

Courier Journal

VOL. 24 - No. 11 Thursday, March 11, 1948

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The newspaper is a member of the Anti-Communist Council of the United States and the Catholic Press Association. It subscribes to the full reports of National Catholic Welfare Conference, Roman Service, and National News Service.

Published every Thursday by the Catholic Courier and Journal, Inc.

PRINTING OFFICE: 1100 E. Main St., Rochester, N. Y. Phone 44-1100

Subscription rates: Single copy 10c; 1 year \$10.00; 6 months \$5.50; 3 months \$3.00.

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Fr. Higgins Says:

'Double Talk'

By the time this appears in print, the steel industry will have had an opportunity either to vindicate itself before the bar of public opinion or to convict itself, by its own testimony, of a "pub-lo-be-damned" approach to the problem of prices.

Fortunately the Congress of the United States, for whatever mixture of reasons, has concluded, and rightly so, that the public is entitled to an explanation of the recent increase in the price of certain kinds of steel. The Congress seems to feel—and this is good Christian teaching—that the steel industry, whether its directors admit the fact or not, is answerable to the American people and not merely to its stockholders.

AND IF IT be said that the Congress hasn't any right to be asking questions about the price of steel, let it be remembered that it was Pops Plus XI and not the Supreme Court of the United States, nor the administrators of the Sherman Act, who laid down the following principles on the ethics of property ownership.

"It follows from what we have learned the individual and at the same time social character of ownership, that men must consider in this matter not only their own advantage but also the common good. To define these duties in detail when necessary requires and the natural law has not done so, is the function of those in charge of the State. Therefore, public authority, under the guiding light always of the natural and divine law, can determine more accurately upon consideration of the true requirements of the common good, what is permitted and what is not permitted to owners in the use of their property."

The Congress is well within its rights, therefore, in summoning the leaders of the steel industry to Washington to give an account of their stewardship—stewardship being an old-fashioned Christian word which describes very accurately the function of those people who happen to hold title to a part of the material wealth which Almighty God, in His Providence, has created for the welfare of all of us.

IT IS ONLY fair to state, in passing, that the steel industry may be able to vindicate itself completely in the eyes of the American public. Who can tell at this early writing? Perhaps it can be demonstrated that the price of steel had to be increased for any or all of the several reasons already adduced by spokesmen for the industry. Perhaps it remains to be seen.

But there is still another question to be answered. Can it be demonstrated by representatives of the steel industry—or by anybody else, for that matter—that black is white or that two and two make five? In other words, can it be demonstrated that the steel industry is essentially a competitive industry when most of the major steel corporations blandly announce identically the same price increases at identically the same hour on identically the same day. If it can be so demonstrated, even the apostle will have to admit that the age of miracles isn't over. Either that—or words have lost their meaning.

For the moment we can proceed from the merits and the demerits of price competition. Maybe price competition is a good thing; maybe it isn't. But grownup men and women don't expect to have their cake and eat it too. And a grownup industry, by the same token, can hardly ask for the privilege of calling itself a competitive industry if at the same time it insists on following a non-competitive policy in setting its prices.

Some apologists for the steel industry (David Lawrence, for example) have argued that there wasn't any evidence of "collusion" among the several steel producers when they simultaneously announced "identical" price increases a week or two ago. Maybe not. Maybe there wasn't any formal collusion of the type prescribed under the terms of our anti-trust legislation. But again, that remains to be seen.

WHILE WE ARE awaiting the expert verdict of the Department of Justice, perhaps it will be of interest to recall that it was the great high priest of free competition, Adam Smith, who reminded us almost 175 years ago that there is more than one way of skinning a cat—more than one type of collusion, if you will. Says Mr. Smith himself: "We rarely hear, it has been said, of combinations of masters, though frequently of those of workmen. But whoever imagines, upon this account, that masters rarely combine, is as ignorant of the world as of the subject. Masters are always and everywhere in a sort of tacit, but constant and uniform combination, not to raise the wages of labour above their actual rate." Could it also be that "masters" are sometimes in combination to stabilize their prices?

Suffice it to say that if the steel industry has already lost face by its recent announcement of uniform price increases (and even friendly newspapers like The New York Times admit that it has), it can ill afford to take further chances on its reputation by kidding the American public about the subject of competition. The Chairman of the Board of U. S. Steel — to cite but one example — added little or nothing to the reputation of his industry when he said the other day that the free or voluntary market "enables the value of each man's services or goods to be constantly and competitively evaluated by those who make use of them."

Some Americans will call that "double talk." And Americans, to their credit, don't like double-talk. They don't like to be kidded—and least of all about serious bread-and-butter subjects such as prices.

Do You Remember?

25 Years Ago—March 16, 1923: Leaders of the Holy Name Society in Detroit predicted that most of the city's business firms would close on Good Friday from noon to 3 o'clock in response to an appeal by the society's committee, headed by John Sullivan.

10 Years Ago—March 10, 1938: That it was high time that the mass be stripped from Godless Communism "which calls itself intellectual progress, liberalism, and what you will" was the declaration of His Excellency Bishop Keane opening a series of radio talks on WHAM.

Dreams of Tomorrow's Career



As We See It By Dan Patrick At Long Last -The Awakening

THE RISING crescendo of red imperialism is to point an accusing finger and say: We told you so.

Headlines, strangely reminiscent of the days when Hitler was on the march ten years ago, tell us the story of the surrender of Czechoslovakia to the flat from Moscow.

—Finland receives a Soviet bid for an alliance and the mapmakers prepare to drape the iron curtain around that unhappy nation.

A congressional committee warns that we need 35,000 military aircraft as a first line of defense.

In an historic moment in the United States Senate, Michigan's Arthur Vandenberg rises to begin debate on the Marshall Plan and solemnly warns his colleagues that our own voice is the last one competent to hear the western European peoples in their determination to survive in their own way of life.

ALL THIS adds up to a deadly pattern—the menacing shadow of Communism.

During the past week that shadow has broadened to cast its pall not only over little Czechoslovakia and Finland but across the Atlantic to the door of the United States Senate.

For if Communism were not on the move there would be no Marshall plan to debate and the Czechs and Finns would simply be numbered among Europe's millions striving to recover from the Second World War.

Unfortunately that is just a misty dream, born of the lofty promises of World War II and shattered on the rocks of Russia's grab for power.

Just Between Us

A Mob or an Army? + + +

A mob can become an army through organization. A mob is useless, but an army can get things done.

We think of that when we hear people belittling "organized religion."

Jesus knew the difference between a mob and an army. He did not want a mob. He wanted—and organized—an army of believers to go out and using spiritual weapons, conquer the world.

Of course, Jesus believed in organization. Mohammed organized. Lenin organized. Why, if even the Boy Scouts, with their program for youngsters, find it necessary to appoint a chief executive and regional commissioners, isn't it natural to suppose that Jesus would have assembled an organization?

IT'S HARD to see how any clear thinking man could imagine that God would come to earth, bringing a message in precise phrases—a message involving the salvation or damnation of mankind—and then step blithely off the earth, leaving that message to just blow around among men like a puffball in the wind.

Another consideration: Jesus must have seen that His revolutionary doctrine would capture people's imaginations, that it would make saints and apostles without number. But—and this is the point—like every great movement, it would tend to attract a fanatic fringe. It would have any number of fanatics buzzing around, cranks of all sorts. These would either have to be put in their place or thrown out of the organization in one way or another. In other words, the organization would have to be set up with a group of officers having authority.

Mind you, this authority wouldn't club people over the head. It wouldn't use force in any way at all. It would simply preach what the Lord told us. If you want to argue with Him, that's your business; but you can't stay in our organization.

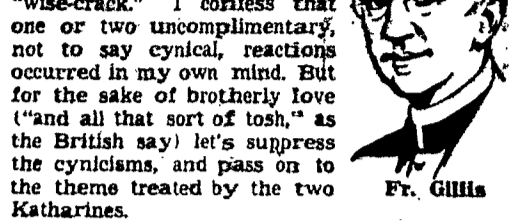
Now, as a matter of fact, we find that Jesus told the Apostles—the officers of His organization—to do just that. If thy brother "will not hear the church," He said, "let him be to thee as the heathen and the publican. Amen I say to you, whatsoever you bind on earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven."

Right there, in the granting of special power to a few of the believers—the apostles rather than to all—there, precisely, is organization!

Fr. Gillis Says:

'John Bull's Conscience'

A pair of writers, Katharine East and Katharine Hillier, in This Week Magazine for February 15, caught and held the eye of the hurried reader with that startling caption, "John Bull's Conscience." Also, I dare say, the phrase occasioned many a "wise-crack." I confess that one or two uncomplimentary, not to say cynical, reactions occurred in my own mind. But for the sake of brotherly love ("and all that sort of tosh," as the British say) let's suppress the cynicisms, and pass on to the theme treated by the two Katharines.



They think—and they quote from British lips to justify their thought—that the common attitude of the people towards the black market in food today in England is about the same as the attitude of Americans toward drink in the days of prohibition. But there is a difference. The Americans patronized bootleggers without scruple; the English patronize bootleggers and are stricken with compunction.

IF THAT comparison be true, it suggests a nice problem for debaters: Is it worse, the sinner who doesn't see that he sins and so has no shame, or the one who confesses his sin and continues to commit it? But first let's have the facts about food in England. The facts? Not so simple. In these days of "propaganda," facts are doctored, altered, "slanted," presented not to enlighten or inform but to prove a point. If you ask for the fact, you get different answers according to what the fact dispenser wishes to tell you.

FOR EXAMPLE: We have been hearing pathetic, even heart-rending stories about each family in England being allowed one egg a week. Or was it two weeks, or three? We have heard of housewives in a queer progression slowly for hours to the door of a meat market in the hope of obtaining a meager ration only to find when they get to the head of the line that "the cupboard was bare." That sort of experience, be it remarked, was not unknown here in our own well stocked America. Also we have read in the papers that only half the normal yield of coal was being mined in England and Wales because the miners were underfed and so couldn't work full time. These and dozens of other dreary items of information were parceled out to us.

But when Loretta Young, the movie actress, returning from England, revealed some such information and expressed sympathy with the suffering Britons, their newspapers rose up to smite her. They insisted that it must have been some other country of which she spoke. One could imagine their spurning American sympathy, but they went on to deny the fact that conditions were seriously bad in regard to food and fuel and other necessities.

ABOUT THE TIME that this exchange was in progress between the American actress and the British journalists, I happened to be reading an extraordinarily stimulating little book from England, "Our Threatened Values," by Victor Gollancz. The author, be it noted, is a socialist (not Communist), and quite obviously a humanitarian. He pleads for the people of Germany (specifically of the English zone of Berlin). He says that in 1945, those Germans were officially entitled to receive 1500 calories a day but were actually getting only enough "to keep a man alive if he remained in bed and did not exert himself at all."

Mr. Gollancz goes on to present some horrifying statistics concerning children and infants starving to death. Over against those grisly details he quotes governmental figures to prove that the English are sufficiently nourished, and that indeed the general health of the people of Great Britain is better than it was when they were eating more.

SO, AS I SAY, the facts are hard to verify. But granting the fact that food is none too plentiful in England and that the process of getting it legally is tedious to the point of exasperation, we can understand that those who can afford to do so are turning to the black market. And that's where we came in. The British, it seems, cannot buy on the black market with a good conscience, like the French, the Italians and other less scrupulous people. One Britisher said:

"We used to stand around in our clubs and pubs and have the effrontery to blame the French for letting little corruptions eat away at their decadence. I feel differently about the French today. During this past year I have learned a very important thing—you can't blame a man for doing something wrong until you know what provoked him into doing it."

NOT ONLY BUYING in the black market disturbs the British conscience. Worse perhaps is taking the shortcut to what one wants by bribery: "What is keeping the British awake these nights is not bombs but uneasy consciences," say the authors of the article in This Week. "They find themselves using the words 'scrounge,' 'edge,' 'angle' and 'wangle'—words they had always associated with other people, never with themselves. They are realizing with nasty twists of heart, that after eight years of 'taking it' and 'making do' and 'sharing alike,' they have at last succumbed to what is, at best, ethical carelessness, at worst, wholesale corruption.

"A distinguished artist, a man of great sensitivity and moral courage, recently summed up the new British dilemma like this: 'Our finest hour? We've had it. We're being nibbled to death by deathies. First to go was our standard of living. Now it's our standard of ethics. I don't know where it will all end, but at least I can say this much for us—we know what's happening, and it bothers us. That may be our salvation.'"

I wonder if the confession of the "distinguished artist of great sensitivity and moral courage," is representative of the people of Britain. If it is, they have in them the promise of regeneration, confession and presumably contrition. It would do some America as no harm to develop a more delicate conscience in regard to violation of the laws of man, such as they have—some of them—in regard to the laws of God.

The Supreme Court Speaks

Any decision of the Supreme Court calls for the obedient support of every American. The decision of this week declares that the practice of permitting religious instruction in public schools during school hours is contrary to our Constitution. Reports up to the present on the decision leave us in doubt as to its extent. Does it also forbid such instruction on recessed time when given outside the public school? We anxiously await a definite answer to this question.

Rochester has been one of the great centers of religious instruction of public school pupils, has carried on its program for many years in full cooperation with the local school authorities, and in later years with the State law as released time. Thinking Americans will be eager to serve their country in making permanent the benefits of religious instruction for these pupils under circumstances fully within the law. In an age when the results of lack of religious knowledge, and ignorance of the law of God, show themselves so patently in the general increase of juvenile delinquency, the increase in divorce, the irreligious spirit of so many, there can be no thought of lessening our zeal for proper instruction of our youth. The religious school is the best answer. Where conditions make impossible the registration of all our children in parochial schools, we will have to strive to carry on our instruction program for public school pupils in circumstances that will be fully in accord with the law as laid down in the current decision of the Supreme Court—fully in accord with the laws of our beloved country.

Positive Religious Thinking

The man who confines his religious thinking to condemnation of current un-Christian doctrines and practices can never reach the great majority of the body politic in an effective way. There must be positive religious thinking and a positive statement of religious principles as the basis on which to keep the public well informed, and to keep the public fully protected, against the unwholesome teachings and the sinful practices of those who would go against the laws of God and the laws of men. Emphasis must be on the good virtues rather than on their opposite vices.

The symposium on "The Christian Family" held last Tuesday at the Columbus Auditorium is a shining example of the positive religious and moral teaching of God and His Church. God's law on marriage and the married life was skillfully set forth by Father Connolly, C.S.S.R., of the Catholic University at Washington. The three essentials of a true marriage were given as children, fidelity, permanence. There was nothing new, nothing startling, about this delineation. From the beginning, these three items are essential to marriage as God founded it, first as a natural contract, and in the Christian Church as a Sacrament. There can be no true marriage where any one or more of these items are wilfully excluded. Planned parenthood may do away with children, but it also, in sinfully excluding children, does away with one of the essential purposes of marriage. Infidelity may destroy the peace and happiness of the married couple, because it turns the erring partner or partners away from God and from God's ideal of marital love. Divorce may pretend to dissolve what God has joined in a permanent union, but even in its pointlessness and futile attempt to put asunder what God has joined together it can succeed in destroying the salutary effect of that permanence that God made an essential part of His great Sacrament. Normal people will still strive to preserve in their marital life those essential elements established by God. Sensible people will want to go God's way, to follow God's will, to find their continued happiness in the married state in children, fidelity, permanence.

The Family Talks to God

Father Peyton, C.S.C., spoke at the Symposium on family prayer, "The Family Talks to God." His was an eloquent and fervent appeal for union with God and His Blessed Mother in family prayer, particularly in the family recitation of the Rosary. Children of God, heirs of His Kingdom, dear to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary, the family and its members should live with God and His Holy Mother. "The family that prays together, stays together." Surely, there can be no room for planned parenthood, no room for wicked philandering, no room for separation, in the family whose members are united to each other and to God and Mary in the full use and enjoyment of the graces they have received in this great Sacrament.

Keep Father Peyton's words in your heart, let them be your sure foundation in the midst of so much pagan teaching and practice for the positive religious thinking that will keep you close to God.

Not of God

When God speaks, man is bound to obey. Jesus Christ as the Son of God came to earth to teach men. His teaching was to help man to bring him to salvation. It was to overcome sin and death. Those who accepted that teaching were to live forever.

Men had no great reason to recognize Christ as a Divine Teacher that they could have no valid excuse for not believing His words. Refusal to hear and obey Him would come only from sinful disregard of the signs He wrought of the dignity that so evidently belonged to Him.

Christ upbraided those who refused to have faith in Him. He answered them when they questioned His assertion that those who accepted His words would never die. They called Abraham and the Prophets, all men who declared God's message, and yet all dead! Was Christ then not Abraham and the Prophets? Christ stated that He was that "before Abraham came to be."

His enemies in the world today? Many have tried to deny His teaching. Christ's words to give them in answer, "I believe, while they spurn the invitation of the reward of faith in Christ, let them take as they see fit. In this way we shall receive as not of that number, whom the world declared to be 'not of God.'"

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