

The Indianapolis Times

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THE CITY'S GAS PLANS

HOUSEHOLDERS and manufacturers of Indianapolis are to have cheap natural gas if it can be purchased at a reasonable price. This is a fundamental part of the city's plan for taking over the Citizens Gas Company.

The present gas plant should not be abandoned even though natural gas comes into the community. If natural gas should give out the consumers should be able to fall back on the manufactured product. Also the presence of the plant in actual operation could serve as a threat to keep prices low on natural gas.

Under the plan for municipal ownership the city would obligate itself to pay at least \$500,000 annually for seventy-seven years for the lease which the Citizens Gas Company has on the equipment and mains of the old Indianapolis Gas Company.

Fears have been expressed that in seventy-seven years gas may become as obsolete as whale oil and the city would find itself saddled with an expense running into millions of dollars for which it would receive no return.

These fears are apparently groundless. If gas became obsolete the city could default on its lease and invite the owners of the Indianapolis Gas Company to take over their property, which would then be as useless to them as it would be to the city.

There is only one serious flaw in the city's whole plan. That is the secrecy which has been thrown around the true ownership of the Citizens Gas Company. Who are the chief stockholders? How much did they pay for their stock? When, and under what circumstances, did they acquire it?

The taxpayers have a right to know with whom they are doing business when they purchase the gas company.

SPRAGUE AND ROOSEVELT

AN exaggerated importance is being given to the resignation of Dr. O. M. W. Sprague, one of the administration's financial advisers. Advisers come and go, but the government goes on.

We say this without any desire to laugh off the growing split in the administration and in the country over the issue of inflation. It can not be ignored; it is too big.

But before taking sides as between the Sprague anti-inflation policy and the Roosevelt inflation policy, it is well to remember that the professor sees the issue only as a technical monetary question, while the President must work out this very difficult problem in relation to the whole complicated recovery program. The Roosevelt monetary moves can not be judged adequately either in a classroom vacuum or through the Wall Street lens of prejudice.

The President's purpose is simple enough. He is trying to manage money to establish a stable purchasing power, an honest dollar. That is no crime, any more than the orthodox and customary effort of government to manage credit. Managed credit proved inadequate during the crisis. Now the President is taking the next step.

Will the President's particular gold-trading method produce the desired results? Nobody knows. It is an experiment—an experiment forced by events. All that we know positively is that the old monetary system broke down. We must seek another way out. We dare not sit holding our hands, chanting hymns to gold. That was what the Hoover administration did, and with dire results.

For a man with a scientific mind, Dr. Sprague's letter sounds rather dogmatic. It would have been more convincing if it had been a trifle less cocksure. After all, Dr. Sprague has been out of sympathy with the Roosevelt policy since last July—according to his own letter—and the end of the world has not come yet. Perhaps it is not as near as the professor fears.

Even so, we are glad that Dr. Sprague is going to carry this dispute to the country openly. Here is an honest difference of opinion on an exceedingly vital policy. Every one is involved in what happens to the dollar. There has been too much secrecy about the matter, too much whispering, too many rumors, too much fighting in the dark.

If the issue can be aired thoroughly between now and January, perhaps congress, which is impatient for action, will act more intelligently when it meets.

Dr. Sprague says he has "reached the conclusion that there is no defense from a drift into unrestrained inflation other than an aroused and organized public opinion." There is a danger of unrestrained inflation. The danger comes, however, not from the President, but from congress.

Nothing the President has said or done justifies the belief that he plans or desires unrestrained inflation. On the contrary, his entire effort is to control inflation. Whether he will succeed in the future will depend chiefly upon congress and upon public opinion, but that he has controlled inflation to date is a fact which Dr. Sprague nor no other critic can deny.

Make It Smart to Be Legal

An Editorial

FOR nearly fifteen years this nation has witnessed the exaltation of the smuggler and the bootlegger.

It has seen otherwise law-abiding citizens, by the million, in protest against a sumptuary law they abhorred, become the patrons and thereby the allies of the smuggler and the bootlegger.

It has seen officials in every path of public life, city, state and federal, corrupted by a vast, illicit, and tax-free industry. It has seen crime, grown rich from liquor, use its riches to broaden its operation into all manner of allied crimes. It has seen racketeering flourish and kidnaping, the most vicious offspring of an ill-conceived reform now repudiated, rise to a stature that has cast its shadow over the entire land.

To do that may be somewhat costly in some communities where the disparity in price, due to taxes, gives the bootlegger the advantage.

For the person who buys alcoholic beverages at all, this combination problem in economics and citizenship therefore arises—"Is it better to save a few dollars a year on a luxury by buying from an outlaw, or to do my part by spending those few dollars toward freeing my country from the crime strangle. And, incidentally, contributing my bit to taxation?"

The answer, for the good citizen, should be obvious.

To a nation that likes its slogans we suggest this, for and after Dec. 5:

"It's smart to be legal."

ELECTRIFIED AMERICA

"WE believe," David Lilienthal, a director of the Tennessee Valley Authority, told a group of lawyers in Atlanta, "that with notable exceptions the rates for electricity throughout the United States constitute a barrier between the people and the great source of electricity."

This is an agent of the new deal talking, a man who is setting up in the Tennessee Valley the yardstick by which may be measured power rates everywhere.

It is important that he should make such a statement; but more important is the fact that the Roosevelt administration has as one of its aims an "electrified America."

There are two chief ways of attaining this goal. One is to make electric power available to more people by making it cheaper. Power companies can do this by themselves, or they can wait to be forced into lowering rates when people learn more about the cheap rates that are being charged by TVA to towns and businesses in the Tennessee Valley. Another way is to cheapen the costs of distribution to these people of the appliances which electricity operates.

And let it be said to the honor of American business men that the overwhelming majority have kept this desire in mind through the hard years of the depression.

This is the power age. But unless these things are accomplished, the general use of electricity to lighten the burden of human labor and more evenly distribute the comforts of life will be hindered.

This program can not of course be carried out by the government alone. First it must have the co-operation of the people themselves; it must also have the co-operation of private power companies. This latter can be voluntary or forced.

But the man who tries to argue that all business men are cut to the Mitchell-Wiggins pattern, the man who says that the business class as a whole stands condemned because of the faults of a few—that man simply does not know what he is talking about.

GASOLINE RACKETS

GASOLINE tax evasions and frauds are becoming so scandalous that officials of nine eastern states are meeting in New York on Nov. 27 to figure out a way to curb losses.

Through smuggling, bootlegging, adulteration and other swindles the states and Federal government are losing an estimated \$200,000,000 a year in taxes.

Leaks threaten to become worse as prohibition repeal drives lawless elements into new fields and as the government's experiment in price-fixing raises gasoline prices to the consumers.

The forty-nine varieties of gasoline taxes invite chicanery. Not only are these easy-come sales taxes generally too high. They vary between states. Florida and Tennessee levy a 7-cent-a-gallon tax. In some southern states localities have joined the line and have run the levy up to as high as 10 cents. In fifty cities the average gasoline price is 14.3 cents, the average tax 3.6 cents. Out of \$13,000,000 collected by the states in gas taxes more than \$75,000,000 is applied to relief and uses other than road upkeep.

As a nation we profess to be interested deeply in the preservation of life and health. We support all kinds of drives to cure this or that malady. Just now, we are all excited over the possibility of a cure for cancer and thrilled by the idea than an honest-to-God anti-tuberculosis germ may have been discovered.

In strange contrast to this sympathetic attitude is our comparative indifference to the multitude of individuals, half of them women and children, killed on our highways every year, or the still greater multitude exposed to less serious accidents.

Since the war, our automobiles have killed five or six times as many people as lost their lives in the war. The same proportion holds good with regard to injuries.

High and chaotic gas taxes should be remedied. Whether or not the federal government should collect all state taxes at the refineries, as urged in the Byrd bill, some coordinated and united action should be worked out. We are riding a willing horse to death.

Just as high liquor taxes will breed lawlessness and evasions so will high gas taxes defeat their end.

POLITICS BARRED

THE vast civil works program recently put forward by the administration, under which it is planned to put 4,000,000 men to work before Christmas, is the most ambitious program of its kind ever attempted by any government; and it is encouraging to note that President Roosevelt has declared flatly that politics must have nothing at all to do with the allocation of jobs.

Rightly handled, this program can be of inestimable value. By the same token, it could become a horrible thing if party politics was allowed to be entangled with it.

The slightest suggestion that the directors of the project were trying to gain political advantage from it would be fatal. The administration does well to announce unequivocally that politics is out.

New York is sinking at the rate of nearly five inches in 100 years. To some observers, New York couldn't go any lower than it is already.

BUSINESS MEN

IN all the talk now current about need for a reorganization of a new spirit in American business, it is important that we do not make the mistake of judging all American business men by the spectacle which a very few have made of themselves.

One of the great purposes of the NRA program is to make possible some sort of effective, broad-gauge co-operation among business and industrial units. It is perfectly true that our pre-NRA system let greed go unchecked, and that the unrestrained working of that greed was in no small measure responsible for the depression.

But we could not make a greater mistake

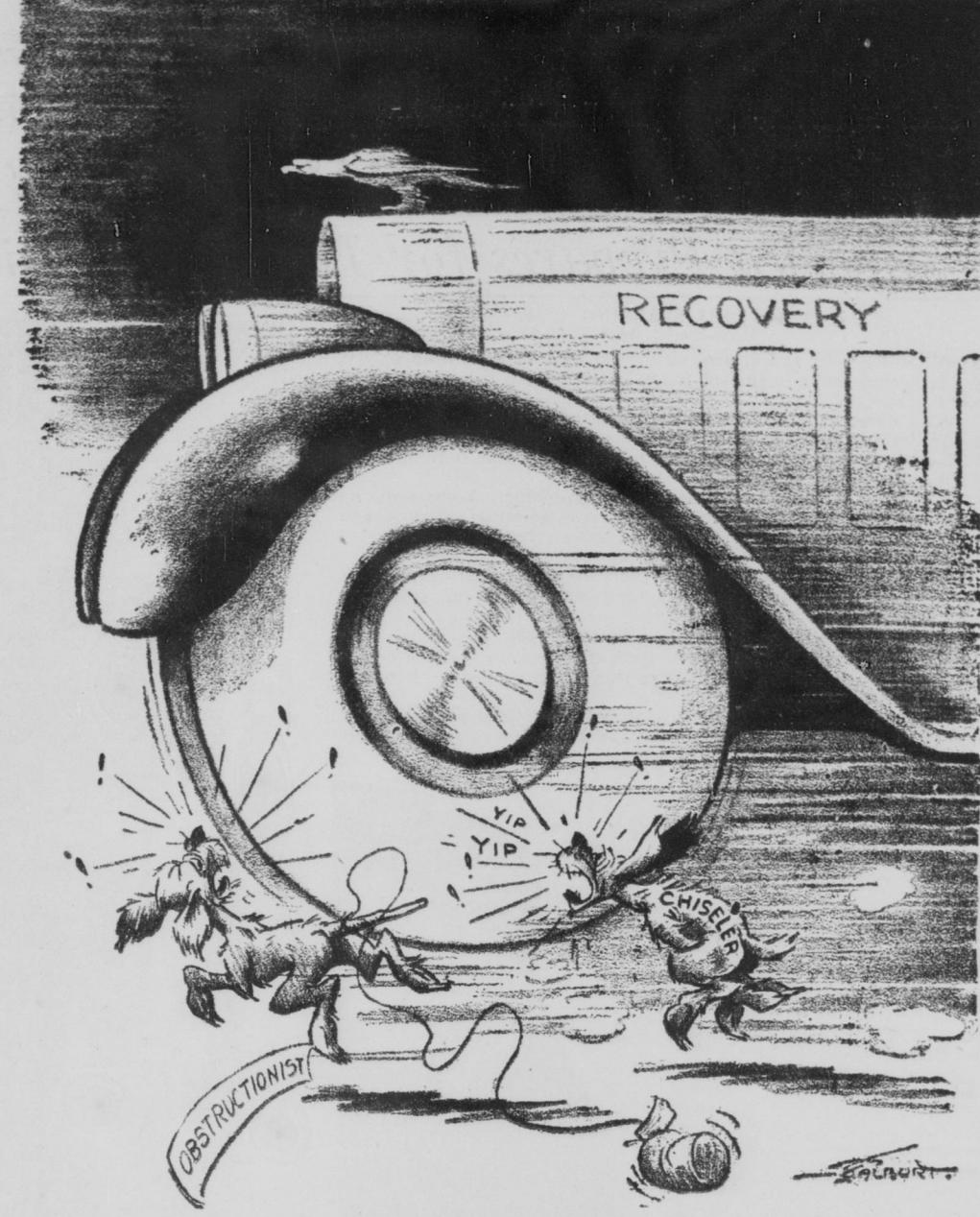
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It is only when a

politic

In the Path of Progress!



The Message Center

I wholly disapprove of what you say and will defend to the death your right to say it.—Voltaire

Political Crooks

By Ernest C. Phipps

WHEN Governor McNutt made his speech at Trenton, N. J., and had so much to say about rigorous but not false economy, I wonder if he thought about the \$1 and \$1.50 tax law in Indian?

We farmers expected Governor McNutt to stand by his platform and quite play in the fire. We have had several jokes played on us already, and they are about to react.

The thing to do is to take up the political playground and make an example out of every crook. The time is not far off when there will be weepin, wailing and gnashin' of teeth.

Now this is the point I would like to bring out. In going down South Emerson avenue you see the old Butler college buildings, now useless. Why doesn't the city, the trustees or some one who can fix that up and give such mothers one or two rooms, and those who are able to work pay as much as they can, or if any are able financially, let them pay what they can for the upkeep of it.

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The trustee is supposed to keep such families. The district would not have to be called a slum district, or the inmates would not have to be made to feel like they were dogs and just next to nothing.

Just remember the young of tomorrow will be the old of tomorrow and the precious boy or girl you think so sweet and cute some day will think of you as ours do of us today. God help us. What is to become of us? One lone woman without a home, the mother of eight and a constant reader of The Times. I wonder if some more poor mothers will answer that?

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It Seems to Me

BY HEYWOOD BROUN

NEW YORK, Nov. 22.—The Norsemen aimed their frail craft toward the setting sun and came at last to long, white beaches. They called the country Vineland and after a little while departed, leaving small trace behind them.

Columbus and his caravels set out to find a certain somewhere, and even before him the Phoenicians dared to take that fearsome leap over the rim of the horizon. In those days, as in these, the old men said