

# The Indianapolis Times

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Member of the Scripps-Howard Newspaper Alliance

Client of the United Press and the NEA Service

\* \* \* Member of the Audit Bureau of Circulations.

Published daily except Sunday by Indianapolis Times Publishing Co., 214-220 W. Maryland St., Indianapolis. Subscription Rates: Indianapolis—Ten Cents a Week. Elsewhere—Twelve Cents a Week. PHONE—MA in 3500.

No law shall be passed restraining the free interchange of thought and opinion, or restricting the right to speak, write, or print freely, on any subject whatever.—Constitution of Indiana.

## LEST WE FORGET

That fine endorsement of the city manager form of government, the law passed preventing the people from getting it until two Indiana mayors serve their terms, ought not to be forgotten.

It should, instead spur the efforts of the group of citizens who appealed to Governor Jackson to permit the people of the cities to rule themselves.

True, the law just signed sets aside a solemn contract made with the people by these mayors of Indianapolis and Evansville when they spent large sums of money to obtain the jobs of mayor.

When they sought these offices, they took them under a law which gave to the people the protection that whenever the people grew tired of the present system of these mayors, they could change to the city manager form of government by a popular vote.

It was because the people of these two cities, or at least a very large percentage of the people, wanted to change that the politicians controlled the legislature and the governor, made bargain-breakers of the mayors and shackled the cities for two more years.

But that very fact should be an argument for immediate action to secure the change in the system before the bosses tie up the prosperity for four more years of machine government.

The time to hold a city manager election and start the machinery in motion to introduce business into government and banish partisan politics is right now.

Unless petitions are circulated in the very near future, it will be impossible to hold such an election this year.

The city should get ready to enter the promised land of relief. Each day adds its evidence of the high cost of partisan political control of this city. The future and the growth of the city are constantly menaced and burdened by the tribute exacted by favored politicians.

There is no department of the city government which is free from the burden of waste and inefficiency that is inevitably and invariably tied to a partisan political government. The one advantage which the boss has is that he can generally count on a certain lethargy and indifference on the part of those who really want decent things.

He can always count on men who should lead being too busy to vote and too much engaged in some worthy private enterprise to take the trouble to follow through.

The boss stays on the job continually. That is how he thrives. It is his business.

This city movement ought not to die. It ought to be in full sway. For the people know its value. They know its advantages. They know that it will help the city.

The bosses have endorsed it by fighting. That in itself ought to be enough argument for its adoption.

## AN ABSOLUTE PRIVILEGE

"The law puts no bridle on the mouth of truth." Here is the latest epigrammatic declaration of the freedom of speech and of the press. It comes from Senator James A. Reed of Missouri.

Citizens of Indiana will be interested in this statement of an ancient right, because of the fact that this right has been challenged from time to time in this State and in the popular mind there may be some confusion as to just where the privilege to speak and to print ends.

The absolute privilege of speaking the truth carries with it, necessarily, a duty to speak nothing but the truth.

No individual has a right to print false and malicious slanders or libels. No individual has a right to destroy reputations and cause humiliation by gossipy falsehoods.

But as long as the newspaper stays within the confines of truth, there must never be, either by legislative enactment or by judicial encroachment, any invasion of this right.

It is preservation of that right that the legislature has brought impeachment proceedings against one of the Indiana judges.

For the law provides penalties for falsehoods, uttered in malice, and the legal redress must be relied upon by all alike, whether they be a humble citizen without influence or a judge upon the bench.

The law provides that when persons print false and damaging statements, they can be held in damages.

If the false statements contain charges of turpitude, they become crimes and the liar is sent to jail in punishment.

But the law, at the same time, is jealous of the right to speak the truth and the legislature has declared that judge who attempts to pass upon truth and falsity without a hearing, invades this sacred right and should be removed from office.

That is the reason the attention of the nation, especially of newspapers and those who have stood guard over the priceless heritage of freedom of speech, are interested in the Indiana effort to maintain it.

No one defends the liar and the maligner.

But he must be punished under the law and in a legal way. To set up any arbitrary method of punishment, to prevent a hearing upon the truth or falsity of statements, opens the path to tyranny.

The right to speak the truth is absolute. It can not be modified with safety. It can not be surrendered in fear.

## A REVISION OF WAR DEBTS?

Secretary of the Treasury Mellon has just administered a gentle slap on the wrist to the 116 Princeton professors who last week joined in the agitation for a revision of the allied war debts.

Somehow we can not escape the impression that they had it coming to them. Quite as the secretary points out to President Hibben of Princeton, one of the signers of the manifesto, "It is not so long since that all of our soundest economists claimed, and rightly claimed that the one prerequisite to the restoration of economic prosperity in the world was an early settlement of these debts between governments."

Today the settlements are an accomplished fact—baring the notable exception of France, with whom an agreement is hanging fire. To undo all this would not be good sense. It would throw the world right back into the chaotic quagmire, where it was struggling when our economists demanded its rescue. Thus it is true, notwithstanding any blunders com-

# Tracy

Who Shall Control Water-power? Becomes Dominant Issue.

By M. E. Tracy

mitted by our commission charged with the settlements.

Not a single thing has happened in any of the countries involved which would give us anything better to base an agreement upon than we had at the start.

So, as the debt liquidation period is to run sixty-three years, and as no country will be called upon to pay more than a nominal sum during the first ten years of that time, we can very well afford to wait and watch, as Secretary Mellon says, to see how things work out.

This paper is decidedly of the opinion that a revision of debt settlements is not only inevitable, but ultimately more vital to the United States than to any other nation.

The United States can, and must, correct the one fundamental mistake its debt commission made, namely, to leave the entire world under the impression that Uncle Sam's real name is Shylock.

Secretary Mellon correctly points out to President Hibben that we have virtually canceled the actual war debt of every ally that owes us, with the exception of Great Britain. But who knows? This? Few Americans know it, let alone foreigners.

France's after-war indebtedness to us, with interest, the Secretary says, amounts to \$1,655,000,000.

The present value of the Mellon-Berenger settlement with France at 5 per cent—a rate less than she now has to pay for money—is \$1,680,000,000, almost an identical amount.

This being the case, why couldn't we have said to France: "To show our love and admiration for our traditional friend and ally, and in recognition of the noble struggle you put up while we were preparing to take the field, we here and now make you a present of every last cent of the money you borrowed from us from the time we entered the war until the armistice. We only ask that you pay us what you borrowed after the war was over with interest at 5 per cent."

We would have been just as well off financially, Secretary Mellon himself admits. And there is no computing how much better off we would now be in the world's opinion!

He disposes of the argument that the United States should write off what allied countries owe us as a contribution to the common cause very neatly.

"Looking at the substance, rather than the form of the transaction," he says, "the situation was no different than if the (allies) had actually sold their own bonds in the American market and our Government had endorsed them. Had this course been followed, would any one consider that the sums advanced were intended as contributions to a joint enterprise, rather than loans expected to be repaid?"

Answering the professors' statement that in estimating the allied capacity to pay "only incidental consideration was given to repayment payments to be received by the other debtor countries from Germany," Mr. Mellon says:

"Now the fact is that all of our principal debtors are already receiving from Germany more than enough to pay their debts to the United States."

## \$51,000 Signature

Builton Gwinnett's signature brought \$51,000 at a sale in New York last Wednesday night. This is the highest sum ever paid for an individual signature.

Builton Gwinnett was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, to be sure, but I cannot find his name in the "Encyclopedia Britannica."

Either an ambitious collector has placed an exaggerated value on his name or what claims to be the most authoritative work of information has grossly underestimated it.

The answer, of course, is, we played politics here at home. Our politicians climbed to the rooftops, gritted their teeth and shouted to the world that, by cracky, we'd make Europe pay every last red cent she owes us or know the reason why. That was for home consumption, but the world did not know it, and so has taken us at our own valuation—as a tight-fisted, hard-boiled old skinflint.

After this public exhibition of ourselves, we took off our Shylock whiskers and quietly agreed to accept whatever our debtors felt they cared to pay us.

Eventually this time will come when a debt revision will be necessary. Then will be our chance to regain from the world some of the good will we foolishly threw away.

## PROSPERITY

Prosperity means all things to all people.

To the little boy, with his face glued against the candy store window, the difference between prosperity and anguish is about 5 cents.

To a Ford or a Rockefeller, the addition of fifteen millions to a personal fortune is a matter of course, calling for no prosperity bulletins.

That's why one honest man can contend that the country is enjoying a period of unprecedented prosperity, while another equally honest man can argue that the great mass of the people are really not prosperous at all.

That's about what is going on at the present time.

One man hails the report of the National Bureau of Economic Research that the average income of those gainfully employed in the United States in 1926 was \$2,010, an all time record, as an irrefutable evidence of general prosperity.

Another rises in wrath to call attention to the sad plight of the farmer, the continuing unemployment in industry, particularly in New England, and the demands to know "What do you mean, prosperity?"

Both men can be speaking from reliably recorded facts and still be shooting wide of the mark.

Right now the best of any general argument certainly rests with those shouting the praises of prosperity, provided, of course, that they make an exception of the relief-less farmer.

With the coming of spring, all the reports indicate that business is swinging into a stride which promises little unemployment, good wages and large profits during coming months.

That, of course, means "general prosperity."

It does not mean there will not be individual and community disasters, and that those who want to debate the issue of general prosperity won't be able to find ammunition.

It simply means that the "average man," a product of the statisticians and not of real flesh and blood, is getting along pretty well these days.

## Law and Wealth

Sinclair's conviction proves that the law can rise above wealth on occasion.

If this man had not been a millionaire, he probably would not have trifled so contemptuously with the Senate. At that, he probably acted on the advice of high priced lawyers which his millions enabled him to hire.

The case is not over by any means. There are motions for a retrial to be heard, and appeals to be taken. Every loophole which the law offers will be tried, for that is the bread and meat of attorneyism.

Sinclair may get out of it in the end, or he may not. Meanwhile let it be remembered that Sinclair was convicted only in the charge of refusing to answer questions, while no one has been convicted of looting the Government oil reserves.

Pedestrians are getting their rights at least. They used to get last rites.

These are the kind of days we'll be wishing for when we have the kind of days we're wishing for now.

New York minister says the devil is busy in Russia. Then somebody actually is working over there.

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