

The Indianapolis Times

(A SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPER)
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Member of United Press,
Member of Associated Press,
Member of National Newspaper
Enterprise Association, Newspaper
Information Service and Au-
dition Bureau of Circulations.
Price 5 cents and published daily
(except Sunday) by The
Indianapolis Times Publishing
Co., 214-220 West Maryland
Street, Indianapolis, Ind.
Price 5 cents a copy; elsewhere, 2
cents a copy; in Indiana, 12
cents a week. Mail sub-
scription rates: in Indiana, \$5 a
year; outside of Indiana, \$6
a year; outside of U.S., 25 cents a month.

TUESDAY, MAY 16, 1933.

THE ELECTRIC TAX

IT was about a year ago that a congressional conference committee, subservient to the power industry, violated legislative precedent to transfer a 3 per cent tax from the companies that produce power and light to the people who buy it.

A congressional committee again is about to consider the electric tax. Again there are indications that an attempt will be made to lighten the burden of the industry best fitted to assume such tax.

The house of representatives approved a measure that put the 3 per cent tax on the companies. The senate put only 2 per cent tax on producers and 1 per cent on users of industrial power.

More significant still was the senate provision that the tax shall not be transferred until Sept. 1. This is intended, according to a frank statement by the senate finance committee, to give power companies time to obtain rate increases from local utility commissions. In other words, the senate is doing its best to help the companies keep the tax just where it is today.

Bludgeoned into it by a rebuke from Senator Hiram Johnson, the senate exempted municipal power plants from the new tax.

The conference committee will be urged by the utilities to reject the municipal exemption and to retain the senate's other provisions lessening the tax and delaying it. Already, propaganda has been directed at utility security holders, who are urged to protect their investment by writing congress at once to protest against the company tax.

Due regard for public service and the equities of the case demand action just the reverse of this from the conference committee. A tax on the earnings of an enterprise guarantees a fair return in good times and bad, which frequently has secured far more than the most bizarre conception of a fair return, is a just tax.

A RECORD HANDS DOWN

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT was very modest and matter-of-fact in recounting the achievements of the first two months of his administration, but he has far surpassed anything accomplished by a previous chief executive in so short a time.

The only Presidents who even would be thought of as contenders are George Washington and Woodrow Wilson. Yet, with no blemish whatever of their record, it must be said that for hair-raising decisiveness and sweeping accomplishments Roosevelt leaves them outstripped.

Washington and Hamilton put through an amazing program in record time, considering the difficulties which the new government had to meet. They organized the federal administration, passed a tariff bill, restored federal credit, funded the domestic and foreign debt, passed an excise tax bill and established the First United States bank.

But nearly two years elapsed between the inauguration of Washington on April 30, 1789, and the passage of the bank bill in February, 1791.

Wilson's record has been regarded as even more spectacular. In Harper's Weekly of Aug. 22, 1914, President Eliot of Harvard declared it to be unprecedented. Professor Max Farrand, in his "Development of the United States," offers an estimate representative of fair-minded historians:

"It was primarily as leader of the Democratic party that Wilson acted in his first administration as President of the United States, which probably will remain with an unequalled record of legislative achievement, and for this the greatest credit must be given to President Wilson himself."

"Merely to mention a substantial reduction in tariff rates, a revision of the banking and currency system, the strengthening of the currency system, the strengthening of the infant of the anti-trust acts, and creating a federal trade commission, would be sufficient to indicate his accomplishment."

It was a year and six months, however, between Wilson's inauguration and the passage of the Clayton bill, which represented the conclusion of the first big spurt of his administration. The Underwood-Simmons tariff bill was signed on Oct. 5, 1918. The federal reserve act received Wilson's signature on Dec. 23, 1913. The act creating the federal trade commission became law on Sept. 26, 1914. The Clayton act, supplementing and altering the Sherman act, was signed on Oct. 15, 1914.

Compared even with any of Theodore Roosevelt's accomplishments, this was express train speed. Yet, over against Franklin D. Roosevelt's feats to date, Wilson's achievements seem slow freight.

The very fact that one could not, if he wished, fully summarize Roosevelt's administrative acts during two short months within the space allotted to this column is in itself eloquently indicative of their unprecedented scope and velocity.

Banking, currency, inflation, securities, farm relief, railroads, public utilities, public works, wage levels, foreign trade relations, war debts, economic planning and the like, all have been grappled with resolutely. If the Roosevelt program is not as yet in all respects a realized legislative fact, its general outlines are clearly apparent and it can be wrecked only by congressional sabotage.

This brings me to the last point I wish to make. In the congressional campaign of 1914, Woodrow Wilson warmly urged re-election of members who had served in 1913-14. He said: "The American people have been served by this congress as they never have been served before."

We may hope that President Roosevelt can say the same in August, 1934. The present congress has the opportunity to establish a record of public service which will make that

the Wilson congress seem a "fadeout" by comparison.

BOOKS BURN; THOUGHTS ENDURE

IT is almost like going back into the middle ages to read of Germany's attempts to put the torch to all books which do not conform to the notions of Adolf Hitler.

Those bonfires, dotting public squares from one end of Germany to the other, may have seemed to the Nazis like the beacon fires of a new day, a day in which everything "non-German" is to be destroyed.

In reality, they marked the camps of an army engaged in the most hopeless of all losses—the attempt to make force triumph over the ideas of men.

It has been tried before, over and over again. Roman emperors and Spanish inquisitors have tried it. Russian czars and French kings, courts civil and religious—and it never has worked.

Books have been burned and their authors have been burned, all the resources of great kingdoms have been enlisted to stamp out ideas that rulers did not like; and nothing of permanence has ever been accomplished.

The fight against a book, against an idea, against a song, is one fight in which ultimate defeat is written in the stars.

New law permits physicians a ninety-day supply of liquor for patients. After twelve years, at last the reward of patience.

Modern office boy no longer takes afternoons off to go to grandmother's funeral. Granny now insists on going to the ball game with him.

Story of the frying-out of Greece in three words: Alexander, Constantine, Insult.

Hoover drove the bonus boys out of Washington with bayonets and gas. Roosevelt plans to drive them out by offering them work.

"Works Program Due Next Week," says a headline. Hey! We thought they'd already given us the works.

If love is really what makes the world go 'round, perhaps that's why so many of the young folks are dizzy at this time of year.

Latest figures indicate that \$11,000,000,000 of the \$22,000,000,000 in gold mined since 1929 can not be located. People are so careless!

President Roosevelt may not make a hit every time he comes to bat, but his average so far is certainly "way above 3.2."

If wine is a mocker, as the Scriptures say, then the new 3.2 wine will be pretty hollow mockery.

Latest style dresses have rows and rows of hooks and eyes. Getting ready for a nation-wide hookup.

Funny, but no matter how much girls hate each other these days they always seem ready to make up.

The neighbor's daughter says she's crazy to get a riding habit. But what she really needs is the walking habit.

Illinois supreme court rules the state sales tax invalid. Illinois citizens reported saying they hope it never recovers at all.

Woman stood up in the house gallery the other day and yelled, "You can't spend what you haven't got." That never bothered congress—they can spend what the rest of us have got.

WHERE BLAME BELONGS

THAT Pennsylvania politician who criticized Mrs. Gifford Pinchot for joining a demonstration by striking sweatshop workers seems to have got his argument a bit mixed.

In his criticism, this politician protested that such demonstrations "seek to associate class hatreds" and asserted that their leaders are trying to "array classes of Americans against each other."

The obvious retort, of course, is that it is the sweatshop itself, and not the demonstration against it, which does those things.

If class hatred is springing up in sweatshop centers, one can hardly wonder at it; but it hardly seems intelligent to put the blame, not on the sweatshops, but on those who protest against them.

CHILD AUTO DRIVERS

A 14-YEAR-OLD Chicago high school girl, driving an automobile along a public highway, recently struck a 7-year-old boy who was riding a bicycle. The boy wasn't badly hurt, and witnesses said that the girl did everything an adult driver could have done to avoid hitting him.

But it preyed on her mind, and the tragic upset was that after a sleepless night of brooding the girl committed suicide.

It's a pitiful story, and it makes a sad commentary on the automobile age. Why should a child of that age be permitted to drive a car in heavy traffic—or, for that matter, in any kind of traffic?

Handling an automobile these days is strictly a job for adults. The nervous strain that the accidents of the road can bring to a driver is something no 14-year-old ought to have to shoulder.

MONEY FOR REBUILDING

TO stir activity in a trade which touches the living of a fifth of the population of the United States, the administration is working with committees in Washington upon a public works bill.

This bill is expected to provide mainly for federal or local public works federally assisted, for additional construction of the type of slum-clearance, and possibly for private industrial construction where the financing is not locally available.

There can be little doubt that millions of Americans need new housing, that the provision of decent accommodation in the blighted areas of Indianapolis would stimulate the construction industry as nothing else could right now.

But we are wondering if the government is not overlooking another field of construction which is capable of being entered somewhat sooner than many of these other projects.

We allude to literal reconstruction, to renovation, to modernizing, or in the recently coined word, renovizing.

Many cities have had their renovation campaigns (Indianapolis had a successful one)

in the effort to get householders to spend a few hundred dollars apiece in fixing up their places, but the one difficulty all of them run against is the shortage of financing.

Only the people with money in the bank have been able to buy repairs to their homes, and this number has been reduced sadly by recent events in the banking field. Even these people practically have had to buy their repairs for cash, because of the inability of dealers and contractors to carry them on time payments.

The cost of what financing has been available for home modernization has run as high as 25 per cent.

Here, surely, is a department of the construction industry which the administration well might turn to for immediate stimulation. If the government is to lend for new construction can it not lend with equal safety upon existing property?

No long and complex engineering studies would be needed to start the work of modernizing. Every man knows what he would like to repair or rebuild or add if he knew where he could get the money.

Wearing a top hat in Vienna now makes one subject to arrest. In America it only makes one subject to a jest.

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President Roosevelt is a great disappointment to some people. He rides no hobby horse, has no pet remedy to sell, and no pet theory to prove. That is a new and unexpected kind of leadership. People have been schooled to associate one-idea men with action and reform, especially since the war.

Every European dictator represents a doctrine of some kind or other. The Mussolini's, Stalins, Pilsudski's, and Hitler's have risen to power by riding some peculiar scheme, and have retained it by ruthlessly silencing all those who disagree.

Even here in America our elections are supposed to turn on some single issue and our Presidents to follow some fixed program.

When President Roosevelt took office, it generally was assumed that he would adopt a cast-iron attitude in behalf of certain measures and that partisanship presently would reshape itself according to the division they suggested.

During the last eight weeks, the various schools of thought in this country have done their best to present President Roosevelt as the champion of their respective doctrines, but his common sense, and unpremeditatedness make it impossible.

President Roosevelt is ready to do what the situation calls for, but no more. He is not going to use it as an excuse for making dangerous experiments. He frankly admits that some of the measures which he advocates may fail, and that, if they do, he will be the first to succumb.

Such attitude represents no more than good sense, but how many leaders adopt it? How many have the courage to acknowledge their fallibility?

We are all human, but a little power and prestige make us forget it. The old illusion that kings can do no wrong lingers on.

It is not going too far to describe him as the most typical American who has occupied the White House in many years. That, more than anything else, explains the confidence he has developed among all classes of people.

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President Roosevelt stands for the kind of leadership that is essential to re-establish democracy, to overcome this adobe-pated notion that the twentieth century can't get along without dictators, tyrants, and despots to remind us that the principles for which humanity fought so many years and which eventually found expression in modern governments are not dead.

Civilization can not sacrifice the victories it has won, or throw away the safeguards of human liberty it has erected, because of this depression or even the holocaust out of which it grew.

A certain amount of readjustment is necessary, but that does not mean the destruction of a system which has done so much to promote happiness and prosperity.

President Roosevelt is bringing not only America, but Europe, back to a saner viewpoint, a realization of the dangerous tendencies which have been developed by the ruthless ambitions of vain doctrinaires who have not scrupled to capitalize human misery.

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THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES

Prime It!



The Message Center

Bell Methods

By Another Bell Employee.

I want to thank "Bell Employee" for his letter of May 12. I hope the company doesn't find out his identity—nor mine, for the company does a lot of "pussyfooting" on the employees. It has to do this to protect its methods toward its workers.