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"The Strongest Memory is Weaker Than the Weakest Ink."
 THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 1944

What Shall It Profit—?

The *Winnipeg Free Press*, leading Liberal newspaper, is still holding editorial post mortems on the recent "zombie session" of Parliament, and is becoming more and more dissatisfied with the figure cut by its Federal party leader. In the latest issue to hand, that of Dec. 22, it contributes some rather gloomy "Footnotes on the Crisis" which are worth noting. They are significant because, unlike its earlier jubilant comment on Mr. King's success in weathering the conscription storm, they were written at a time when "the emotions of the crisis have subsided and perhaps a clearer view of a hitherto unregarded aspect of it is now possible."

This "hitherto unregarded aspect" is simply the fact that "responsible government as we know it, depends upon the confidence of the people that their public men will keep faith and honor their pledged word."

From this viewpoint, the *Free Press* finds, the events of last October and November are "open to serious criticism." Mr. King entered the crisis as the head of a government which everybody believed was pledged to impose conscription if necessary—"not necessarily" conscription, but conscription if necessary." Careful reading of the speech of Hon. J. L. Ralston in the House of Commons on Nov. 29 reveals that at least one of Mr. King's colleagues, after many days of cabinet discussion, could not discover what the Prime Minister's public pledge meant. That was the chief reason why Mr. Ralston left the Government.

"In this context," says our *Winnipeg* contemporary, "the question is inevitable: If a cabinet colleague is unable to discover the meaning of a pledge, given by his Prime Minister publicly and under the most solemn circumstances, what chance have the common people got? What becomes of faith and confidence in public men under such circumstances?"

Again, it considers the position of another cabinet minister, Hon. C. G. Power, former Minister of Defense for Air. "I remained with the Government," Mr. Power told the House of Commons on Nov. 27, "and held firm to the policy to which I clearly understood it to be unreservedly committed. It was the policy on Wednesday morning last. It was the policy until Wednesday night. I could not change my mature consideration in a matter of minutes." Mr. Power went on to make the point here being discussed: "The most tragic thing of all is the weakening of faith and confidence in public men."

"Here then," comments the *Free Press*, "is another experienced and capable cabinet minister who was certain the government was moving in one direction when as the event proved, it was going exactly the opposite. That the right goal was reached is a matter of congratulation. But in a democracy, the end cannot be held to justify the means. There is a price too high to be paid."

Mr. King's government survived because he successfully surmounted two distinct crises. The first involved the resignation of Col. Ralston, who could not persuade his colleagues to adopt conscription. The second was the decision on the night of Nov. 22, which, if made three weeks earlier, would have rendered the first unnecessary, for it was at that moment that the cabinet decided to apply Bill 80. "Study not only of reinforcement statistics but of political pressure made the latter decision inevitable," says the *Free Press*, "but the result was to create in the public mind an impression not of adherence to principles laid down, but only of deft manoeuvre." And it adds:

"Democracy is not a sickly plant which requires for its nurture the performance of miracles. These are not a substitute for straightforward action. The people of this country do not hanker for spectacular performances of this kind. They are plain, forthright folk, and the growing myth that a Prime Minister can always be depended upon to escape from tight corners by sheer cleverness does not enhance him in their eyes."

To mitigate its criticism, the *Free Press* says the circumstances in this crisis were exceptional and on that account as well as on his long public services Mr. King "can be certain of indulgence." It concludes, however, by reminding him sternly that "at the end of a long public career, Campbell-Bannerman gave a word of advice which fits this occasion very well. It was this: *The man who walks a straight road never loses his way.*"

Italian Campaign

Military observers suspect that the German high command intends to pull its forces out of Northern Italy as soon as weather conditions are such as to permit Field Marshal Albert Kesselring to withdraw his troops unhampered from the air by the Allied bombing fleets.

Italy has lost its military importance for the Germans. The Alps form a formidable barrier between Italy and Germany. A relatively small force, not exceeding five divisions, could hold on indefinitely in keeping an invading army from crossing the mountains into the Reich. The Berlin high command desperately

needs the well-trained and battle-ried divisions now opposing Gen. Mark Clark's forces. Kesselring's men could be of great help to the German armies either on the western or the eastern fronts.

On the other hand, the Germans are said to feel that a withdrawal from Italy would not free many Allied divisions. The internal situation in Italy would further deteriorate when the strong politically-minded Italians from the north are liberated.

Troubles similar to those we are now witnessing in Greece, only on a much larger scale, are anticipated by the German leaders. And since no actual peace has been signed between the Italian and Allied governments they believe that London and Washington will feel bound to maintain law and order with the help of military forces about the size of those now fighting in the Gothic Line.

EDITORIAL NOTES

Government House has no attractions these days, except for those who like to frequent the pond.

Whether we like it or not, the fact remains, the Nazi war machine is still pretty much intact.

Eternal hope still clings to a return of our boys from overseas in time for Old Home Week.

Notwithstanding Christmas is past, the stores are still busy, preparatory to New Year celebrations.

Britain is letting out for active service as many of her military clerical staff as can be spared; no doubt her example will be followed in Canada.

Re-admission to the Labor party of Sir Stafford Cripps, minister of aircraft production, has been recommended by the divisional Labor party of Bristol East, his parliamentary constituency. Sir Stafford was expelled from the party in 1939 because of his persistent advocacy of a popular front with the Communists.

"In our free country," (writes Prof. J. D. Mackie for his BBC broadcast entitled "Seen From Scotland") "we can't run democracy—or any other doctrine—down people's throats. We can't establish true citizenship by written laws. But we can establish a spirit of true citizenship, and if we can teach our young people that they must check their individual desires by consideration of the desires of others, and must limit their ideals by taking account of possibility, we shall have gone far towards accomplishing our task. What we want to do in a free democracy is to train individuals to put upon themselves discipline which in other places is enforced by law—a moral and intellectual, not a physical, restraint."

The Russians have the interests of their rising generation very much at heart. Preparations for New Year's holidays and vacations for Soviet schoolchildren are completed after weeks of preparation. Youth organizations, departments of education, sports societies and clubs, trade unions, theaters, cinemas, museums and parks are participating in plans for tens of millions of children. New Year trees will be set up in all schools, children's homes, stadiums, skating rinks, etc. Leading Soviet actors will entertain the boys and girls; heroes of the Patriotic War, outstanding scientists, musicians and sports champions, will meet with their young admirers and recount their experiences. There will be many children's excursions, winter sports competitions and games.

Thomas Woodrow Wilson, American statesman, born this date, 1856; son of a Virginia Presbyterian Minister, became a lawyer and university professor, afterwards elected the first non-clerical president of Princeton; elected Governor of New Jersey in 1910, and two years later President of the United States, being re-elected in 1916; the following year he broke off diplomatic relations with Germany and entered the Great War, on the side of the Allies; his "14 points" provided the basis for peace negotiations in 1918; and in 1919 he declared in favour of the League of Nations; unfortunately Congress did not approve his action, outcome being World War II, while Wilson died of a broken heart; "Militarism does not consist in the existence of any army, nor even in the existence of a very great army. Militarism is a spirit. It is a point of view. It is a system. It is a purpose. The purpose of militarism is to use armies for aggression."

The movement which seems to be spreading among American cities and towns to construct "living" war memorials in the form of public auditoriums and civic and recreation centres, promises a vast improvement over the motley array of shafts and statuary, ranging from works of art to just works of the local iron foundry, which have sprung up after earlier wars, says the *Christian Science Monitor*. But it would be well for the city fathers to plan carefully even in this more imaginative direction. An unused building somehow seems more lifeless and futile than a statue, which isn't supposed to do anything anyway, but just stand and remind by its presence. Many communities which erected memorial buildings after World War One with the hope, if not the expectation, that the mere existence of the structure would initiate and develop the activities which would make it functional, found that they had put the cart before the horse. It is sounder planning to think first in terms of appropriate community activities, provide reasonably for their continuity, and then proceed to the matter of a building to house them.

Notes By The Way

The reason why there are so many laws is that most of them were made as "the other fellow" — Kitchener Record.

"You should smile when you pay your taxes," advises a Government official. Maybe so, but that would be about as difficult an undertaking as to smile while your tooth was being pulled.—Kitchener Record.

If the Nazis had the breath to spare, it would be interesting to hear what they think now of the decadence of democracies.—Memphis Commercial Appeal.

A traveller reaching Labron from Germany reports that the pessimists in that country are busy learning Russian, while the optimists are devoting themselves to English.—Brookville Recorder and Times.

British Columbia produces something more than choice apples, as its 1944 crop suggests. The Victoria Cross so well show. The latest recipient of this high honour, Pte. Ernest (Smoke) Smith, would be a most apt hero and richly deserved the award conferred upon him.—Hamilton Spectator.

Painful though it is to hear that our 18-year-old servicemen are now being conscripted, there are over large numbers, there is comfort in the realization that this policy may well shorten the war and thus spare the lives of many of our boys. Audacity, endurance, nerve and recuperative powers are probably better in the man who has been through any other time.—Chicago Daily News.

After the ceremony in which Hiroto worshipped his grandfather, the former Mikado Meiji, on the 15th anniversary of the necessary, we are told that government officials reported the recent Japanese victories to the gods. We wonder if it is really sporting to spoof a spook. It is also baffling to the Western mind that Jap gods have to be told the news in this manner. Western mythologies they were supposed to know all ages before radio was invented.—Chicago News.

Give the us the slightest armed advantage, and they revert to type and soon reveal themselves as atrocious brutes. Their slaying of all but a handful of 1050 American troops, who were taken prisoner, is the most heinous and present offensive, is additional proof of how deeply the grain of their barbarism runs. The effect of such outrages is to make Allied troops fight all the harder to avenge their defenceless comrades.—Hamilton Spectator.

Safe here at home, drying our shoes and overcoats and gloves in front of a heater, we forget the radiator, suffering from one dry place and another only the nuisance of a cold and the rain. What can we do or hope or say to those brave men, fighting and dying in our cause along the front lines? We can do each his appointed task, no matter how small, to speed the final victory. We can hope that success will be swift and the losses small. We can say only, God bless you! —New York Times.

Edison Bell, 10th line, Mesasa, has rigged up a wood splitter from discarded stationary gasoline engine. The cylinder head is removed, an axle head welded to the end of the piston, and a heavy iron plate 20 inches from the end of the cylinder. The splitter is powered by a tractor run at moderate speed. The axle head is welded to the cylinder and when the piston is pushed back again the block is split with the cylinder. The trick in operating is to hold the block on the underside. The rate is about 100 cords per hour.—Wheatley Journal.

At the end of the year 1944 the military demand for more tires calls for additional manufacturing capacity—not for more rubber. And there is the story of synthetic rubber, one of the achievements to keep Americans bragging about their industrial genius for years to come. As early as last summer the capacity of the various types of plants that go into the making of synthetic rubber had outrun the tire makers and the production was still headed for the higher goals of this winter. Only three years ago the United States was cut off from natural rubber. It had done much more than make up for the loss with synthetic. From acetone and petroleum it is producing more than it ever imported from the rubber plantations of the East Indies. It had access to all the natural substances in the remaining problem would not be materially different from what it is today. The bottleneck is in the tire factories. The only difference is quality; and the superior quality of synthetic rubber over the present type of synthetic rubber means as great as popular fancy would have you believe. The Jap arrow hit our vulnerable Achilles heel, our rubber heel, without causing much more than discomfort.—Kansas City Star.

There are at least half a dozen hymns, "Onward Christian Soldiers," "Auld Lang Syne," and "O Come, All Ye Faithful," among them, that are as familiar to the average person as "God Save the King." Percy Ghent writes in the Toronto *Telegraph*. This Christmas, as in times past, the last hymn or carol of the three mentioned will be sung by millions in churches and homes throughout the world. It has been translated into more than 120 languages and is sung by more people than any other Christmas song that ever came down to us. Yet no one knows who wrote the words, and the music is from an ancient Latin hymn composed in the 12th century. The musician is completely forgotten. And that, so far as we have been able to ascertain, is all that can be told about the most popular of Yuletide carols. Except for tradition, another lovely carol, "The First Nowell," had its origin in the deep woods of the north. It is found as to who wrote either words or music, or where or when they were written. But there is a happy legend that the shepherds themselves, tending their sheep on that first Christmas night, saw the verses and from the starry heavens an angelic choir responded with the chorus: "Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Born is the King of Israel."

Floor Prices For Agriculture

(Bank of Nova Scotia Monthly Review.)

Problems Involved in Setting Floor Prices

To work out a floor-price policy which will give the largest feasible amount of benefit to the farmer and create the fewest production and market complications is a task of no small matter. The support in which prices are set, the levels established, and the method of implementation, all have a vital bearing on the success of the policy. The desirability of preserving a flexible price structure in order to guide production has already been mentioned. Such flexibility involves freedom either to raise or to lower the floor price of products—and frequently enough to induce the desired adjustments in production. The rigidity in the price structure which would, for instance, from setting floor prices for a considerable period in advance, save three or four years, might be "exceedingly costly in the misuse of agricultural resources that is likely to result." The emergency program suggested in the report on the maximum efficiency in guiding production could be attained by an emergency floor price, beginning of each production period, before planting time in the case of crops, before breeding time for livestock.

Tying prices to any rigid standard such as parity creates a similar inflexibility. The extent to which it has been found necessary in the United States during the war to emergency to modify the hard-and-fast relationships imposed by parity prices is significant. "Clinging to parity would have hampered the emergency program suggested by Professor Shepherd of Iowa State College. "90-14 parity was too high for wheat, cotton, and corn (to say nothing of horses and mules, where it was three times as high as the going price, so far as the farmer was concerned) and too low for cattle and a number of other products. The only way to make parity work with these major products was to depart from it."

The reason for this is that parity, in the very nature of the thing, is forward-looking. In seeking to restore the relationship between farm and non-farm prices that existed before the war, the program necessarily freezes price relationships within agriculture, as of that period. The prices so established take no account of relative changes in the costs of producing various commodities or of relative changes in the demand for them. The more out-of-date the consequent price structure, for this reason, a production pattern which is necessarily related to the current situation may result. Hence, parity cannot be said to be a satisfactory guide for price policy in a post-war situation which will require market readjustment to meet peacetime needs.

It is also important to recognize that the farmer, particularly in an export country, must not, over the long period at least, be too far out of line with the realities of the market situation. A farm-price level unrelated to external markets would create for the government a serious administrative problem in disposing of surpluses and controlling production, and would probably make the most of the rest of the country's support prices for agricultural products excessively large.

As the London Economist said recently, "About the principle of guaranteed prices and assured markets for agricultural products, there can be no doubt. It is, about the cost to the community, there can be no doubt, and only one that which imposes a less additional charge in return for the maximum of efficiency—can be the first one." There is no justification, the Economist points out, for a policy which involves high prices for over-large quantities of produce.

This reasoning, of course, applies to the long-term situation. A distinction should be made between temporary surpluses such as those which may arise after the end of the war, and chronic surpluses, such as those which are gravitated by artificially high prices. Clearly, the community cannot object to sharing the burden of surplus disposal in the case of agricultural products as in that of other war materials. On the other hand, a level of post-war support prices which failed to take account of market prospects might delay adjustments to an agricultural production pattern suited to the requirements of peacetime and perpetuate a surplus situation for farm products.

The emergency program here carried out by subsidy, the corollary of this situation would be continued in order to be sure of producing and mounting subsidies. If the government purchase method were used, the corollary would be the accumulation of surpluses in the hands of the government and selling at a loss in export markets. This risking retaliation in the form of "anti-dumping" restrictions and competitive price-reducing subsidies by other exporting countries. Indeed, the danger that floor prices may interfere with that free flow of international trade on which farm prosperity is based is widely recognized.

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