THE CHARLOTTE NEWS

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For A Reassertion Of Authority

THE theory of labor unions as a responsible partner in industrial democracy splinters before the hard fact of a strike against the 140,000,000 people of the United States. Make no mistake about it, this railroad strike, and likewise the coal strike which is largely in effect despite a pledged truce, are strikes against the whole economy of this country, designed by their paralyzing effect to force a nation to buy its way out.

There can be no other view. The Executive Department of the Government, still largely imbued with the pro-labor philosophy of the late President Roosevelt, has sought with open sympathy and with the gentlest of pressure to ameliorate the demands of the railroad brotherhoods and the United Mine Workers to the point where they might be met. The failure of President Truman and his aides signifies no inherent weakness, although it must be conceded that their leadership has been unimpressive and ineffectual. That failure attests, rather, to the disillusioning explosion of the theory that an equal and equally beneficial partnership might be formed between Government, Industry and Union Labor.

In Government, the actions of the majority are subject to the pressure of the minority and the public. Industry has, and knows it has, a master in the form of Government. Union Labor as typified in industry-wide strikes against the Government, against industry, against the public and even against itself, recognizes no limitation upon the will of its membership. The weird months since V-J Day have given full proof of that statement.

To find out why this condition of affairs became possible is no assignment in synthetic research but a pressing problem of Government, calling not only for dispassion and impartiality, but for honesty and courage and resolution. What has happened is that under President Roosevelt organized labor was made an instrument of Federal policy, which policy was to extend the widest possible benefits of our economy to all—and it was a humanitarian theory. It was bolstered with rights, written into law, whereby the process of unionization and union supremacy were guaranteed by no less an agency than the United States of America, which set up authoritative agencies of its own to see that the policy was carried out. And it was carried out, to the point where the Government of the United States, guarantor of Labor's rights, found itself supinely helpless before the instrument in which it had reposed those rights.

Let's not be heroic about it. No revolution impends. Nothing more unAmerican is involved than the desire to make the most of a good thing. Among the men who labor there is about the same proportion of stern disapproval of these strikes as there is among the public at large. These strikes will pass, and striking men will work willingly and faithfully again. But so long as the present system prevails whereby a nation struggling to its feet can be knocked prone again and again by legalized acts-in-concert against the people of that nation, whereby considerations of public welfare fail to moderate the acts of industry-wide labor unions, we shall not dwell in comfort and accord in this land.

It is a legislative process, not a summary act of any department of the Government, that is called for. An elementary beginning would be to deny the benefit of unemployment compensation to strikers, an absurdity whereby one hand of the Government feeds those with whom its other hand is contending for mastery. A second step, always with the profound rights of working men in mind, would be to subject international labor unions to the laws against conspiracies in restraint of trade, a procedure which would require prior legislation to make parent and subsidiary unions entities amenable to the law. A third step would be to amend laws already on the books, good sound laws in many of their portions, to elicit responsibility from labor unions along with the privileges accorded them.

A fourth step, and it is a primary one, would be to remove the administration of such laws from the hands of those who serve a partisan cause to the courts of this country which deal in justice.

It is a process that may not be completed, or even wholly envisioned, overnight. It is a process that will not, of itself, end the strike of the railroad brotherhoods, the United Mine Workers, the Maritime Unions or any of the industry-wide organizations which contemplate participating in the melee. But it is a process that cannot be delayed if we are to have in this country the same regard for responsibility as for rights, a common regard for discipline instead of disorder, an equality before authority.

The Old Guard Won't Surrender

A news story of the week which barely qualified as news, reported the smashing victory of Old Guard Republicans in Pennsylvania. The ruling GOP machine, lustily attacked by younger progressive elements within the party, won thumping decisions all down the line. And the results are not too fragmentary to point a trend: the Republicans are going to give the voters the same old choice in 48. They stuck rigidly to the traditional pattern in every year of the futile assaults upon Franklin Roosevelt, except in 1940—and then Willkie managed to outrage the Old Guard.

They aren't likely to be caught again. They obviously plan to serve up the old Republican dishes, in contempt for the great independent vote, and to gamble that Herbert Hoover's 'irreducible minimum" of 15,000,000 votes will parlay with current dissatisfaction for a national victory. Wherever they are in power they will scorn the new liberal movement within the party as an unnatural child of Republicanism.

Pennsylvania is not the only stronghold, though the die-hard ultra-conservatism of its Old Guard is famous. The skeleton organizations of the party in the South will add their disproportionate weight to Republicans of the far right. That was clear in the selection of Tennessee's Carrol Reece as National Chairman, and in hearty Southern Republican approval.

When North Carolina's GOP assembled this Spring Harold Stassen appeared, and roused long cheers, but party leaders behind the scenes held him in light regard. They made a point of speaking up for Reece, who had been vigorously attacked by Stassen. And they talked about Bricker and Taft of Ohio, They lumped all Republican progressives like Stassen and Morse, of Oregon, into one doomed category. They shouted that the people of the country deserved a choice between old-time Republicanism and what's left of the New Deal. They took it for granted, as they did so blithely from '32 forward, that the people would turn to their party.

The death of Mr. Roosevelt left the Democrats all but leaderless, and removed the most powerful political personality of many generations. So the strength of the Democrats at the polls in '48 is uncertain. And the Republican Old Guard, none too sensitive to the mood of the people, see the coming campaigns as a chance to carry the old, old flag to victory once more. They might understand, but apparently don't, that their heaven-sent opportunity to win the nation is to assault the obvious weaknesses of the Democrats, offer a convincing progressiveness of their own, and forget the man who was their conqueror four times in twelve turbulent years.

Don't Forget The Sheriff's Scramble

MOST of Mecklenburg's electorate looks on Saturday's primary as a mildly interesting affair centering around the more important offices of Congressman and Solicitor. But to thousands of voters the burning question is, who's going to get the Sheriff's easy pickings? Most of the yells and the fights on Saturday night will involve the supporters and workers of the candidates for that sinecure.

Not only is the office of Sheriff fortified with a constitutional status but also with an amendment adopted several years ago whereby the two-year term was doubled. The associated sheriffs of North Carolina—there are 100 of them, plus innumerable deputies—are a potent crowd politically. They have to be.

In the old days the High Sheriff had to work for his pay. Not only was he the chief law enforcement officer of the county but its tax collector as well, accountable to the Commissioners for their expending money. Frequently he received a percentage of the collections, and if he was a good trader, or politically sympatico with County boards, he could turn himself $10,000 or $20,000 a year without lifting a hand. But as North Carolina counties became more predominately urban and as Government became more systematized and progressive, the High Sheriff in many a county became a lowly process-server and little more.

County and city police forces took over law-enforcement. Tax collectors took over tax-collecting. About all that was left for the Sheriff and his deputies was to serve as bailiff who O'Yezzed the court to order, served its processes, levied on judgments and politicked to stay in office.

Nevertheless, the most intense excitement over the election returns Saturday night will prevail among the candidates for Sheriff and their supporters. For some reason, process-serving is a juicy plum, large enough to feed the multitudes of deputies and supporters.

We don't quite know why this should be, but it seems to us that the electorate should interest itself to the point of examining the candidates with care.

There is an impression of something missing in photos of the volcanic island erupting out of the Pacific. By rights a politician should be riding the lava and demand relief.

Like his countrymen for generations past, it is evident that Goering even now entertains delusions of racial superiority. The babe comes from a long line of delusion-entertainers.

A somewhat different oratorical manner is called for, in the long-distance debates with the Kremlin. It was a mistake on Winnie's part ever to pause for a reply.

'Well, Judge—Here We Were Again'

People's Platform

Is The News Promoting War?

PORT BRAGG

Editors, THE NEWS:

PERHAPS some day this country may fight Russia but I doubt it very much. If it does I believe men like you will share in the responsibility for having brought on a new war.

You are "small fry" but many like you can do the trick. Of course I am confident that you had friends and relatives die in the past war and are completely ignorant of the part you are playing to bring on World War III. All you are interested in for the moment is to sell your papers.

Your publication of "I Choose Freedom" will help you sell your papers. Do you think the American people are in danger of embracing a system of government similar to the Soviet regime and these articles are going to help save them from themselves? Certainly not.

Do you think that this Victor Kravchenko wants to help the American public from what has happened in Russia and that is the object of his writings? Certainly not, all he wants is some easy American "sucker money". You will contribute. I believe you and the many other editors throughout the states, who publish these articles, are blind or ignore the possible terrible cost.

We don't like the Russian form of government and I believe there is no danger of us adopting it. Russia was our ally in the past war, fighting for a common cause. Russia will be a strong ally in attaining a permanent peace if our Government leaders can work in harmony with their leaders. Articles like "I Choose Freedom" by Victor Kravchenko are breeding distrust, hatred and dissension between two great people having a common interest in peace. That cause war.

I came all the way through with Patton's Third Army and was wounded in combat. I don't want my ten-year-old son in another war. In my opinion you are contributing in some manner to bring about another war. Think it over! I wish I could think differently.

—SIGNATURE WITHHELD.

(Note: Kravchenko's book is being printed in THE NEWS for the same reason other readable features appear: it is interesting, informative, and makes an unmistakable point. His message seems as important to us for complete understanding between Russia and the United States as a treatise by, say, Ilya Ehrenberg. His point isn't new by any means, but it thoroughly documents a truth we must all understand—that the two great powers of the world today simply aren't traveling the same road, even if their objectives are supposedly the same. As for pandering to the public taste by publishing sensational stuff, we expect no more increase in readership from this series than we would from a serialization of The Bobbsey Twins.—Eds., THE NEWS).

An Accident?

MONROE

Editors, THE NEWS:

TWO American soldiers in Germany "stumble" into the line of fire of a Negro soldier and are unerringly shot dead. An accident the authorities say. "That would not happen again in a thousand years." Why the emphasis? Why was the Negro shooting? What wanton authority allowed him to carry a gun on such evident monkey business?

Negro publishers prepare to investigate to ascertain if any racial question is involved and then suddenly turn back with their mission apparently not completed and the case seems doomed to abandonment with one single, inexplicit explanation, "an accident".

More than a year ago the mothers of these soldiers might at least have been able to say with pride that their sons died in Germany fighting for the ideals of a great people. Can it be disillusionment and shame these mothers now feel when compelled to think of the shady circumstances surrounding their sons' deaths?

Moral disintegration seems to be gaining speed in high places. Politicians have taken the place of statesmen. Fuzzy-brained idiots dictate the destiny of our nation. An accident? You can bet your insecure life it isn't. It might even be possible that this "accident" is concrete evidence that we are finally reaping our harvest of wild and unconservative decisions, our great experiment in the equality of all men, our hypocritic subscription to high ideals, our uncompromising manner with life itself.

Had it been Germans who were the assassins of our two very dead soldiers, they most certainly would have been tried in a most positive American manner and justly shot forthwith after a detailed condemnation of the German race. But as the decision now stands—"An accident that would not happen again in one thousand years."

However, I think it not an accident that the author, Carl Schurz, once said: "Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands, but like the seafaring man on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them, you read your destiny."

—M. HUNTLEY.

Just A Beginning

CHARLOTTE

Editors, THE NEWS:

In view of the fact that Morris Field barracks may now be converted into housing units for veterans, please reprint the results of the housing survey as made last Winter and let the public see how far this new arrangement will go in solving the situation. Please give the exact figures. Thank you.

—R. E. ADER.

(Note: The survey, conducted by THE NEWS for the Citizens Emergency Housing Committee, brought requests for 1,136 units, 697 of them from veterans. Estimates made at the time by the committee and the OPA Rent Control Office were that this represented no more than one-third of the demand. Assuming the estimates to be correct, we need about 3,500 housing units. Morris Field's 400 will provide about one-eighth of those.—Eds., THE NEWS).

The People's Platform is available to any reader who cares to mount it. Communications should be less than 300 words, typewritten if possible, and on only one side of the paper. Libel and obscenity will be deleted—otherwise anything goes. Each letter must be signed, although, in exceptional cases and upon request, we will withhold the writer's name.—Editors, THE NEWS.

Marquis Childs

Remember Perkins?

WASHINGTON

REMEMBER way back when we had a woman as Secretary of Labor? Many people liked to say that, if only Miss Frances Perkins was kicked out and a big strong man put in her place, we should have no more labor troubles.

John L. Lewis was one who used to say that. Perhaps he had in mind a big strong man named John L. Lewis.

Well, we have a man as Secretary of Labor today and we are having more strike trouble than at almost any other time in our history. It is unfair to put the blame on Secretary Lewis B. Schwellenbach, as it was to put it on Miss Perkins.

The causes of conflict go very deep. They are beyond any "strong man" solution. Moreover, there is no adequate framework of law within which orderly and disciplined collective bargaining can be carried out.

Schwellenbach can scarcely be rated a "strong" Secretary of Labor. Too often he seems overwhelmed by the sea of trouble that confronts him. With profit he could be less vague and more decisive.

PLANS UPSET

In his brief tenure of office, the Secretary has had difficulty keeping his lines of authority straightened out. Schwellenbach's plans have been upset by the interference of others in the Truman Administration. As public pressure has mounted, top-level policy makers have all taken a hand in cooking the labor broth. The result is in accord with the old saying about too many cooks.

Meddlesome interference has come from eager beavers in unexpected places. The testimony of Civilian Production Administrator John D. Small advocating a no-strike law for six months came as a shock and surprise, both to President Truman and Secretary Schwellenbach.

Small, more or less an accident in his current job, which grew out of his association with J. A. Krug when the present Secretary of the Interior was head of the War Production Board, read his testimony to members of his staff before going to the Capitol with it. They were startled. In its original form, it contained an angry denunciation of John L. Lewis. Small was persuaded to delete that section.

It is not merely the official kibitzers who keep looking over Secretary Schwellenbach's shoulder. He has a whole host of unofficial advisers, including columnists and editorial writers, who can tell him exactly how to end the labor trouble. All he has to do is to take their advice.

FANNY'S COMPASSION.

When Miss Perkins thinks of her "successor" in office, it is with compassion on this very score. She has an interesting theory about the climate in which labor disputes occur today. The very fact of the concentration of public interest, with tempers at the boiling point, makes a strike more difficult to settle.

It's like trying to discipline a child with company looking on. Advice from aunts and uncles and in-laws makes the disciplining process all but impossible. Perhaps the best service that the press and public could perform in a labor dispute would be to ignore it completely in the critical stage.

A major difficulty is the fact that, ever since 1933, our labor troubles have been occurring in an atmosphere of crisis. In the early '30s, it was a crisis of depression and unemployment. Then came preparation for war, and then war itself. Now the crisis is reconversion and the threat of inflation inherent in shutting down production.

Although Miss Perkins herself has become a columnist, she is being very careful not to contribute in any way to the agitation over current strikes. The former Secretary of Labor writes a weekly column which is distributed to some 600 labor papers throughout the country by the Institute for American Democracy, Inc. She is paid to write the column. Not all the papers use it every week. Miss Perkins says, but the average is around 400.

SKIPS DISPUTES

When she first started to write, she made it very clear that she would not discuss current labor disputes. Her column deals customarily with matters indirectly related to trade unions. She has written several times on the full-employment bill. Her last articles dealt with price control. The detached, almost scientific intellect that characterized her twelve years in the Labor Department is evident in the care and precision of her writing.

In fairness to Miss Perkins and to her sex, let's recognize that she had an almost hopeless job. And so, given present circumstances has her successor.

Richard M. Boeckel

Rise Of U. S. Labor

WASHINGTON

AMERICAN labor has come a long way.

As late as 1917, when President Wilson addressed in person the annual convention of the American Federation of Labor at Buffalo, some ultra-conservatives muttered in their beards that the President of the United States had no business dignifying a labor gathering, even in wartime, by his presence. Four years before, there had been groans, and not only among employers, that an out-and-out trade unionist—William B. Wilson, secretary-treasurer of the United Mine Workers until he became a member of Congress from Pennsylvania—should have become a member of the Cabinet as Secretary of Labor.

When President Wilson spoke to the A. F. L. convention in 1917, the total membership of American trade unions was only around 3,500,000—of whom 75 or 80 per cent were in the A. F. L. After World War I the number of union members rose to over 5,000,000. In 1922, after the first major postwar depression, the number was down to 3,750,000, if not lower, and it failed to rise much above that figure even during the so-called prosperity of 1925-1929.

HUGE MEMBERSHIP

Today the total membership in the trades unions of the United States is not far from 15,000,000. The A. F. L. now that the Mine Workers are back in the fold, claims over 7,500,000, and the CIO over 6,500,000; almost half a million are in the railroad brotherhoods, and almost another half a million in other unaffiliated unions. More than 3,000,000 women workers are said by the Department of Labor to be trade union members now.

A total of almost 15,000,000 trade union members represents 40 per cent or more of the 35,000,000 employees estimated by the Department of Labor as engaged in "non-agricultural" pursuits. They represent more than one-half of the 29,000,000 estimated to be in "occupations in which unions are organizing" (excluding executives, the self-employed, etc.).

UNDER AGREEMENTS

The number of workers covered by collective bargaining agreements in April, 1946, is put by the Department of Labor as 13,500,000. Of these, 45 per cent are covered by closed-shop or union-shop agreements, and another 29 per cent by maintenance of membership provisions.

Trade unionism in the United States originated at the beginning of the 19th century among certain skilled workers organizing on a local basis. In the second quarter of the century the movement went off into various Utopian and experimental schemes, also into political action. But around 1850 various crafts organized on a national basis—the Typographical Union was organized in 1850, the locomotive engineers in 1863.

EARLY STRUGGLES

In 1866 came national federation, in the National Labor Union. The Knights of Labor was organized in 1869 and dominated national unionism for several decades, until supplanted by the American Federation of Labor, organized in 1886. In 1887 trade union membership in the United States reached 1,000,000, but the long depression of the 1890's cut the figure by more than one-half. Even at the beginning of the twentieth century there were less than a million members in the various unions. There was much comment that the American Labor movement would certainly bear watching when trade union membership reached all of 2,000,000 in 1904.

Drew Pearson's Merry-Go-Round

Some Unions Menace To Free Enterprise

(Note: Drew Pearson's column today takes the form of a letter to the Attorney General of the United States.)

WASHINGTON

TOM CLARK,
ATTORNEY GEN OF THE UNITED STATES,
THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT,
WASHINGTON, D. C.

DEAR TOM:

Not being a lawyer, I suppose I should not be giving advice to the chief legal administrator of our country. It's like an old-maid aunt telling me how to run my children.

However, I have something on my mind which may not be good law, but I think it is good sense. I suspect a lot of other Americans have the same thing on their minds also.

For some time I have watched the enforcement of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, first under Thurman Arnold, later under yourself and now under Wendell Berge, and in my opinion you have all done one of the most important jobs of the decade in preserving the American spirit of free enterprise and the right of small businessmen to compete with the big. Except for a few brass hats in the Army and Navy and a few big-wigs on Wall Street, the country has been with you every inch of the way.

Today, however, we are faced with a new threat to free competition—the ability of certain labor unions to shut down every coal mine and every railroad in the country, and, with them, business both big and small. When this happens, the whole spirit of American free enterprise goes up in smoke.

Coal Miners Monopoly

THERE was a day when John L. Lewis struck one group of coal mines and let the others operate. This was something nobody could complain about. Furthermore it enhanced the principle of competition. The mine operators who were struck didn't like to see their competitors, who were not struck, rake in the profits—while they didn't.

But in the last twelve years we have let John L. Lewis build up an airtight labor monopoly in the coal fields. This did not use to be the case. When Lewis called his last big strike after the last war, only about 50 per cent of the nation's coal production stopped. But in this latest strike, probably 100 per cent was shut down.

The important thing is that Lewis got his monopoly through the closed shop and the Guffey Coal Act and the Wagner Act.

Personally I don't begrudge him these benefits. On the contrary. The mines were at an all-time economic low in 1933. They had to have relief. Furthermore they should also have better mine safety and a reasonable welfare fund—though not dominated by one man.

So I say I do not begrudge the miners their new and powerful organization—provided they don't let an insatiable, ruthless leader misuse this power against the interests of the American people who gave it to him. For it is important to remember that when John L. Lewis and the miners were voted the closed shop and the Wagner Act and the Guffey Coal Act and the means of building a powerful monopoly, the vote came from the American people who did not expect their humanitarianism to be thrown back into their faces.

And what the American people voted, they can later vote to modify or take away.

Right here, in my opinion, is where the Sherman Anti-Trust Act comes in.

Are Unions Monopolies?

I KNOW that the Supreme Court has ruled against you in some cases (but the Supreme Court has been known to reverse itself), and it seems to me that when any labor union ties up the entire country it is a clear monopoly and is hampering free competition just as much as the Aluminum Corporation or International Nickel or other big corporations you have prosecuted.

If, for instance, John L. Lewis calls a strike in part of the industry, as the United Auto Workers did against General Motors, while allowing Ford and Chrysler to operate, there can be no charge of monopoly. But when he uses the power voted the miners by the American people to bring a monopolistic strike against all the American people then, in my opinion, he should be prosecuted under the Sherman Anti-Trust Act.

And if you, as Attorney General, don't feel you have enough legislation to support you in such a prosecution, you should ask Congress for it.

For if you or someone in the Administration does not act first to meet this situation, a hog-wild Congress will pass a heavy-handed labor law which won't work and which will wipe out all the hard-won gains of other labor groups which don't deserve to be penalized because of John L. Lewis or certain rail labor leaders.

The American public is fast coming to the conclusion that our modern economy is too intricate and interwoven to have any monopoly, whether it be miners, rail workers or telephone operators, tie up the entire country; any more than they were willing to have Standard Oil of New Jersey conspire with Germany to keep synthetic rubber patents from the American people.

That prewar conspiracy set the nation back in its manufacture of rubber tires for three years. And the public has been grateful to Thurman Arnold and the Justice Department's anti-trust division for exposing it.

Likewise the current wave of monopoly is setting back postwar reconversion and heading toward disastrous inflation. The country will be equally grateful if you check labor monopoly at the same time protecting the great mass of American labor which has not abused its privileges.

Hoping you will forgive these turbulent opinions from one whose only legal knowledge is the law of libel, I am,

Sincerely yours,

DREW PEARSON.