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A DOUBTFUL CURE

A COMPLETE solution for the kidnapping racket can be designed, "on paper," by penalizing those who pay rewards to kidnapers. Such a solution accords perfectly with the theory that if you take the profit out of crime there will be no crime.

But no law ever has been strong enough to go against human nature.

That penalizing the reward-payer does go against human nature is our fear in connection with the recommendation made by the Governor of New York and others.

We only have to recall the recent waves of public emotion which have risen instinctively in behalf of the father and the mother of kidnaped child or the wife of a kidnaped husband to give us pause on the question of whether a jury would ever convict under a statute penalizing those who pay the reward.

Failure of such a statute to stand up—widespread refusal of juries to convict—would add one more chapter to the already long story of laws that are unenforceable.

To strengthen the law against the kidnapers himself, to create a "Scotland Yard," to set up any super-intelligence service, no matter what the cost, in order to stamp out this most vicious and heartrending of all rackets—yes.

But to prosecute the relative who has gone through the torture and who has responded as you and I would respond, might have the effect of not retarding and stamping out the crime, but of demonstrating to the racketeers themselves that one more law has merely proved its impotency.

BETTER BUSINESS CHART

THE President has created a new federal statistical agency. A statistical chart is a dry affair. So is a compass or a fever thermometer. But life sometimes depends on them. Just as an inaccurate fever chart may cost a patient's life, so an unreliable economic chart may close banks, bankrupt businesses and throw workers on the streets to starve.

Indeed, that is more or less what happened for two years, when officials of the Hoover administration were pulling figures out of their hats to prove that prosperity was just around the corner.

Despite our boasted American business efficiency, it is a little known fact that we have no complete and authoritative government statistics on business and labor conditions. On a great many questions where precise statistics are essential, we have been operating by guesswork, or by misleading generalizations on inadequate figures.

Therefore the Hoover administration was not altogether to blame for its wish-fulfillment figures—the charts were so incomplete often they could be read either way.

With the advent of the Roosevelt administration and the recognized need for definite economic planning on a national scale, the old hit-or-miss government statistics were more inadequate than ever.

The first reform was achieved when Secretary Frances Perkins named Dr. Isidor Lubin, an outstanding expert, to head and reorganize the bureau of labor statistics. Meanwhile, other cabinet officers were improving their statistical organization, and many of the emergency bodies, such as the agricultural adjustment agency and the industrial recovery administration, were setting up new chart agencies.

That is the purpose of the new central statistical board. On that board it is said there will be such men as Dr. Lubin for labor, Dr. Mordecai Ezekiel for agriculture and Dr. Winfield Rieffel for the federal reserve. Given a free hand they will gather statistics that can be trusted.

CURING SPECULATION

THE house-cleaning rules issued by the New York Stock Exchange probably are the wisest move ever made by Wall Street. The professed object of the new rules is to curb speculation. To that end margin requirements are increased and weekly reports to the exchange committee are required on pool and syndicate operations.

Whether these rules will prove adequate remains to be seen. Obviously the new system will not even have a chance of success unless the exchange members co-operate completely and in good faith.

There are many who believe that half-way measures are not enough to prevent the worst speculative evils. Especially there is a demand in some responsible quarters for enforced publicity on pool operations as the surest way to produce results.

It is an open secret that the Roosevelt administration is studying the problem in preparation for rigid regulation of the Stock Exchange if that expedient becomes necessary. The administration would much prefer, it is said, for the Stock Exchange to regulate itself, provided voluntary action gets under way quickly.

Doubtless the knowledge that effective voluntary regulation is the only alternative to a strict government licensing system has encouraged the board of governors of the Stock Exchange to hasten the new rules.

In the midst of the crucial national recovery plan, neither the administration nor the nation can be indifferent to the effects of unrestrained stock market speculation. If the effect were merely to wipe out a few gamblers the government would not be concerned.

But, unfortunately, stock quotations, no matter how inaccurate they may be, in reflecting actual business conditions, are

powerful influence on the national psychology. An artificially high market followed by an inevitable gambling collapse could play havoc with industrial recovery, which is being purchased by the co-operation and temporary sacrifices of the legitimate industries of the country.

The administration owes it to the industrial recovery plan—and to the 125,000,000 Americans who are trying as employers, workers and consumers to make the recovery plan a success—to protect recovery from the gambling sharks. There is every reason to believe that the President will act on this responsibility if necessary. But the job can be done better and quicker by the New York Stock Exchange itself if, under the stimulus of a great emergency, it has the capacity for self-reform.

SCHOOL PUPILS AND WAR

IT is not surprising that school children who were examined in a survey by two professors of Columbia university, should have revealed a tendency to glorify everything connected with war. Martial things—roll of drums, blare of trumpets, men in uniform, and all the fanfare and trumpery of war—have a well nigh irresistible appeal to young minds, and to many old ones.

School children in the very nature of things can have little appreciation of the horrors and cruelty of war; they see only its glories. Their text book heroes are great soldiers, and they learn that the destinies of their own country have revolved about war. Was not America born in blood? Was not Lincoln a hero to be emulated, even though he led a nation in war?

Nor is there any wonder that children have little grasp of the machinery of peace. Even adults might be found woefully lacking in knowledge of the Kellogg pact, the World court, the League of Nations, and the intricacies surrounding these agencies.

But while the professors' survey reveals little that is surprising, it does call attention to the need for bringing forcibly home to future citizens the fact that war is a national catastrophe and that as such it is to be avoided if that is possible; and that good has seldom come from any war. Probably the greatest need is to destroy the belief that war is inevitable, unquestioning acceptance of which is perhaps the chief reason that peace measures have been so ineffectual.

World armaments are far larger now than they were in 1914, and the world now as then is filled with international jealousies and suspicions, and rumors of war. Progress toward universal peace has been disappointingly slow and has had many setbacks. Peace machinery is imperfect and not very effective.

These facts, however, only make it more desirable to put forth every effort to avoid a new war, which would be infinitely more terrible than the last, and which many world leaders believe would bring the destruction of civilization.

It is not necessary to breed a nation of milksoop pacifists. An understanding of what war really is, how wars are made, and what is being done to minimize the chances for war, can be combined with a healthy patriotism.

It has been estimated that the number of homeless women adrift in the United States has reached a total of 250,000. Many of them have taken to the open road in their search for work.

We have been accustomed in the past to large numbers of unemployed and wandering men; transient labor has in fact been useful in many ways. But the addition of women to the ranks of this unfortunate army constitutes a new and disturbing problem in our social readjustment.

The Welfare council of New York reports that 15 per cent fewer men sought shelter in June than in May, while the number of women was 12 per cent greater.

The increase in the number of destitute women was attributed to the fact that each day additional women and girls are reaching the end of their resources and are obliged to appeal to charity. And they are not the type regarded as "derelicts," but are former white collar workers, unskilled for the most part, but heretofore self-supporting.

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