

A Look at Labor Industry's Failure

By A. C. Tuohy

A good meal can make us forget days of hunger. A healthy body remembers not laugh wipes away all tears. The memory of most of us is high will make prices low.

This is the argument which was used to put an end to OPA, and which was held out as the hope of the small income groups. It is an old argument. Will it result in 1949 what it brought about in 1929?

Let us ask an authority. He should know. He was in the middle of the fight to lick the 1929 depression. And this is what he says:

"When we fully understand the economic history of the twenties, we shall find that the debacle which terminated another apparently prosperous period was largely contributed by a failure of industry to pass its improvements through labor-saving devices on to the consumer."

THOSE MISTAKES ought not to be repeated.

Up to the week before the "Black Thursday" of 1929 the American people were told a great many things about the continuing and never ending prosperity. The prophets were wrong. We ought not allow the same prophets to mislead us again, for the same facts stare us in the face once more.

We are being told that the high prices, now wrecking our economy, are due to government spending, the Marshall plan, surplus money, and high wages. There is some truth in all these charges. But by no means can inflation be explained only in those terms.

The real explanation is that many people are milking the economy for as much as they can get out of it, charging in prices whatever the traffic will bear, and rolling up huge fortunes for which only the little fellow will pay when the economic bubble breaks.

Selfishness is wrecking the economy. Nothing else.

ORTHODOX ECONOMISTS, journalists, and some politicians, are giving us the same arguments that were popular in the heyday of the 1920's. High profits, they tell us, mean that industry can obtain better efficiency. This means greater efficiency in business and lower prices. In the end, high profits will mean more purchasing power in the hands of the masses. Economic laws which make profits

'Miracle of the Wells'

How Our Lady of Victory Found A Gas Well for Monsignor Baker

The following article marking the 12th anniversary of the death (July 29) of Father Baker, famed founder of Our Lady of Victory Basilica at Lackawanna, appeared in the Buffalo daily newspaper, the Courier-Express.

By JAMES R. CLEARY

The miracle of the gas wells at Father Baker's in Lackawanna created a nationwide sensation a half century ago and little known facts about the story were gathered recently after an exhaustive research by officials at Our Lady of Victory institutions.

The Rev. Nelson H. Baker, a missionary when he died July 29, 1896, at the age of 35, solved his greatest problem—that of paying huge fuel bills—with the discovery of a miracle well in 1891, another in 1911.

WITH THESE discovery Father Baker saved thousands of dollars a year on lighting, heating and cooking. The savings were so great that it wasn't until 1922 that the priest consented to close gas jets and install electric lights. And today his wells furnish gas for all cooking in the institutions and for heating water boilers. So strong is the gas pressure in the stove jets that flames leap as high as 12 inches.

Gas authorities say the supply of the two wells appears to be unlimited.

In 1890 Father Baker was engaged in expanding the institute's original facilities. St. John's Protectors for Boys and St. Joseph's Orphan Boys' Asylum, Lackawanna then was called Limestone, West Seneca.

Father Baker knew he could not invest money in new facilities while saddled with the huge expense of fuel for lighting, and cooking. He was using coal, wood and kerosene. Natural gas had been introduced only a few years previously in Buffalo.

Father Baker went to his chapel and prayed fervently to Our Lady of Victory, Mother of Christ, for help.

DAILY AS HE walked along a path separating his flower garden from his vegetable patch, located where Our Lady of Victory Hospital now joins the Infant Home, the priest asked the institute's patrons to show him how to decrease or eliminate the fuel bills.

After weeks of serious consideration of the problem and fervent prayers, the thought occurred to Father Baker that a gas well on the premises would solve the problem.

He was aware that Bishop Stephen V. Ryan of the Buffalo diocese recently had received a \$5,000 gift to be used for any purpose the bishop selected.

Father Baker journeyed five miles to Buffalo in his buggy to ask the bishop for funds to undertake the project.

ACCORDING TO old records at the institution, Bishop Ryan was shocked when he heard of the Limestone priest's request.

The bishop reminded the priest that Limestone was noted for its dry holes. But Father Baker insisted: "Our Blessed Lady of Victory will find gas for us."

After much persuasion, Bishop Ryan consented to give the priest \$500. That would hardly be enough to buy tools, Father Baker pointed out. Somewhat reluctantly, the bishop increased his grant to \$2,000.

Records of a meeting of the institute's board of managers January 13, 1891, disclose it adopted a motion authorizing drilling for gas on the premises.

Father Baker's public announcement that he would drill for gas swept through Limestone like wildfire. The entire community buzzed with gossip.

"Dig a well in Limestone?" Father Baker must be mad," exclaimed one. "Hell never find gas here!" declared another.

Even a nun at the institute expressed her skepticism. She told

Father Baker "We all know you have literally performed miracles here, Father, and I am sure no project you have in mind could surprise us, but this is not project. This is folly, sheer folly."

Gas experts from Buffalo went to Limestone to see the Father Baker who planned to "lose good money, waste his valuable time and be the laughing stock of the countryside." They offered scientific proof that gas could not be found in that area.

"Well, if there is no gas in the ground, Our Lady of Victory will put some there for us," the priest smiled.

A few days later, Father Baker formed a procession of nuns, brothers, altar boys in surplices and cassocks and marched from the protectors across the street to the path that separated the gardens and where he walked daily as he read his office.

Father Baker led the group in the recitation of the rosary and in singing a hymn in honor of Our Lady of Victory. When the procession reached Father Baker's "prayer path," he raised a hand and halted. With

instincts, light his trade school and other buildings. Excitement is great in the town and the people dream of untold fortunes.

When friends approached Father Baker after the novena and said "Well, father, what now?" the priest was quick to announce a special novena for the purpose of striking gas would be started immediately.

Throughout the novena, Father Baker knelt at the foot of his altar and prayed to Our Lady of Victory. "I have placed this well under your patronage," he whispered. "You know we must have gas. It is a necessity, not a luxury we are asking."

Father Baker knelt and prayed a benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament during services on the eighth day of the novena. His eyes were transfixed on the Sacred Host, his heart immersed in love for Our Lady of Victory.

Suddenly, a disturbance was heard in the rear of the church. Father Baker heard footsteps approach. A breathless boy entered the sanctuary, hurried to the priest's side and whispered excitedly:

"Father, they have struck gas! They want you right away!"

Father Baker's lips quivered as he said, "Yes, my son."

He remained to complete the services and offer prayers of thanksgiving.

When Father Baker arrived at the scene of operations, he found the drillers and spectators crying with joy. Gas was found at a depth of 1,145 feet.

The news spread rapidly across the countryside and thousands came to see Father Baker's miracle well. Telegraph and telephone wires carried the story across the nation.

THE NEWSPAPERS reported: "Father Baker of the West Seneca Catholic Protectors got more than enough gas to heat his

two acolytes, he walked to the end of the path, prayed and sprinkled the ground with holy water. Removing a medal of Our Lady of Victory from his cassock, he uncovered a small patch of earth and placed the medal a few inches beneath the ground's surface.

"We will drill here," he announced. "Now let us get back to our work."

When drilling was started in May, 1891, the story of "Father Baker's folly" spread across the country and hundreds of persons came to watch operations. Weeks of drilling passed and there were no signs of gas. The drillers shook their heads. They were beyond 500 feet in depth.

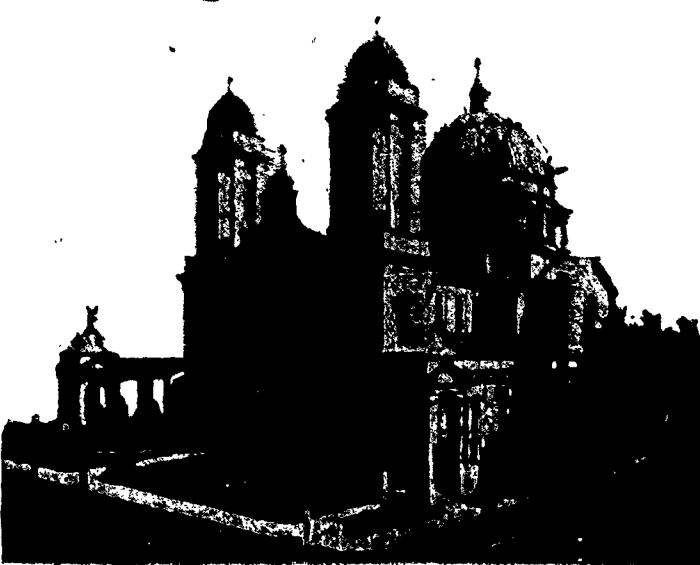
"If gas is to be found here, we should have found it at 500 feet," they said.

SPECTATORS BECAME fewer and fewer as days dragged into weeks. Monday the drillers went deeper, but there was no sign of gas.

"Poor Father Baker," friends sympathized.

The contractors called on Father Baker and strongly urged he abandon the operations, but he ordered them to drill "a little deeper."

In August the institute's annual public novena in honor of the Assumption of the Mother of God into Heaven was offered as usual for the intentions of soil



Our Lady of Victory Basilica

drillers and, in particular that gas be found.

The novena ended and no gas was found. "You know we must have gas. It is a necessity, not a luxury we are asking."

Father Baker was offered as much as \$60,000 for the well, but he would not sell. Dozens of other persons immediately began drilling operations in the vicinity, but all except one struck dry holes. One succeeded in obtaining a small quantity but it was short in supply and soon was exhausted. Many thought this prospector merely had struck a vein of Father Baker's well.

The flow of gas was so strong that extra equipment had to be used to control its 600-pound pressure.

Flooded with requests to furnish neighbors with the gas, Father Baker acquiesced and pipelines were laid to homes within a radius of miles. He charged small fees. Soon after, however, there were indications the gas supply would run out. Sending this as a sign from Our Lady of Victory that the gas was to be used exclusively for the charitable institutions, Father Baker discontinued gas service to the community.

Twenty years later, a second well was drilled to augment the original, which often had to be closed for cleaning and repair of equipment. The second well proved equally successful. It was drilled at the other end of Father Baker's "prayer path."

Priest Dies in Siberia
London—(CIP)—News has just been received here that Canon J. Wasilowski, Rector of the Seminary of Pinsk, formerly Poland, now Russian Union, died March 2 in Soviet captivity near Krasnoyarsk, Siberia.

Mrs. McCollum Seeks Writ To Block Religious Study

Champaign, Ill.—(RNS)—Mrs. Vaanti McCollum, self-professed atheist whose suit to ban religious instruction in the public schools here was upheld by the U. S. Supreme Court, has called on Circuit Judge Grover W. Watson of Peoria, Ill., to issue a writ compelling the Champaign board of education to prohibit the use of public school buildings for the dissemination of religious doctrine.

U. S. Catholic Youth Get Spain Invitation

Washington—(NCY)—Catholic Action Youth of Spain has invited 15 Catholic students of the United States to take part in a great youth pilgrimage to the tomb of St. James in Compostela late in August. According to the Joint Committee for Student Action, which has received the invitation here, the Spanish group has offered to pay the expenses of the U. S. delegation while in Spain and their return passage to this country. It is expected that 100,000 young Catholics from all over the world will be present at the Compostela event.

The Joint Committee for Student Action is the unit which represents the Newman Club Federation of Catholic College Students in national in international activities.

The situation here is complicated by the fact that an April referendum approved the dissolution of the school district which was specifically named in the suit Mrs. McCollum took to the Supreme Court. A new district has since been formed, which includes a larger area than the one cited in the Supreme Court decision.

THUS, JUDGE WATSON is faced with the problem of deciding whether the order he issues should include only the former school district, or the new, larger one.

According to John L. Franklin, attorney for the new district, Judge Watson should issue an order merely instructing the board of education to "adopt and enforce" rules and regulations prohibiting all instruction of religious education in the manner heretofore conducted in said school district.

Franklin said it would be "presumptuous" for the court to give wider or more comprehensive interpretation of the opinion of the Supreme Court than necessarily arises from its decision.

An opinion along the lines of Franklin's proposal, it was said, would permit other school boards and courts to make their own interpretations of the Supreme Court decision.

Prague Streets Much Named
Prague—(NC)—The changing name plates on some of Prague's streets could well title chapters of a book narrating the turbulent political changes which have characterized this section of Europe.

One street constructed in upper Prague about 30 years ago has already had its name changed six times. First it was called Namenska; then Kamenicky's; then Comenius; the Czech Professor's; and then Fiedelova, after the neighboring Fiedel hill.

After a visit to Prague by the late King Alexander of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the city heads renamed the street Alexandrova. Upon completion of the city by the Germans it was called Flegel-Strasse-Lesecka. After World War II, the street was rechristened Titova in honor of Marshal Tito. Now, after the Communist form has at the Yugoslav leader, Prague's are wondering whether the street will soon get its seventh name.

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Near East Missions

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Mgr. Thomas J. McMahon, National Secretary
Rev. Harry M. O'Connor, Rev. Andrew H. Rogosh

Heaven on Earth

For the new Shrine Chapel of St. Theresa, soon to rise in Lebanon for the conversion of Russia, a status of the Little Flower will be needed. Can you give a hundred dollars for this? Write for "The Unpetalled Rose," our beautiful picture folder on the Saint who would spend her heaven on earth.

YOUR OWN PRIEST

If God has not given you a son in the priesthood, why not adopt a missionary and make him your priest? You can adopt Fesouh Berhe in the Seminary of Adigrat, Ethiopia. His six years' course will cost six hundred dollars. If this is too much, we have other students nearer their First Mass, and a hundred dollars will cover a whole year's training.

AUGUST GIFT

This month is dedicated to the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the feast of St. John Eudes, her apostle. On August 19, reminds us that Mary's Feast antedated the Feast of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in the Church. The people of Zarka in Transjordan have written a letter to the Holy Father, asking for a little chapel. Can you give a thousand dollars for this and dedicate it to Mary's Pure Heart.

HOW DID HE?

Write for "TWO FACES," our little story of Father Damien, the leper. It tells how he held the chance in his leprous hands. We send it to all who add a dime to our DAMIEN LEPER FUND.

FEED HOMELESS BABES

That crust of bread for homeless children, abandoned on the doorstep of St. Vincent's Crib, our Founding Hospital in Beirut, Lebanon. How much it brings of God's love. Won't you give a dollar for "Orphan's Bread" this month?

FLOWERS NEVER WILT

Those frail flowers of Carmel, the children of Sisters praying day and night, will not fail. But they cannot go out to beg. So we ask again for donations to the Carmel of the Child Jesus in Bethlehem. The tragedy of Palestine has brought them starvation. How much ten dollars for a food package can do!

BIG MONEY

One hundred and fifty dollars is big money for the people of Assiut, in Egypt, but it gives all the altar furnishings for Bishop Scandar's chapel there. Please do help.

FATIMA'S PROVIDENCE

Father Pinakatt, chaplain of Our Lady's Hospital at Mary Girl, India, run by our American Medical Missionaries, writes that the twelve-bed hospital built by Near East friends is a blessing to the poor, and that six native Indian girls have just entered the convent. Can you give three hundred dollars to sponsor one, making her your adopted daughter? Any offering for this noble work will bring Our Lady's blessing. To all we send a picture folder on Our Lady of Fatima.

HOLIEST HANDS

"In the holy hands of the priest the Word of God is again made flesh." If you only could know how much your Mass offerings help to support poor missionaries. The Holy Father has asked us to help those refugee priests, who fled countries dominated by Russia, and are now in Germany. Don't forget them.

THIS IS REAL GRATITUDE

A little orphan, in the care of the Ursuline Sisters on the island of Tins, off the coast of Greece, now writes: "Owing to you, we do not suffer hunger like many other children. That is why we thank you and pray to Jesus for you with all our hearts." The Sisters can support these orphans of war for only one hundred and twenty dollars a year. Here is real charity, and we know your heart will be moved.

JUST COMPLAINT

"Some of your appeals require so much money. Father, isn't there something small I can give?" Yes, write for "HOW CAN I HELP?" which will tell you. We are deeply grateful for the smallest gift.

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