



The Indianapolis Times

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"Give Light and the People Will Find Their Own Way."

Straightening the Railroads

When one mentions straightening out our railroads, he is likely to think at once of adjusting their tangled finances. This, of course, is the ultimate problem, but many of the financial kinks could be eliminated if some of the geographical knees and elbows in our railroad systems were straightened out.

Most of our railroads seem to have been built without any realization of the basic geometrical proposition that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. The reason in many cases is that the first great system of steam transportation was carried on by river steamboats.

The railroads tried to cut in and compete with this traffic. For that reason, and also to gain easier grades, they built their lines along the great river valleys.

The incidental and immediate advantages may have been great, but such construction enormously increased the length of the line between major cities and correspondingly raised the cost of transportation. What are great railroad terminals were insignificant towns in the early days.

Hence, there was little effort to plan construction for the purpose of reaching such terminals in the most direct and economical fashion. In light of the metropolitan and industrial map of 1931, some of the great railway systems laid out between 1850 and 1880 seem about as rational as a crazy-quilt.

But there is no reason which the construction mistakes of 1850, 1860, or 1870 should survive to ruin railroading in 1931. The slogan of the future will may be "consolidate and straighten out or die." Professor W. Z. Ripley, authority on railroads, has indicated what this has meant with respect to two of the great systems, the Baltimore & Ohio and the Erie.

Of the former he says: "The old line started at Philadelphia and went clear to Washington before heading west toward Chicago and St. Louis. That was all right for the port of Baltimore, for which it originally was constructed. But it was roundabout from Philadelphia and unattainable from New York."

The B. & O. now is linking up with the Central Railroad of New Jersey, the Reading, and the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh. This considerably reduces the distance between New York and Chicago, cuts the grade over the mountains by 800 feet, and gives a New York terminal.

The Erie, even in its original form, came far closer to a "crown-flight line" to Chicago than the Pennsylvania, the B. & O., or the New York Central. But at that it operated under great physical handicaps: "First it has to surmount a stiff watershed over into the Delaware valley; and then to climb another to reach the Susquehanna.

"But its real grade troubles begin only after it leaves this stream in western New York. And it seems to have been laid out purposely to avoid any good-sized cities. It is an uphill and downdale proposition most of the way."

Then the Van Sweringen Brothers bought the Nickel Plate line, which had an almost straight water-level route from Buffalo into Chicago. But they were blocked from New York. An arrangement was made to tie up with the Erie.

The result is a direct route to Chicago, fifty miles shorter, with a crossing of the Alleghenies on a grade 500 feet lower than the original line.

Professor Ripley emphasizes: "These are the things that make for mile-long trains, high speed, fuel economy, dividends—the very fatness of railroading."

Economies like these ultimately might put the railroads much farther ahead than such temporary stimulants as rate boosts.

Official Nullification

We have been waiting for the dry leaders to denounce the government for collecting income taxes from Al Capone. It seems rather illogical to imprison a man for carrying on an illegal business and then tax that illegal business, doesn't it? But the prohibition leaders apparently see nothing wrong in that.

Our mistake! What reason had we to suppose that either the dry leaders or the Hoover administration were interested actually in outlawing all liquor? Come to think of it, national prohibition legislation and enforcement has been one long record of official nullification from the beginning.

To start with, the amendment and the federal law nullified complete prohibition by leaving a loophole as big as the side of a house for the purchaser, confining the crime to the maker, the transporter and the seller of liquor. That doubtless was necessary strategy, otherwise they could not have put prohibition over, but from the point of view of complete prohibition it was hypocrisy and it was nullification.

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The next step was further to nullify the eighteenth amendment by the Volstead act, which left more holes. The law exempted fruit juices and cider—which would turn into liquor with more kick than a barrel of nonintoxicating but illegal beer.

Not content with that, certain administration spokesmen tried to start a back-to-the-home-brew-in-the-home movement. Citizens did not take advantage of that officially suggested nullification because it was too much trouble—why make your own when you can buy it so easily and so cheaply, was the attitude.

The point is that these administration spokesmen argued that making beer in the home is not illegal under the law—though of course it is illegal under the eighteenth amendment. Just another convenient bit of nullification, sponsored not by the wicked wets, but by the drys and the government officials who wrote the law and imposed it on the country.

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Going beyond these legislative invitations to nullification, the government—with the approval of the dry leaders—then proceeded to subsidize wholesale nullification by supplying from the federal treasury the funds with which the grape industry flooded the country with a wine and container which automatically produced strong liquor.

In that sense the federal government has been in the same business as Al Capone—in fact, a competitor. The chief difference was that the beer Al peddled was mild and the government-subsidized stuff was not mild.

Any one interested in a more detailed exposition of the federal government and the dry administration in their capacity as prohibition nullificationists has only to refer to the Wickersham commission's report, which denounces the legal contradiction and hypocrisy of this wine-subsidizing and bootleg-taxing policy.

There is one way to remove the legal contradiction and the moral hypocrisy from the present governmental and dry policy of nullification. That is to repeal the prohibition law and proceed to tax the manu-

facture of all liquor—as the government now taxes Capone's bootleg product.

Of course that would nullify the amendment, but several of the constitutional amendments—including the eighteenth—are being nullified today, anyway. This method is illogical. But it is the American way.

We never have repealed our amendments. We merely have killed them by failing to pass enforcement laws or by repealing those enforcement laws. This amendment should be repealed. But that will take time. Meanwhile, the American method of repealing the law probably will be used.

Coming back to Mr. Capone, we have no objections to the government taxing his liquor profits. Other businesses are taxed, and it would be unjust as well as imprudent to let one of the largest and richest industries in the country escape taxation.

Our objection is that the government's method is inefficient. Catching only a few bootleggers and having inadequate income tax returns, the government gets very little tax from the industry. If it would repeal the now nullified prohibition law the underground liquor industry would come into the open for taxation.

The liquor tax, plus the saving of expenditures on lawless and ineffective enforcement of the unenforceable law, would wipe out the annual billion-dollar deficit.

Such reform would do more than balance our national budget. It would reduce racketeering and crime. It would reduce general hypocrisy and disrespect for law. It might even reduce the consumption of liquor. We are convinced it would reduce drunkenness.

Page the Dress Censor

It requires little imagination to conceive that Gandhi, if he visits this country in his white shawl and thin cotton loin cloth, may become the major thin of the autumn.

Customs officers, who sniff suspiciously for taint of immorality in every arriving book and who sometimes fail to distinguish between great literature and pornography, may not approve the garb of the distinguished sage from India.

Though the wise man from the east probably will not visit our bathing beaches where stern gentlemen in the discreet blue serge of the law scrutinize and measure bathing garb to make sure it is decent, still the police who patrol our city streets may look askance on their own account.

Gandhi already has received a deluge of letters from the United States criticizing his costume, some of them undertaking to tell him that the Bible demands he wear more clothes.

Meet the Progress Party

When the Republican managers felt their party slipping it took them a long time to discover what was the matter. But after heroic search, Chairman Fess and Director Lucas found the source of the infection and party sickness. It was in the colleges.

College professors throughout the land were challenging such Republican dogmas as higher tariff, bigger navy, and rugged—it is ragged!—individualism.

Not the depression and wholesale unemployment, or any of the failures of the Hoover administration, were responsible for the sweeping Republican defeat at the congressional elections last November; the G. O. P. losses were due to that insidious thing called radicalism—or democracy—with which college professors were infecting young voters, Fess and Lucas demands.

They did the obvious thing. They called a national conference of young Republicans to meet in Washington. The idea was to drive out our enemies with the power of Republican party truth, which was described as a matter of education.

So Chairman Fess of the Republican national committee opened this unique university Thursday with the following statement of "truth":

"The history of the progress of the United States is but the history of the Republican party."

And then they wonder why intelligent voters are deserting the party leadership of Fess and Lucas!

Dorothy thinks that a national guardsman is an all-American football player distinguished for his work on the line.

REASON BY FREDERICK LANDIS

THE papers say there is great unrest in Germany over the heavy taxes, due to the loss of the war.

Really this is too bad!

Those who now are doing the kicking were in high feather back in 1914 as they rode with the kaiser through Belgium.

What a shame such gentle spirits must be burdened with the consequences of their crime!

But Germany never will pay her debt.

Just mark this down in your little red book, for will be another upheaval in Europe some of these times and Germany will manage to light of the winning side and then she will kiss her creditors good night—kiss them with a hob-nailed boot!

ALL in all, our experience with Europe since the World War has been such that every man in his right mind should wish to see his country put on a pair of husking gloves when she shakes hands with her and if there's another European war we should the Uncle Sam's coat tails to Pike's Peak and keep him in the U. S. A.

The Rev. G. Z. Brown, Negro pastor of Washington, D. C., just has won the honor of having preached the world's longest sermon, he having stayed at it for twelve hours.

What a United States senator he would make!

A gentleman in Evansville was arrested for disorderly conduct because he kissed his wife in public as she was entering the place where she is employed.

We are glad the judge let the man go, for if a fellow's wife has a steady job these days he should be permitted to express his enthusiasm as he sees fit.

THE department of agriculture says that all of us ought to put honey in radiator to keep them from freezing, but from the humanitarian standpoint, that which goes down the radiator does not go down the gullet.

Alexander F. Lewis, former welfare official of Detroit, who admits having taken \$207,000 from the funds intended to feed the starving, should get a prison suit with very broad stripes, for alongside the public officer who is a grafter, the train robber is a gentleman and a scholar.

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THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES

M. E. Tracy SAYS:

Something Must Be Done to Clean Up the Situation Until the Dry Law Can Be Repealed.

NEW YORK, June 20.—Centralia, Wash., adopts a city ordinance requiring all male inhabitants to grow whiskers between July 8 and August 12.

The object is to provide realism for the annual pioneer picnic.

A worthy object, no doubt, but one which could have been attained just as well without law.

Objects, no matter how silly or serious, have come to play too big a part in law-making.

We no longer are content with the simple idea of trying to maintain order and do justice. What we want these days is something specific, something to pep things up, something that will make jobs for experts, reformers, or promoters.

That's one reason why we have so many laws and why they do so little good.

Coming back to Mr. Capone, we have no objections to the government taxing his liquor profits. Other businesses are taxed, and it would be unjust as well as imprudent to let one of the largest and richest industries in the country escape taxation.

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