

## The Indianapolis Times

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TUESDAY, JAN. 24, 1933.

## REDUCING TAXES

Reduction of taxation can be accomplished only by economies and savings in cost of public service.

The plan of Governor McNutt to revise many state departments is moving forward swiftly. The public will commend the major portion of his recommendations.

Within a few days the state highway commission will be put on a more business-like basis.

For years there has been a suspicion that the cost of roads has been too high. The people have paid in the past few years approximately twenty millions of dollars each year for this service. The work has been done under a commission which was political in its viewpoint.

As one example of saving, the recent order of Governor McNutt stopping the purchase of cement at prices which were much higher than was paid a year ago may be cited.

The cement interests, for some unannounced reason, discovered that the price should be increased about ten days before bids for state consumption were opened. And with one exception, the bids were exactly alike.

The establishment of a cement factory at the state prison farm may be one way to save many thousands of dollars.

The reorganization of state government by consolidation of bureaus and the transfer of authority from the office of secretary of state should work for the interests of the taxpayer.

It is unfortunate that a past political coolness between the Governor and the secretary of state might give such a movement the flavor of politics. As a matter of fact, the secretary of state has been given powers that should never have been under his direction. The office was built up by Stephenson as a political feed box through which he expected to control the state.

Patronage was thrown to this office with no regard for proper authority. Many of these powers should belong to the Governor if he is to work effectively for economy.

Cutting taxes finally means cutting expenses. That can be done only by eliminating useless jobs.

## DEATH OF THE LAME DUCK

One of the few good by-products of the depression is the speed with which the lame duck amendment to the Constitution was ratified. The weaknesses and dangers inherent in the lame duck system were revealed at their worst by this crisis.

In a race Monday for the honor of being the last of the thirty-six states needed to amend the Constitution, Speaker Meredith hurriedly called the members of the Missouri house together by phone, so his state could ratify ahead of Massachusetts, whose house was scheduled to meet for the purpose in the afternoon.

Ratification broke all records for speed. It took ten years of fighting to get congress to pass and submit it. It took less than eleven months for thirty-six states to act. Not one state refused to ratify. There may be a unanimous vote of forty-eight states.

All honor to Senator George W. Norris of Nebraska for this victory! In battling to end this clumsy and illogical anachronism, he was opposed by what he called "the organized political machines of special privilege."

How right he was proved not only by the chorus of approving votes of the states, but by the congressional antics of this, the last lame duck session of our history. From now on it will be harder for buck-passing party leaders, frivolous filibusters, or irresponsible politicians to block the will of the voters.

Now Senator Norris has one more important amendment. He will set about now to abolish the electoral college, another survivor of stage coach days.

## DELINQUENT LAND

The other day in Virginia an auctioneer put under the hammer for unpaid taxes one-fourth of once-rich Spotsylvania county. Of the 900 farms and plots offered, only 200 pieces were redeemed, only fourteen sold. The rest went back to the state.

This is a familiar story. In the last five years tax delinquency sales covered 3½ per cent of the nation's farms. Farm failures have resulted in creation of a new public domain of more than 100,000,000 acres, one-half the size of the federal public lands.

Some are good farms that in better times will find their way back to private ownership. The bulk either are logged-over regions or submarginal farms of an eastern state, recently surveyed. More than one-half had been abandoned for tax delinquencies. The farmers on the other half had incomes averaging \$98 a year.

The worst sufferers are southern and lake states. Wisconsin, Minnesota and Michigan, paying the price of careless logging, have 20,000,000 acres of tax-delinquent lands, at least 2,000,000 of which have returned to state ownership. Florida, Oregon and the Dakotas are hard hit.

The personal woe that goes with abandoned farms is matched by serious social maladjustments. New tax sources must be found, schools, roads and towns must be shifted.

Some of the more progressive states are tackling their land problems with vigor and realism. New York last year planted 41,000,000 trees on its submarginal land. Michigan and Minnesota are creating state forests and parks for recreation and game preserves. Wisconsin is turning its idle land into county parks.

But most states refuse to face the fact that here is land that for many years is theirs to hold. It is their responsibility to re-create social wealth. A new crop of private owners at this time means another crop of heartbreaks.

What is needed is a national land policy evolved through co-operation of state and federal government. President-Elect Roosevelt has said he wants to move 5,000,000 American families back to the land. These should be colonized on good land, while the worn-out acres are put to work raising trees.

National planning should be applied to agriculture.

## MORE DRY TRICKERY

The beer legislation was confused enough. Now the senate judiciary committee has carried the confusion further by throwing out the bill which passed the house and by substituting a dubious one. By the time the senate finance committee, to which the bill now goes, gets in its licks the result may be a measure which the drys can defeat.

In the form reported by the judiciary committee, the 3.2 per cent by weight of alcohol content provided in the house bill is reduced to 3.05. The question arises whether any large market exists for such beer. The primary purpose of the measure is to raise revenue through taxes to help balance the federal budget.

But the dry wreckers in the committee did not stop there. They added amendments to prohibit the sale of this alleged beer to minors and to prevent advertising it in dry states. Of course the only possible justification for such amendments is the theory that this 3.05 per cent drink is intoxicating.

So the bill carries within itself the tacit—but untrue—admission that it tries to legalize an intoxicant.

The catch is obvious. No bill can legalize an intoxicant so long as the eighteenth amendment is in the Constitution.

Therefore, the senate judiciary committee bill is a direct invitation to senate drys to defeat it on the ground of unconstitutionality, and, failing that, an invitation to President Hoover to veto it on the same ground.

There should be an end to this hypocritical and backhanded maneuvering. The house bill was honest. The senate drys have a right to try to kill it in open and fair fight. But when they resort to trickery they confess they fear defeat.

The trickery may or may not succeed in the lame duck session. But effective beer tax legislation probably can not be delayed later than the spring special session of the new wet congress.

## A JAPANESE PATRIOT

At last Japan's military madness has been challenged in the Japanese diet. For more than a year the liberalism of Japan, which once made possible the peace treaties, has seemed dead. By every means, from assassination down, the anti-military opposition was silenced.

Laterly, the reports have stated that opposition no longer existed, that Japan was united behind her war-troopers.

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## THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES

## Can't Be Bothered!



## It Seems to Me . . . . by Heywood Broun

THE agreement reached between President Hoover and President-Elect Roosevelt has a dual significance.

It may mark the first step in a genuine effort to achieve international economic co-operation. It is at least an admission that the old die-hard position of "We have nothing to discuss" is to be abandoned.

To be sure, the agreement covers too small a field. The arrangement merely specifies that the incoming administration will be given the right to receive representatives of the British government early in March to discuss the debt and possibly a world war.

Whether Hitoshi Ashida finally is rewarded for his daring honesty with assassination or with eventual leadership in the Japanese movement, the world pays tribute to his patriotism.

He loves his country enough to oppose her when she is wrong. Only patriots of this kind can save Japan. The road of conquest is the road to destruction.

## COLLEGE LOANS

Now, of course, if this conference is to find "ways and means for improving the world situation" there are several other nationalities which well might be included. The United States and Great Britain are a good deal less than the world. It is difficult to think of concerns which touch them both which do not also involve the necessities of France, Germany, Italy, China and Japan.

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