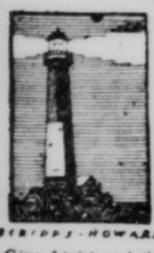


The Indianapolis Times

(A SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPER)
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Member of United Press,
Scripps-Howard Newspaper
Alliance, Newspaper Enterprise
Association, Newspaper
Information Service and Au-
dit Bureau of Circulations.

Published daily
except Sunday by The In-
dianapolis Times Publishing
Co., 214-220 West Maryland
street, Indianapolis, Ind.
Price: 25 cents; elsewhere, 3
cents; delivered by carrier, 12
cents a week. Mail sub-
scription rates: Indiana, 25
cents; outside, 50 cents.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 26, 1933.

GYPPING THE JOBLESS

A HEARING on the closing of two New York private employment agencies reveals human nature at about its lowest.

Witnesses told of having been required to advance fees for jobs, only to find those jobs were mythical. One elderly applicant for an elevator job said he paid \$8 in advance fees and then spent 95 cents in car fare to reach the place where no help had been requested.

An inspector testified that \$120 had been collected in initial fees, with the firm's full knowledge that the jobs advertised did not exist.

This depth of meanness, doubtless, can be plumbed in any American city. Wherever such private exploitation of men's desperation exists, there can be found the well-known evils of excessive fees, fee splitting, crooked collusion with employers, and other forms of knavery.

California has a free state service, yet in 1929 267 private fee agencies collected \$1,500,000 in fees from the jobless. Estimates of the annual tribute exacted by this country's fee agencies run as high as \$50,000,000.

Some day job placement will be a public monopoly, as it should be. The twenty-five states with public services recognize this. So does the Wagner act, that will provide a unified federal-state service through federal aid and federal standards.

But for some time to come fee agencies will persist. The supreme court does not permit states to wipe them out by statute, as Germany and some of the Canadian provinces have done. Pending the time when the public services will drive the fee agencies out of business, the states should regulate the privateers more effectively.

They should do this with the same type of aggressive efficiency that Wisconsin displays. And now that employers are hiring again, it is time to think of this sort of democracy.

We must tolerate the fee agencies a little longer; we need not tolerate their swindles.

PROBLEMS AFTER REPEAL

A COUPLE of years ago, repeal of the eighteenth amendment looked like a very remote possibility. A year ago the possibility, far less remote, still was only a possibility. Two months ago it began to change into a probability. Today it looks like a dead certainty.

The unanimity with which all sections of the country are indorsing repeal marks the culmination of one of the strangest and most surprising shifts of public sentiment in American history.

But the truly interesting and important part of it all is still to come.

A majority of Americans, evidently, have decided that federal prohibition is a mistake. No one knows, yet, what laws the several states will devise to control the liquor traffic once the amendment is repealed; and, for the moment, that question is unimportant.

Whether we are acting wisely or not on the amendment ultimately will depend less on the new laws we pass than on the mental attitude with which, individually and collectively, we face the problem of alcohol itself.

To boil it down to a colloquial phrase, it is the question whether we are going to have sense enough to take it or leave it alone.

A complex industrial civilization like ours can not operate on a tradition of hard drinking. Probably it was a dawning recognition of the fact that made us willing to experiment with federal prohibition thirteen years ago.

And now that we have learned the failure of that method of coping with the problem, we are going to have to find some new system of social control which will keep alcohol from becoming a menace.

Our best bet, oddly enough, well may be this dawning economic system by which the ordinary working man is going to get more leisure, better living conditions, and a higher wage.

Strong drink, traditionally, has been the wage slave's method of escape from unpleasant reality. Excessive drinking was not so much the cause of abject poverty as abject poverty was the cause of excessive drinking.

And from this it is clear that the success of the repeal experiment will depend largely on the success of the industrial "new deal."

Bringing the "submerged tenth" up into a freer and happier life is our best chance of making alcohol a useful servant and not a ruinous master.

OUT OF THE MINES!

COAL mine operators have agreed to employ no miners under 16. The United Mine Workers want the age limit set at 18. The national recovery administration will decide. For humane and economic reasons, it should insist that no boy under 18 be allowed to go down into the coal mines to work.

The mining of coal not only is a man's job. It is more hazardous than any other major American industry. Particularly it is hazardous to boys. The 1930 census revealed 15,904 operatives under 18 working in coal mines.

Pennsylvania recently made public a study of 1930 accident records of 5,300 boy miners. It found that one of every seven boys under 18 was injured in the course of a year. Of the injuries one in every five was severe.

Five were killed, eleven suffered permanent disability. In the bituminous mines, 188 boy workers in every 1,000 were injured, compared with 148 of all workers injured.

Accidents in mines are three times more frequent than in other industries, four and one-half times more severe. The laws of five states—New Mexico, Arizona, Texas, New J.

sey, and Wisconsin—prohibit employment of miners under 18.

For at least three good reasons, the government should adopt the rule of these states. First, with the high accident and fatality rate, the hiring of boy miners is too expensive an industrial risk. Second, with more than 200,000 adult miners permanently jobless even in good times, there is no excuse for hiring boys. Last, every boy has the right to a youth of sunshiny education, recreation, and normal living.

Men, perhaps, must risk life and limb to dig coal. But not boys.

WILL DEMOCRACY COME THROUGH?

IT has been held of late rather generally that democracy can not meet the heavy demands of the critical period in which we live. It is more or less taken for granted by a large group of writers that either Fascism or Communism must step to save the day. In either case a more or less irresponsible dictatorship occupies the pilot house of the ship of state.

Certain it is that democracy will be put to the final test in the next few months, and that this test will be made primarily in the United States. It is quite apparent that the older form of democracy—that which represented essentially a transfer of the colonial town-meeting to a national scope—is outmoded hopelessly.

Government by a debating society can not deal with the complex and difficult issues of our dynamic age. Debate and discussion constitute valuable contributions to public life, but the place for them is primarily the press and the forum.

It should be remembered, however, that democracy is not necessarily limited to ideals and practices of the Jacksonian era. It permits extensive stiffening up of executive resolution and leadership. It can make possible the dominion of specialized experts in formulating and administering policies.

So long as the machinery ultimately rests upon majority rule, popular sovereignty, and the consent of the governed, it remains democracy, no matter if a particular administrative agent rules with as much decisiveness as a Mussolini.

There has been too much of a tendency to identify democracy with the old American system of government. The Constitution of the United States has no monopoly on democratic forms or practices. We might have an end of the conventional type of congressional government without terminating democracy.

As for the supreme court, its assertion of the right of judicial review always has been an anti-democratic usurpation. So long as we possess an elective ruler governing by popular mandate, we have the underlying essentials of democracy.

Indeed, we probably have the only form of democracy which has any chance of persisting in the twentieth century.

To date, the new democracy, under Franklin D. Roosevelt, need not be ashamed when hung up in the light against the background of Italy, Russia, or Germany. Neither the Bolsheviks, Mussolini, nor Hitler accomplished any fraction of the achievements of Roosevelt in the first three months of their rule.

It is easy enough to estimate a great transition in historical retrospect; it is much more difficult to appreciate and appraise it when we are passing through it.

President Roosevelt took over a country in which the government was the willing servant of big business, even when the latter had been discredited by three and one-half years of depression. Mr. Hoover remained putty in its hands to the end.

Our economy was planless and chaotic. The predatory pirates of speculative finance enjoyed their hegemony over American economic life, undaunted and unchallenged. The welfare and purchasing power of the masses were subordinated to the profit motive.

Organized labor was suppressed hopelessly. Wages had been slashed ruthlessly, farmers deflated and enslaved and fifteen million were unemployed. Rugged individualism and the business and financial lobby still dominated the United States.

Three months later the government of the United States is the dictator over American industry and finance. Planning of our economy has been made obligatory by the most sweeping legislation in our history. The financial pirates have been exposed and cowed, even if much more needs to be done to put them on permanent leash.

The national recovery act and the farm bill are designed to provide decent living conditions for the masses. Collective bargaining and organized labor are not only permitted, but made mandatory. Decent wages are supported by the government flat.

It is no exaggeration to hold that the transition from the Hoover to the Roosevelt regimes represents a more sweeping and fundamental change than that from the government under the articles of confederation to that under the Constitution.

The new regime after 1789 represented mainly a political transformation. The Roosevelt regime—if it actually merits that designation after the test of experience—will constitute an alteration of the very fundamentals of our economic system.

Indeed, to date, there has been nothing like it in modern history. More has been accomplished than in the twenty years of Bismarck's chancellorship or in the ten years of the British labor party after 1905.

Yet, it is well to remember that up to now it is all a paper victory. The real test lies ahead. And that test will involve not only the soundness of the policies of Mr. Roosevelt and his brain trust, but the destinies of democracy.

If the latter fails in the United States today, it never is likely to get another trial on any significant scale.

EVEN THE MAJOR

GENERAL, when we think of Major A. V. Dalrymple, the new national prohibition director, we think of the story of the parrot which had just learned to say "Sis 'em," and was trying out the new vocabulary on the dog. As the last of Polly's green tail feathers were going into Rover's mouth she was heard to mutter: "Polly, you talk too much."

But the major's comment on the recent recall elections has significance:

"Prohibition is on the skids. We can't escape it, and we might as well not care ourselves."

When the nation's chief dry enforcement official turns wet, who then will wash the river Rhine?

THE INDIANAPOLIS TIMES

AN AMBITION REALIZED

IT is hard not to feel a bit of sneaking sympathy for that 17-year-old boy in Milford, Conn., who stole a railway locomotive the other day and set out to go to the Century of Progress exposition in Chicago.

Of course, the lad didn't get there. Not being used to engines, he slammed his into a string of box cars before he had gone more than a mile or two, causing \$10,000 damage and winning for himself a jail sentence of thirty days and a \$50 fine.

But it's so easy to understand how he felt. A lot of us used to feel that life's greatest moment would come if only we could sit just once, at the throttle of a locomotive.

This lad, who actually put his desire into practice, at least had some get-up-and-go about him.

Given the proper sort of guidance, he ought to get somewhere, some day—and that "somewhere" won't be in a cell in jail, either.

OUR DANGEROUS KITCHENS

THE kitchen doesn't ordinarily seem like a dangerous place—except, perhaps, when a truly inexpert cook starts concocting indigestible dishes for defenseless diners.

But figures released by the National Safety Council show that a huge number of fatal accidents take place in American kitchens every year.

The highway, of course, is the scene of more fatal accidents than any other spot. But there were 28,000 deaths last year from accidents which took place in the home, and fully 34 per cent of these occurred in kitchens.

Falls and scalds seem to be the most prolific sources of home accidents. And while it is a bit difficult to see just how a safety code can be devised and enforced for the home, a little care and forethought in the midst of the daily round of activities ought to save a good many lives each year.

SUPPRESS CRIME LEGALLY

THE breath-taking power asked by Massachusetts' Attorney-General Warner of the state legislature reveals a hysteria of the type that often follows upon such revolting crimes as the recent kidnapings.

This law officer wants to mobilize groups of citizens into anti-crime agencies and empower them to search homes and automobiles, to arrest with or without warrants, to carry on other high-handed acts in the law's name.

Massachusetts legislators should read their own state's history to remind themselves that it was just such invasions of the rights of person and property that set off the spark of the American Revolution.

The people today will submit to such tyrannous practices in the name of law enforcement no more readily than did their forefathers in resisting King George's methods.

Congress and the legislatures should arm law officers with every reasonable weapon with which to detect, arrest, and punish racketeers, kidnappers, and other public enemies in high and low places.

But lawless law enforcement is self-defeating. It does not prevent crime; it breeds crime.

It's already clear who will be the "Forgotten man" in 1934—none other than the federal prohibition agent.

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The average New York voter has been educated to believe that if he stays hitched he can depend on favors and protection. District leaders are expected to come across. Coming across includes not only getting people on the pay roll and keeping them there, but seeing that they are not dealt with too roughly when they get into trouble.

It also includes a judicious distribution of contracts and what, for want of a better word, is called honest graft. The people of New York are not blind to the dangers of such situations, but have consoled themselves with the thought that it represents less inconvenience and less cost than would a change.

It stands for training and efficiency and that any reform administration would lose more through incompetence than Tammany Hall takes for gravy. The business slump gradually is changing their viewpoint, however, because it shows up the basic weakness.

Tammany all could not economize if it wanted to, because its political strength is a bought and paid for commodity. The very fact that it had trained its supporters to expect something means that it must go on giving them something.

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