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EXIT THE EYE GOUGERS

GENERAL JOHNSON'S explanation of the NIRA as the Marquis of Queensbury rules of the business struggle is the best we have seen yet. The kind of freedom America enjoyed in the past was of the ear-biting, blow-below-the-belt variety. That was fine for the plug-uglies. But it was not the kind of freedom of much value to the great majority who wanted to fight fair.

There were no rules to the game. Therefore, victory usually went to the most ruthless and unscrupulous. It was about as civilized as a tooth and claw encounter of our jungle ancestors.

Purpose of the NIRA and other New Deal recovery legislation is to trade the insecurity and chaos of the old dog-eat-dog business turmoil for the security and order which comes with public acceptance of fair rules of competition.

That, as General Johnson pointed out in his Boston address, is the only way to protect the individual liberty and prosperity of the honest business men and of the workers, farmers, and consumers who constitute the American masses.

According to the colorful but accurate Johnson analogy:

"In the days when your fathers were building these cradles of (political) liberty that have become our shrines, the many art of boxing was not unknown in the Anglo-Saxon world. But it was different.

"It was O. K. in those days to insert the ball of your thumb in your opponent's eye socket and gently gouge his eyeball out, or, if the whim seized you and opportunity offered, you could put the point of your knee in his groin and rupture him. Now we have changed all that—in boxing.

"In business we still were in the eye-gouging era until Franklin Roosevelt began to revise the rules. Throughout our industry—in greater or less degree, the man who wants to fight fair—to practice his rugged individualism, but to practice it above the belt—that man always has been at the mercy of every economic eye-gouger who chose to gouge. It is a cause of depression and an obstacle to recovery and there is no sense in it."

But under the NIRA, industry, sitting down with representatives of labor and consumers, draws up rules for the game. Then—

"The government says what it is willing to endorse and support, and the result is a code of fair competition—a sort of Marquis of Queensbury engagement to keep the competitive struggle clean and leave as little human wreckage as possible in its wake."

That is what the Blue Eagle stands for—a bird to be proud of.

A SLOW JOB

NOTHING is more difficult or futile than efforts to lay down a general rule for opening closed banks. A maximum of intelligence and care is required, and that means separate judgment for each case.

But, since there is growing pressure from both political and business sources aimed at forcing the government to speed the process of reopening banks, it probably is a safe generalization to say that in this matter especially haste means waste.

It is all very well to emphasize that frozen assets hold up business revival.

But one thing the country can not stand is another deflation of confidence. All the new faith and the new emergency recovery machinery built up by the Roosevelt administration could be swept away in short order by another flood of bank failures. Therefore, it is important that the banks being opened do not close again.

The administration has been operating with this basic factor in mind. We believe that the administration should be supported in its policy of making sure that banks are not opened until they are sound enough to stay open.

FORD AND THE NIRA

SOME kind of showdown between Henry Ford and NIRA is due by Sept. 5. Meanwhile, everybody is speculating about the significance of Ford's apparent reluctance to sign the automobile code and associate himself under it with his competitors, from whom he has always held aloof.

It may be that Ford just is exercising his genius for getting himself and his automobile talked about.

This appears to be likely, in view of the fact that there is not much difference between the terms at which Ford employs work and the terms laid down for employers in the code.

It long has been his policy to delay important announcements concerning his business until his competitors have all trotted out their stuff. Perhaps the present argument is just a build-up for the announcement of what Ford intends to do under NIRA.

If he doesn't sign, of course, the next move will be up to President Roosevelt and his Blue Eagle chief, General Hugh S. Johnson. If the contingency arises, there is no doubt they will move.

RELIGION AND THE NEW DEAL

THE question often is raised as to what the church can do in the present social crisis. The answer would seem to be that the church has an ample field for productive activity if it will enlist in the struggle for social justice, industrial decency, and world peace.

It can, with great propriety and helpfulness, get behind the New Deal and oppose the forces of corporate greed.

In two articles in The World Tomorrow, Dean Luccock of the Yale divinity school, and Rabbi Edward L. Israel of Baltimore defend the place of religion in advancing social radicalism. Dean Luccock concedes that in the

past religion has been an aid to conservatism rather than to social progress:

"Much organized religion has been and is a reflection of the codes and morals of the privileged groups who make up its adherents. The church frequently has been conformed to this world rather than acted as a transforming agent."

Dean Luccock finds four contributions which religion may make to social radicalism. It supplies zeal and energy through the conviction that the individual is acting in rapport with cosmic causes. It inspires sympathy for human suffering. It produces social rebels and reforming prophets. It supplies standards by which to judge greed, social evils and economic oppression.

Rabbi Israel believes that he can detect signs of increasing radicalism in religion. The first great movements against the evils of early capitalism following the industrial revolution were carried out by secular agencies, often in the face of clerical opposition.

Beginning, however, with the work of Maurice and Kingsley and the encyclicals of Pope Leo XIII, the church has come to reckon with the sufferings of those who have been sacrificed on the altar of riches and cupidity. While all Catholicism can not be judged by the fearless polemics of Father Coughlin and Father Cox, still Catholicism frequently has come out against the gross materialism of American capitalism.

In Father Ryan it has an unsurpassed crusader for social justice. Among the Protestants the pioneering work of Walter Rauschenbush has borne fruit in the labors of Dr. Harry F. Ward, Bishop Francis J. McConnell, and others, and in the striking record of the Interchurch World Movement on the steel strike of 1919.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis also has taken an aggressive stand for a revision of the capitalistic order.

The trend right now in the church seems to be in the direction of greater liberalism. It was the church report on Centralia, Wash., which finally secured some semblance of delayed justice in that lamentable situation.

It was a band of eminent churchmen who defied the threats of Kentucky coal operators and sheriffs, visited the mining areas there and exposed the atrocious conditions. Church bodies and their affiliates issue more devastating attacks upon unrestrained capitalism than emerge from any secular source save the Socialist and Communist parties.

There is one major limitation on religious radicalism. The water of supernatural theology still appears to be thicker than the blood of a common devotion to social justice and human betterment.

This not only prevents modernist churchmen from co-operating with benevolent agnostics like Clarence Darrow, but even leads them to shy off from such advanced modernists as the humanists.

We never shall have any radical religion worth the name so long as it remains a closed shop, limited to devotees of supernaturalism.

IDLE HANDS

THE New Deal fight against unemployment is more than a fight against hunger, disease, and want. It is a fight to save a whole generation of young people denied opportunity to grow into useful citizens.

A recent survey of unemployment in New York City disclosed that the percentage of idleness is higher among wage earners under 20 than among any other class. With wages battered down to incredible levels, employers have chosen to hire adults rather than young people.

Boys and girls under 20 have been left with nothing to do, not even with schools to attend during the time of enforced idleness.

And the old copy book maxim about idle hands is as true as ever was.

In a nation where industry always has been acclaimed as a major virtue, where the climb to financial success has been taught youth as its principal aspiration, where marriage and home-building must wait on a considerable degree of success in getting and holding a job, the situation of youth denied the right to work is dangerous indeed. Morale and character may be crippled permanently.

Youth, not very surprisingly, has been turning to crime. And those who resist this temptation are forming habits of defeat that unfit them for future success.

NRA has attacked the problem of child labor. The problem of child idleness remains.

AT LAST!

NOW that the matter has been suggested, it seems odd that Huey P. Long has got by for such a long time with so few scars and scratches.

For practically every minute during the last fifteen or twenty years he has been living up to the slogan of "Let the fur fly." He has slung enough mud to fill a dozen Mississippi deltas. He has belittled "snake" at this man, "burglar" at that one, thumbed his nose with his right hand and his left.

The fact that he always stood behind his constitutional immunity as an officeholder does not lessen the surprise of it. He is an incredible tribute to the peaceableness of his associates.

The senator has explained that he was "ganged." In other days men used to come back with such imprints and tell about having amnesia.

But the senator needs no explanation for so natural an occurrence. In a career such as his a few shiners are only a mild vocational hazard. Senator Long has been exceptionally lucky.

JUGGLING WITH WORDS

IT is hard to escape the feeling that some one has been playing with words in connection with the automobile industry's new code.

The industrial recovery act states flatly that no man may be denied employment on account of his union affiliations, if any, and that all employees shall be perfectly free to organize as they see fit.

The code says that employers may hire and fire workers as they please without regard to their union connections, if any.

To any ordinary citizen, these contrasting sections seem to mean two entirely different things, and it is very hard to see how both of them can be followed strictly.

Has some one been juggling words to save somebody's face?

THE COAL CODE

THE bituminous coal industry has tried anarchy and failed. Now it is back to order and peace. If the recovery act had accomplished nothing more than this, it would have been very much worth while.

The new agreement being written under the watchful eye of the Blue Eagle promises better days for the coal miner than he ever has known. But this is not all. It promises stability and security for mine owners such as they never have enjoyed in the era of cut-throat competition.

In fact, mine owners probably will gain more immediate benefits from general recognition of the United Mine Workers of America even than workers. Companies have been mining coal at a loss for years, forced to all sorts of tricks and devices to cut their losses, constantly undercut by development of new fields with cheaper and cheaper labor, markets constantly lost by freight differentials, so that the whole enterprise seemed hopeless.

Under the new agreement, labor costs will be the same in various regions, and calculable in all. With the possibility of disaffected labor cut to a minimum, the prospects for profits rise proportionately.

On the other hand, organized labor stands to gain far more than wage and hour scales in the new coal code and the right to belong to the union of its choice.

Labor has suffered from the sickness of the industry. Industry can prosper only when its workers prosper, too, and when they are content in the exercise of a measure of self-government.

Incidentally, the United Mine Workers' union should remember that self-government also involves respect for the rights of the minority in the so-called progressive unions.

Economic democracy is as important today as political democracy. There were learned men, even at the time the Constitution of the United States was written, who believed that political democracy could mean only the downfall of this government.

There are men today who look with equal fear and distaste upon the small measure of economic democracy which unionism represents. Yet a trial of the last will convince, as the trial of the first has done, of its virtues.

The recovery administration, the coal operators, and the United Mine Workers are all to be congratulated, as is the country in which this latest stride toward industrial democracy has taken place.

They're building the world's largest distillery out Peoria-way. In spite of that, we suppose the old-fashioned man who used to think he could drink it all, still will think so.

Trying to prosecute nudists in Philadelphia, says a news item. Probably be a flop. Awful hard to get anything on 'em.

Lots of girls get a run for their money when they buy stockings.

Probably the punch that landed on the brow of the Louisiana kingfish was just a hook.

Lots of fun figuring out all the other things NRA stands for. But so far we give the prize to "Nominates Roosevelt Again," or "Neither Roosevelt Administration."

Now that the auto code has been adopted, we hope the industry has been equipped completely with wizard control.

Wonder if all those young hogs the government is buying up are destined for the pork barrel.

M. E. Tracy Says:

NEW YORK real estate men complain that while the government pays farmers to destroy crops, it furnishes money to finance new apartment houses. They say that there is a surplus of apartments in the greater city and that the construction of new ones only makes conditions worse for landlords.

They say that good apartment houses can be bought at a less price per room than the new ones will cost.

Without pausing to examine this contention in detail, or attempting to pass on its accuracy as to facts, one must admit that it shows up the theory of farm relief in an unfavorable light.

If a temporary surplus justifies curtailed production in one line, why not in another?

The government now is paying hundreds of millions of dollars to plow up crops or reduce acreage. Through imposition of process taxes, the government is collecting this money from the public. These process taxes, of course, will be reflected in higher prices.

As a matter of bookkeeping, the government will get its money back. As a matter of actual fact, the people who pay more for bread, wearing apparel, and other commodities will not.

This is the first time that the government of the United States has subsidized destruction, and it represents a reversal of the theory of progress and prosperity which the American people have followed thus far.

If the time has come to handle our surplus crops by taxing the people, wouldn't it be more sensible to distribute that surplus where it is needed?

There are millions of people, not only in this country, but throughout the world, who would not be injured by a little more bread and clothing. It would not cost us one cent more to give them the extra wheat and cotton than to destroy it, but it might help to stimulate trade and promote consumption for the future.

We have a surplus of silver as well as a surplus of farm products. It has been suggested that the government purchase that surplus by the issuance of paper money and loan it to certain countries, with the understanding that they use it to buy foodstuffs which we well can afford to spare and of which they are in serious need.

During the war we found it feasible to loan the allies billions of dollars with which to buy munitions. Why is it not just as feasible to loan countries a vastly lesser amount with which to buy food for recovery? Even if we lost the money, we would be no worse off.

GIVING wheat and cotton to people who need it, but who can not afford to buy it, would have the same effect on domestic markets as its destruction, and would cost no more, but it would have a far better effect on foreign markets by putting the breath of life into human beings who now are discouraged with the struggle for a bare existence.

From a human standpoint, we have no right to assume that there is overproduction of wheat and cotton as long as millions of people are going cold and hungry.

From an economic standpoint, it is not sound thinking to pay for destruction of food when arrangements could be made to distribute it among people in want at no greater cost, and particularly when those arrangements might help to stimulate business and increase consumption on a widespread scale.

The Village Reprobate

