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THOSE EXTRA HYDRANTS

THE best laugh of the week is on the local real estate men. They have been waging a noisy battle for reduction of the city budget without, however, making any specific suggestions. They have preferred to cry for the enforcement of the \$1.50 tax law. The city administration and the county adjustment board replied with more oratory. The budget was not cut.

Now an interesting fact has appeared from this case of the winds. It was dragged into the light by Howard S. Morse, water company manager. He pointed out that one reason the city's public utility bills are so high is because in recent years real estate interests have forced the laying of unnecessary water mains and the installation of useless hydrants.

The purpose, of course, was to make it possible for realtors to sell lots in speculative "improvements." One of these "improvements" is laid with water mains and studded with hydrants for the servicing of two houses! No doubt it has plenty of street lights, too.

Mr. Morse says the water company protested against all this useless piping and the facts bear him out. The real estate interests were strong enough to over-ride him. There is no evidence that Mayor Reginald Sullivan's predecessors did anything to protect the taxpayers. They apparently approved the scheme and left the bill to the Sullivan administration.

This is merely a miniature of the tax situation in the country at large. Selfish business interests have succeeded in getting enormous subsidies from local, state and national governments. These same interests are now roaring for tax reduction. Each one wants the other fellow's subsidy reduced, but squeals like a pig under a gate when his own ox is gored.

Did we say the laugh was on the real estate men? Perhaps it is at the moment, but it is really on the taxpayer. In fact, it is perpetually on that harassed individual.

Unless the state tax board reduces the city budget Mr. Taxpayer may have the last laugh because he already has demonstrated his inability to pay his taxes. And you can't run a city, a political machine or have expensive real estate improvements without taxes.

PLAIN FACTS

A GOOD many people have toyed lately with the idea that the news-hungry citizen ought to be able to sit at home in his arm chair and have the news of the day wafted to his receptive ears from the loud speaker of his radio.

In theory, it's not a bad idea. In practice, it seems to be a completely nonexplosive dud.

Not long ago a gang of convicts escaped from the Indiana state prison.

An Indiana radio station immediately set to work to broadcast the story of the man hunt.

The man hunt wasn't having a great deal of luck right at the moment, and some radio decided that the listeners-in deserved more excitement than the plain facts were likely to provide. So that part of the public which tried to get its news out of the loud speaker began to hear a wild and woolly tale of a running gun battle, with a juicy slice of trumped-up melodrama substituted for facts.

As a result, the listeners-in were hoaxed and the enforcement officers who were trying to catch the convicts found the work seriously hampered.

In a protest to the federal radio commission, Captain Matt Leach of the Indiana state police asserted:

"This broadcast seriously interfered with the work of the sixty-five state police under my command and a considerable number of other enforcement officers. . . . We wasted several hours of precious time. . . . Telephone wires of the state police at their barracks in Chesterton, Ind., were tied up for several hours by persons who apparently had heard the broadcast and were calling for information."

So the net result of all this was that the attempt to catch the convicts was hampered, some scores of citizens were frightened badly—and nobody knew just what was happening until the daily papers came around with the real facts in the case.

This is just the sort of thing that has happened over and over again in radio news broadcasts. The Los Angeles earthquake some time ago took on the proportions of one of the great disasters of all time—until the news papers come out with the truth.

Wild-eyed announcers have told us of frenzied and sensational prize fights—which next day turned out to be affairs so spiritless and slow that the participants were almost tossed out of the ring for failing to try. The Indiana man hunt was a desperate gun battle—until the newspaper reporters turned in their reports.

So it goes. The loud speaker may be a fine medium for hearing feminine-voiced tenors and third-rate vaudeville. For accounts of the day's news, it seems to be a good deal less than reliable.

ALUMINUM TRUST VS. NRA

THE NRA aluminum code has a tendency to slip into the background because the group opposing it is exceedingly small. It should not be allowed to do so. It presents an issue which is vital to the recovery program and the country's economic life.

The Aluminum Company of America is the world's outstanding example of a monopoly. It is the sole producer of virgin aluminum in the western hemisphere, and it owns such a large interest in European producing companies that it is able to control prices on that continent as well as on this. In addition to

producing aluminum, it fabricates aluminum products. In this field independent companies are trying to compete, though badly handicapped by having to buy their materials from the producing monopoly and having to pay more for them than the production units of the monopoly.

The Aluminum Company of America is trying to perpetuate this condition through the code it has offered the NRA. The independents are protesting and asking either a separate code for fabrication, apart from production of aluminum, or else a safeguard in the form of requirement that the Aluminum Company, in estimating its cost of manufacture, include as an item whatever price it charges for the same materials.

No code should be approved for aluminum without this provision. For years the Aluminum Company has been able to evade the consent decree entered to restrain it, by various bookkeeping devices. A requirement as plain and unequivocal as this is necessary unless every purchaser of aluminum household utensils and important industrial materials is to pay a monopoly price dictated by Andrew W. Mellon's business leviathan.

The recovery act contains a plain injunction against monopoly or monopolistic practice. If the NRA can not recognize monopoly when it comes face to face with the biggest, most obvious combination of all, whose existence is no longer disputed even by its owners; if NRA shows itself impotent in conflict with this antagonist, then we shall have reason to fear growing monopolistic power in other industries.

Wages as well as prices are an issue, and recent aluminum code hearings offered a shocking example of the overbearing tyranny of a powerful monopoly on this question. The Aluminum Company demanded the right to pay wages far below even the minimum set in the blue eagle agreement. It did this in the face of declaration by the independents that they can afford to pay just twice the monopoly's proposed wage rate if they can get aluminum at an equal cost.

If the Aluminum Company should grant every concession asked by the independents it still could consider itself unusually and unduly lucky that it has not been dissolved as a monopoly.

IS NEW DEAL SOCIALISM?

ONE hears many positive declarations now

days that the new deal is easing the United States into a socialistic regime. Such claims come from two widely opposed camps of commentators. On the one hand, we have the soun apostles of "rugged individualism" who have learned nothing from either history or the experience of the last four years.

They charge in surly tones that the NRA is nothing short of "rank socialism." In this fashion they hope to discredit and wreck the Roosevelt

administration.

On the other side, we find radicals, especially foreign Socialists, who claim to see in the new deal the most extensive adoption of socialism in human history outside of Russia. With the growth of Fascism abroad, socialism has had rather slim pickings during the last few years. Hence, there is an eagerness to seize upon any seeming proof of its renascence in our day.

Few sensible persons would be distressed greatly if the new deal were actually socialistic in character, provided it works well and delivers us from the Hooverian brand of "permanent prosperity." Since, however, the socialistic bogey is raised chiefly by those eager to sabotage the new deal, it is worth while to examine the validity of such charges and epithets.

Without in any way holding to any orthodox or Marxian definition of socialism, we may note with reason and moderation the traits of any truly socialistic regime and see how far the new deal corresponds to such characteristics.

A socialistic regime would be one controlled by the masses of mankind—laborers, the white collar proletariat and the farmers. It would aim very decisively at the end of the capitalistic system of profits, private property and price values. Goods would be produced for human service rather than private profits. The state would own all the major public utilities, manufacturing establishments, oil wells, mines and the like.

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of "socialism" realize, however, that if they wreck Mr. Roosevelt's effort to save capitalism we shall before too long have socialism good and plenty. Let them save their shouts of "wolf, wolf," until that day.

THE STEEL-COAL AGREEMENT

STEEL companies operating so-called captive mines have notified the President that they will recognize the union check-off system of dues payment as requested by him. The companies have been criticized sharply—and properly, we think—for their delay which held up the recovery program. But now that they have accepted, they should be given full credit for putting the new deal and the national welfare above their personal opinions in this dispute.

The only qualification in their letter of acceptance is that "all of our employees shall be free to join or not to join any union as they please." In reply, the President notes that it is not his understanding that this or any other company qualification is intended to modify the law or statutory administrative

discretion.

The qualification appears, on the contrary,

to be both within the letter and the spirit of the law and within the rights of the companies.

Of course the test will be whether, on this

basis, the company and union representatives now trying to negotiate a contract, are able to reach a just agreement.

A FORWARD STEP

THE American Federation of Labor's action in taking into its fold the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' union signifies more than a patching of a twenty-year-old dispute between two union groups. It means a strengthening of the American labor movement in numbers, in power and in vitality.

Amalgamated's membership totals about 125,000. Its achievements have been larger.

It had, until the depression, practically wiped out sweatshops in one of the country's most competitive industries. It owns and runs two banks, model apartment houses for 1,200 workers' families, co-operatives for insurance against sickness and unemployment.

Under its president, Sidney Hillman, the Amalgamated has pioneered in a new labor statesmanship that is the central idea of the National Recovery Administration.

THE PRESIDENTIAL VOTE

THE famous lame duck amendment to the

Constitution takes effect this fall—and a very good amendment it is, too. Now it is reported that certain statesmen, including Senator Norris, who sponsored this amendment, are preparing to submit another one which would abolish the electoral college and substitute a fairer method of counting electoral votes in a presidential election.

At present, if a candidate gets a majority of the popular vote in any state, he gets all that state's electoral votes. Under the proposed amendment, he would get a percentage of them equal to his percentage of the popular vote. As a sample: In 1928 Mr. Hoover carried New York by a narrow margin over Mr. Smith and got all New York's 45 electoral votes; under the new system, he would have got 23 and Mr. Smith 22.

That this would make the electoral vote a much closer reflection of the popular will is indisputable. There is only one question that occurs to us: Why not, while we're about it, abolish the electoral-vote business entirely and make the presidential election a straight-out matter of popular votes?

Man in Bloomsburg, Pa., had a piece of his shin bone grafted on his spine, and now will be able to tell us whether barking our shins is worse than being kicked in the back.

We wouldn't mind it at all, if the politicians only would live within our income.

M.E. Tracy Says:

JOSEPH V. M'KEE'S eleventh-hour plunge into the New York mayoralty race has upset most everybody's calculations, chiefly because of his supposed backing by the Roosevelt administration.

While President Roosevelt has said nothing to indicate that he wants Mr. M'Kee elected, Postmaster-General Farley has done more than enough to make many people think so.

Hearst's New York American expresses the view of pro-Roosevelt leaders when it thanks Mr. Farley "for saving the situation in New York city for the Democratic party and for the new deal."

The citizenship was getting along quite well before Mr. Farley intervened, but the Democratic party was not. The Democratic party stood to lose not only the forthcoming election, but as far as the new deal is concerned.

This assumption is borne out by the fact that about all the leaders, captains and even office holders who can break away, are deserting Tammany and climbing aboard the M'Kee bandwagon.

Such would be the outstanding traits of even a moderate socialistic commonwealth—one which might fall far short of the rigorous communism aimed at in Russia. How does the new deal measure up to such requirements?

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