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Catholic Guidance Given in Current Events by Veroin

How Far is the Middle Class in Western?

Grave concern for the future of the middle class has been expressed by not a few sociologists, who perceive that the war may seriously affect the very existence of this class. That this would be injurious to the true welfare of society and would be a staggering price to pay even for victory was the conclusion of the St. Louis convention of the Catholic Central Veroin of America. An outspoken resolution on the middle class charges that unless steps be taken to remedy existing conditions, such a dire possibility may actually come to pass.

Although fully aware of the fact, the resolution sets forth, that the immediate national task is the winning of the war, we insist that vital principles of our democratic institutions and fundamental policies must be upheld lest the successful termination of the war be jeopardized and the future welfare of our country endangered.

Effective warfare on fronts encircling the globe undoubtedly necessitates the pouring out of billions upon billions of dollars. The sacrifices occasioned by this need must be equitably shared by the entire nation. But the scandalous fact of huge profits and wages in war industries, irreconcilable with the tax burden imposed on the great majority of the people, must be remedied. Moreover, obvious tendencies toward even greater centralization of power, with the concomitant increase of a bureaucracy militating against the free exercise of genuine Democracy, must be checked.

SAFEGUARDING DEMOCRACY

We cannot consistently and effectively combat the teachings of totalitarianism unless at the same time we reinforce and secure the safeguards of Democracy and the rights and freedom of the individual under Democracy, which is the antithesis of the tyranny of totalitarianism. The common weal, the welfare of all classes and nations of society must be the concern of Democracy. On the other hand, the totalitarian State sacrifices the general welfare to the interests of the few who, as the ruling party or persons at that party, shape public life in accordance with their selfish will and purposes.

In this connection the Catholic Central Veroin of America wishes to re-emphasize in particular its stand in regard to the middle class.

Unfortunately, the fear expressed regarding the future of the middle class by the 1941 convention of our organization has been more than vindicated by the progress of events within the past year. The resolution, stating that "present tendencies of a political and economic nature appear to threaten its very existence," appears, if anything, more correct today than it did a year ago.

It is also regrettably true that the war is being used as the cloak to excuse the progressive alienation of members of the middle class. Increasingly are the small business men and manufacturers facing the pinch of war priorities, having difficulty obtaining war contracts themselves, because "they are too small." There is ample warrant, in fact, for the prediction that the middle class in general, and small business in particular, is being strangled out of existence.

The decline of the middle class, to which, it should be noted, the greater number of Catholics belong, must be viewed as a dangerous symptom of social sickness. For it is upon this class all Christian sociologists base their theories of social reform. Remove it, drive its members into the ranks of the lower classes, and a disordered social body composed of proletarians and the wealthy will be established, with an unbridgeable chasm separating the two groups. If the middle class is placed in jeopardy by the war, and we submit that this is the case, even in victory our country will be the loser.

In the middle class as it is now constituted we would include also the farmers. While farmers generally are receiving better returns for their products than for many years past, the agricultural problem is by no means settled. Like a sleeping giant it will be until the war has come to an end, when it will awake to threaten the order of farmers with destruction. Ab-

... and the social body disorganized. ... burning will then in all likelihood ... driving from the head the commu- ...

... we would call the attention of ... the middle class about whose ... the country generally must be ...

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