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TAX STRIP MINING

INDIANA is sustaining heavy losses in tax revenue because of strip mining. The gigantic steam shovels of such miners are eating away huge sums which should be applied either for public improvements or for the reduction of the general tax burden.

The situation is peculiar. If a man builds a factory and then expands it for greater profit a certain proportion of that profit reverts to the state. His tax assessments increase because he has improved his plant.

Precisely the reverse is true of the strip miner. The bigger his steam shovels the greater his production and the more his profit, but the nature of his operation reduces tax assessments upon the land which he exploits for personal gain. After he has taken out the shale, coal and clay the property is nothing but a mass of spoil banks and ditches. It has no taxable value.

The remedy for this inequitable situation is easy. Place an occupation tax on the strip miner. Mine companies will argue that this would be an unwarranted interference of government in private business. They will contend that they are being deprived of property without due process of law.

Such arguments are without force. Long ago the United States supreme court decided, in the Oliver Mining Company vs. Lord case, that a state might levy an occupation tax upon the mining of iron ore equal to 6 per cent of the value of the ore produced during the previous year.

None can question the right of Indiana to make special regulations and levy special taxes whenever the natural resources of the state are concerned.

Sound reasoning does not permit what is in effect a subsidy to strip mining. The public interest should forbid the wanton destruction of the mining of iron ore equal to 6 per cent of the value of the ore produced during the previous year.

WHEN Stanley Baldwin, former prime minister to England, declared the other day that the American Constitution has broken down and that Americans today are "practically under a dictatorship," he expressed a misconception which his distance from the scene of action makes quite understandable.

What is much less easy to understand is the fact that there are some people on this side of the water who share in that misconception.

In part, this misconception represents a genuine bewilderment over the puzzling things that have happened since last March. In part, also, it stands for one of those "synthetic dead cats" which General Hugh S. Johnson has been talking about. Either way, it deserves a little straight talk.

If we have a dictatorship today, it only can be said that it is by all odds one of the queerest and most unrecognizable of dictatorships ever erected anywhere.

Every single thing that is being done today is being done as a result of the vote of the people of America, either directly or through their representatives.

The President was put into office by popular vote. The powers he exercises were given him by vote of congress. The whole framework of emergency legislation which we call the recovery program came through congress.

And that is only half of it. A new congress takes office in January. It can, if it chooses, repeal every paragraph of this legislation. If it disapproves of what the executive has been doing, it can render him impotent.

It has the power to throw him out of office if he steps over the boundary of the executive's proper sphere.

Internal economics in nearly every country concerned have made necessary certain temporary policies regarding a number of important phases of economic and trade conditions which obviously will render impracticable at this time useful conclusions as to some items on the old agenda."

He lists specifically "such matters as currency stabilization, uniform import prohibitions, permanent customs duties and the like."

This newspaper agrees with the large number of persons here and in other countries who believe that international monetary stabilization and tariff reduction are essential to world recovery. But it would be absurd to attempt such stabilization until the United States and Great Britain, the two chief nations, have reached the points in their internal economy where joint action is possible. Therefore it is both honest and expedient to postpone the monetary and tariff questions at Montevideo.

In addition to the communications problem, the most important issues remaining for the Pan-American conference will relate to peace and intervention. The United States will be embarrassed seriously by its non-recognition policy in Cuba, the unrest in Puerto Rico, and the protest against our dictatorship in Haiti.

Perhaps during the three weeks before the opening of the conference the United States government can remove these barriers to Pan-American co-operation and peace.

There are plenty of reasons for criticising the administration's acts—but this is a dictatorship business is not one of them.

AFTER SPANNING TAMMANY

Government by Amateurs

An Editorial

EVERY thoughtful man makes periodic appraisals of his business. So should each thinking citizen pause from time to time and estimate the assets and liabilities of his government. The administration of Governor Paul V. McNutt nearly has rounded out its first year. The present is an appropriate time for a dispassionate balancing of the ledger.

To do this properly it is necessary to expunge from the record testimony from two sources. The evidence is wholly unreliable because of extreme self-interest. One source is the disappointed job seeker. His—or her—beliefs have made the Indiana air hideous ever since spring. The other source is the defeated candidates.

Now let us turn calmly to the debit side of the McNutt balance sheet:

First comes beer control through a system of importers who are semi-political in character. It is bad because a public matter is being carried on with a secrecy usually available only to private corporations. It is impossible for an impartial observer to determine where public administration leaves off and private enterprise begins in this beer matter. Every transaction of the importers should be open to public scrutiny.

Second, there is the handling of patronage. The McNutt regime was not placed in office by Democrats. It was elected by liberals of all parties. Jobs should go to those best qualified to hold them, regardless of political affiliations. Instead it is evident that certain of the Governor's advisers, notably Pleas Greenlee, have an obsession to build a powerful political machine.

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