

THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, 1946

A Greeting For The Congress

THE world of the lawyers is a wonderful world, and this is not the way that they do it. The hostilities of World War II did not end legally when men stopped fighting, put away their guns, shed their uniforms, and went back home to hunt for a place to live. The end of the last day of 1945, when President Truman issued a proclamation, But, now that hostilities have ended, both in fact and in legal fiction, it does not mean that the war, or the emergency, is over.

An exercise in double-talk, of course, but a significant one. The Congress established special war taxes and conferred emergency powers upon the executive in a variety of bills, some to be terminated upon cessation of hostilities, some at the end of the war, others at the end of the war emergency. The effect of the President's New Year's Eve proclamation is to divert himself of about one-third of his emergency powers, including some of the most important ones.

This seems to us both logical and commendable. There is reason to wonder if it is a measure of Democratic confidence that it is stamped on the face of the bills, not to precipitate, starting as it did at the moment the last shot was fired in the Pacific. And there is no denying that decontrol is a measure of Democratic confidence that it is stamped on the face of the bills, not to precipitate, starting as it did at the moment the last shot was fired in the Pacific. And there is no denying that decontrol is a measure of Democratic confidence that it is stamped on the face of the bills, not to precipitate, starting as it did at the moment the last shot was fired in the Pacific.

The door, of course, was left carefully open to the possibility of organizing a third party, although most of the lonely liberal citizen has been so busy recapturing their old Democratic stronghold. But the warning of one of their own members, Harold Ickes, seemed to echo in the hall: "A third-party in America would be a disaster as serious as a third party on a homefront."

Nothing, we should imagine, could more promptly kill off a third party movement than the lack of enthusiasm of those who are supposed to found it. The moderately successful third party in recent history was the Bull Moose, founded when dissident Republicans rallied to the banner of Theodore Roosevelt. And that, of course, was a crusade against the reaction of the G.O.P., and the Bull Moosers were fired with the belief that the late William Allen White recalled, in his *Autobiography*, the wild and stirring scenes in Chicago when the rump Republican convention hit the third party trail; he never, he said, saw anything like that again.

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If there was any of that feeling of spontaneity about the New York meeting of the Progressive Citizens of America none of it was reflected in the news reports. The liberals seemed, understandably, not outraged but just plain astounded. The political words, we would say, are still safe from fire.

It is possible that a totally unqualified veteran capable of scoring only 60 out of 100 points on a Civil Service examination might receive a responsible Government job in preference to a highly skilled non-veteran. In some cases it is not so. It is possible that a totally unqualified veteran capable of scoring only 60 out of 100 points on a Civil Service examination might receive a responsible Government job in preference to a highly skilled non-veteran. In some cases it is not so.

Giving the veteran a better break is a commendable goal, but certainly it can be done without reducing whatever efficiency there is in the Federal service. Granting scores of 100 and a passing grade of 70. Applicants scoring between 70 and 100 are listed in the order of their scores and the head of the agency concerned must select an applicant from the top three.

That system has been largely shot to pieces by the Veterans Preference Act of 1944. Under it any veteran is spotted five points on his Civil Service score, and disabled veterans are spotted ten points. Moreover, in all except certain technical and professional jobs in the higher pay brackets, the veteran's name is automatically moved to the top of the list of non-veteran eligibles. Wives and widows of veterans are given much the same privileges.

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This is an expensive process in many ways. It has already cost the President the services of some of his ablest advisers and administrators, and it will throw the budget further out of balance. But it is a logical process, for certainly the economy could not function half-controlled and half-free. When Mr. Truman found that he could not (or that he did not care to) maintain through the reconstruction period the entire complicated structure of wartime controls, he had no real choice but to abandon the field.

The move also strikes us as wise politics. Its immediate effect is to throw the additional burden upon the Republican Congress, giving it specific responsibility for working out solutions to pressing reconstruction problems. The Administration has warned that "all the Government's wartime controls cannot be repealed at a single stroke without leaving chaos." He cited not in a tremulous reference to "our responsibilities in the Atomic Age" in issuing a solemn warning to his G.O.P. colleagues.

Mr. Truman, of course, has indicated he does not plan to throw up all his powers right away. But he has left no doubt that he will let the Congress set the pace and assume the responsibility for decontrol. That it will be the fast track, he has indicated in a tremulous reference to "our responsibilities in the Atomic Age" in issuing a solemn warning to his G.O.P. colleagues.

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