



The Indianapolis Times

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BOYD GURLEY,
Editor

ROBERT W. HOWARD,
President

EARL D. BAKER,
Business Manager

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

Utility Stupidity

The arrogant attitude of the public utilities of this state has reached the point of stupidity.

When property owners are appalled by the size of tax burdens, when commodity prices have reached the lowest levels for years, when more men are out of jobs than ever before in history, the utilities take the stand that they will continue to collect on valuations fixed at highest prices for commodities and for labor.

The people know that the cost of utilities is in reality a tax on business and industry and a tax on the privilege of living. Modern life can not be supported without electricity and telephones and gas and water.

A leading official of the bankers' association predicts a reduction, nationally, of 30 per cent in rates during the year. In Indiana, the utility magnates insist on no reductions whatever.

The history of utility regulation probably gives them some reason to believe that they can continue with their confiscation of the people's property. What has been denied them by the public service commission has been awarded by the courts. In all cases, there has been delay after delay in getting relief so that they can hope, with some reason, that the protests of hundreds of cities of this state can be held up until the depression is over and normal times return.

But that very attitude of intolerance is causing people to think about the utility problem and is forcing a conviction that regulation, under present laws, is impossible and that more drastic remedies must be found to curb the greed of those who have been so heavy a burden even in prosperous days and an intolerable burden in slack times.

The secret meeting of the officials and citizens committee of Indianapolis with one member of the commission on water and electric rates for Indianapolis may have some results. If it means that rates are to be cut, the public will be satisfied with secrecy.

If it means that there is to be no redress, the public is entitled to know the reason for the secrecy imposed upon officials by the member of the public service commission.

The time has come to start a real movement for a change in laws. Cities must have the power to construct new utilities as one way of escape. Cities which now own their utilities must be free from commission domination.

Above all, the utility holding company, a useful system of collecting huge profits and unusual returns, must be put under official scrutiny.

The election of a legislature and Governor free from utility control and influence becomes imperative if these stupid magnates insist on being greedy when all other business suffers.

The Ground Hog

Another prophet without honor in his own land is the groundhog. His long-established reputation as a weather forecaster is being assailed by Arthur H. Howell, United States department of agriculture biologist.

According to tradition, Mr. Groundhog is due to come out of his hibernation Tuesday, squint his weather eye, and look for his shadow. If he sees it, he returns to his sleep for another six weeks of hard winter; if not, winter's over.

Howell now says there's no record of any groundhog, woodchuck, or weasel or moan or wensk or any of this fellow's many names, ever waking up earlier than latter February. So Howell advises us to put our faith in government meteorologists instead of furry marmots.

For ourselves, we still believe in groundhogs. We've watched government prophets at work lately. They have come out of their holes so often to tell us that this winter of discontent is over, and prosperity is around the corner. No groundhog could be a worse prophet.

Unconscious Humor on the Grand Scale

It is to be expected that man, as the highest member of the monkey tribe, would be a funny animal in the very literal sense of that term. But a large block of human humor is of an entirely unconscious variety. Two conspicuous examples have occurred recently.

A former Kentuckian, Lieutenant Thomas H. Massie, is to be tried for murder in Honolulu. The Kentucky assembly adopted unanimously a resolution calling on the government to insure the immediate release of Lieutenant Massie and the others accused of murder. The assembly asked that, if necessary, martial law be declared.

"If such result can not be secured, that the President declare martial law in Honolulu until such time as Hawaii can be made safe for women and especially for the wives of our men in the army and navy, who, not of their own volition, are stationed in Honolulu."

It may seem a little strange that Kentucky, which has convicted two honorable labor leaders of murder because of their organizing activities and economic ideas, should demand the release of a Kentucky naval officer without trial.

Let us, however, accept Kentucky's version of Hawaii for the time being. Can Kentucky, with its Harlan, appropriately cast aspersions on social and moral conditions in our island possessions? Hardly.

The mining section around Harlan is an armed camp. Honest investigators can not enter without grave danger to their lives or personal freedom. Low wages are paid to the mine workers. There is a vast amount of unemployment.

Workers live under physical conditions often worse than those which surround the mine mules. They are subjected to extortion at company stores, which sell goods at from 30 to 50 per cent above the level charged by free competing stores in the locality.

Famine stalks. Many die from slow starvation and from chronic diseases induced by inadequate food. Company-controlled deputies intimidate and even shoot down those who attempt to maintain soup kitchens to feed the starving. Court room procedure in the trial of accused labor leaders resembles that in the Mooney-Billings, Sacco-Vanzetti and Cen-

tralia trials.

Men are tried for murder on account of their social, economic and political opinions. Newspapers are throttled if they propose to tell the plain truth about the methods of the prosecution.

We have no desire to differ with Kentucky on the question of rape in Honolulu or elsewhere. It is a crime which should be repressed sternly. But let any thoughtful man consider whether all the rape since Eden has been as inhuman or brutal as the conditions now prevailing in Harlan and adjacent districts. Is it worse to mistreat a woman or deliberately to starve her to death or condemn her to die from wasting diseases?

To be more specific, is even the horrible Bischoff case in Cincinnati as staggering as the wholesale starvation and disease among little girls in the Har-

lan area? The murder of Marian McLean by Charles Bischoff was one of the most hideous crimes in the annals of violence.

But her death was relatively humane compared to the prolonged suffering of the starving and wasting waifs in the Kentucky coal fields. Let the Kentucky assembly try to laugh this off before it assumes to dictate social conditions and court room justice in Honolulu.

The second major instance of unconscious humor on the grand scale is the successful persecution of the cast of "Lysistrata" in Los Angeles, until the players finally gave up the effort in disgust and canceled further performances.

This will stir a sardonic smile among those who have followed the persecution of Mooney and Billings, the attempt to railroad Yetta Stromberg to prison, the fierce sentences imposed upon those who better the terrible conditions among melon workers in the Imperial valley, the labor policies of the Better America Federation of Los Angeles, and the atrocities against elementary American traditions of freedom and justice committed by the Los Angeles red squad.

"Lysistrata" is a classical play of great dramatic merit, though there admittedly are a number of rather "broad" passages. Yet Mae West at her worst could not produce anything to compare with the fundamental immorality of many outstanding social and economic conditions in California. Indeed, it is doubtful if any peep-show ever put on in Paris is as much of an affront to really vital social morality as the unjust imprisonment of Mooney and Billings for fifteen years.

A state which accepts Oxman can hardly reject "Lysistrata."

Japanese Insanity

In the Shanghai crisis there is one element of hope. The united front of neutral nations has been re-established. It was broken first by the United States in refusing to co-operate with the League of Nations last November, and more recently it was broken by the European powers in refusing to join with the American protest to Japan.

Now the Japan invasion of the international settlement of Shanghai apparently has forced the neutral governments together again.

It is too late now to blame the state department for its gross errors of policy during the last four months, or to harp on the apparent encouragement given to Japan during the last month by France and Great Britain. It is even too late to talk about Japan's imperialistic designs in Manchuria.

The Shanghai crisis can not be attributed to Japanese imperialism or anything else that connotes plan or thought. It is a case of plain madness. Certainly this Shanghai savagery can not possibly profit Japan in any way.

On the contrary, it is turning the world against her. And far from ending a Chinese boycott, it will make Chinese hatred of Japan in the future almost a religion.

Japan has outlawed herself. That act carries its own retribution. No nation can live unto itself alone. Some day—maybe in a month, maybe in a year, maybe longer—Japan will come back and beg to be respected and trusted again.

Then she will pay heavily for this madness. Then she will learn, as other nations have learned before her, that her militarists destroyed her.

Whatever further insanity the Japanese militarists may be guilty of, the United States should not go to war against them. We have no mandate to police the world. We can not protect vast China by force of American arms.

Nor can we preserve American interests by killing Japanese. Even if we were victors in a war, we would lose more than we would gain.

Patience is required of us now, more than anything else. As the world's most powerful nation and as the world's credit control, the United States can wait. Soon or late, Japan must come to us.

When she does come to us, there is bound to be an accounting under the American treaties which the Japanese militarists mistakenly think they have destroyed.

Detroit has followed Philadelphia's suit in closing museums and recreational centers. Anyway, jobless men can stand outside and marvel at the beautiful buildings.

Pittsburgh averaged a murder a week in 1931. But with women having the privilege of making mistakes, too, this leap year, maybe they can bring up the average a little in 1932.

Chicago officials are taking big pay slashes. If this keeps on politicians will have to let out Al Capone to bring back prosperity.

Just Every Day Sense

BY MRS. WALTER FERGUSON

Is there such a thing as the curse of Eve? If so, I can name it for you. It is that woman is doomed forever to pick up after man. And each new freedom she obtains adds to the difficulty and number of her tasks.

In countless homes each morning, women go washing dishes, putting away shaving things, straightening the disarray that men have made in their matinal rites.

And in countless offices each evening, other women put away letters in files, gather up documents and tie up the tangled threads of business that the day's doings have sundered. And scrubwomen crawl upon their knees brushing ashes away, hunting down cigarette stubs and bits of paper carelessly scattered.

Yet these, my sisters, are the easiest of our jobs. Today, when the governmental structure is toppling and man, with reckless disregard for consequences, has undermined the financial foundation of his land, he begins to cry for women to come to his aid.

It is cleanup time now. We must wash up after the great stock market feast. The national dinner plate is empty. He is asking us to fill it. There is filth in Uncle Sam's house. Let women begin their scrubings.

Workers live under physical conditions often worse than those which surround the mine mules. They are subjected to extortion at company stores, which sell goods at from 30 to 50 per cent above the level charged by free competing stores in the locality.

Famine stalks. Many die from slow starvation and from chronic diseases induced by inadequate food. Company-controlled deputies intimidate and even shoot down those who attempt to maintain soup kitchens to feed the starving. Court room procedure in the trial of accused labor leaders resembles that in the Mooney-Billings, Sacco-Vanzetti and Cen-

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THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES

M. E. Tracy

Says:

There Is Temptation in the Feeling That One Possesses the Power to Kill or Conquer, and That Feeling Has a Vital Bearing on War.

NEW YORK, Feb. 1.—The disarmament conference which opens at Geneva Tuesday is the first of its kind ever held. Others have been called to deal with some particular phase of the problem, or to consider its bearing on some particular area, but this one includes the whole world and is without restraint as to what it may study, or recommend.

Sixty-four governments will be represented, nine of them not members of the League of Nations. It will remain in session as long as those in attendance feel that it is worth while. It will be free to entertain any kind of plan and propose any kind of reduction with regard to military establishments.

The fact that all governments could be persuaded to participate in such a conference marks a great step in advance.

Deep-Seated Faith

IN several respects the atmosphere of the disarmament conference is singularly unfavorable to disarmament. With a depression on, with the war debt problem unsolved and with war threatened in the Orient, people are in no mood to make drastic moves in discarding their traditional means of protection.

But if there were not deepseated hope and faith back of it all, the conference would have been abandoned, or postponed.

That humanity should be willing to go through with it, in spite of all the difficulties and discouragements, bespeaks the presence of a new and powerful attitude.

Not matter how dismal the peace movement may have failed in some of its plans and efforts, one can not review what has occurred during the last fourteen years without being convinced that the desire for a new order has been born.

A New Viewpoint

WHATEVER else may be said, humanity has reached a point where it can visualize unrestricted armament by individual governments as a menace and the unrestricted power to make war as a

danger.

That is not only a new, but a very bad idea. It stands for little less than a revolution in the general conception of national rights, international relations, state sovereignty and patriotism.

Even the more civilized portions of humanity will not accept all the changes, concessions and surrenders that such an idea involves, without protracted discussion and, possibly, conflict.

At present, we merely are dealing with details of the experiment. The League of Nations is a detail, and so are the world court, Kellogg pact and disarmament.

Power to Conquer

NO one but a child thinks of disarmament as a cure-all for war. Men have fought without the advantage of modern weapons, and they could do so again. If we were to scrap every gun, battleship or airplane, we still could have war, and murderous war at that.

But arms exercise a psychological influence on the problem.

If Japan did not believe that her well-equipped and well-trained army were capable of beating China's vastly superior numbers she would be far less ready to resort to force.

There is temptation in the feeling that one possesses the power to kill, and that feeling has a vital bearing on war.

Still Need Police

THE thought that we can scrap our armies, or that it would be wise to do so if we could, is chimerical. We are still a long way from that ideal state of mind where we can hope to maintain order without a police force even in small and highly intelligent communities.

The problem of maintaining order throughout the world rests on the same fundamental principles that apply to the village of a thousand souls.

Anti-gum-toting laws will help, but not to an extent that solves the problem. Primarily, they stand for a new and healthier idea of social relations and responsibilities.

To that extent, they serve an essential purpose, but no one should accept them as an excuse to ignore the larger task that still remains.

In justifying this attitude, he explains that he wants to take the league issue out of politics. But that is precisely what all the prohibition pussyfooters say in regard to that problem.

It seems to me that the brilliant gentleman from Cleveland has added his weight to an extremely harmful heresy. It is the custom for presidential candidates to avoid all contentious issues and to compete in platitudes.

It Seems There Was

THERE was once upon a time a young Methodist preacher who accepted a call to a city church. He came to his new charge filled with zeal and fire, and the senior deacon visited him to talk over the subject of the first sermon.

The preacher announced that he intended to strike out from the shoulder against dancing. The deacon wasn't much for that. Some of the young folk were in the habit of meeting in their own homes and tuning on the radio. It would be just as well not to alienate this group.

Gambling was next suggested, but that might annoy the contract bridge crowd in the church. In desperation, the young minister exclaimed, "But what can I preach against?"

"Preach against the Moabites," said the old deacon. "Give 'em hell; they haven't got a friend in the league without majority sentiment to back them."

It begins to look as if we were going to be in for a Moabiteism campaign this autumn.

"What's the big issue?" a reporter inquired,