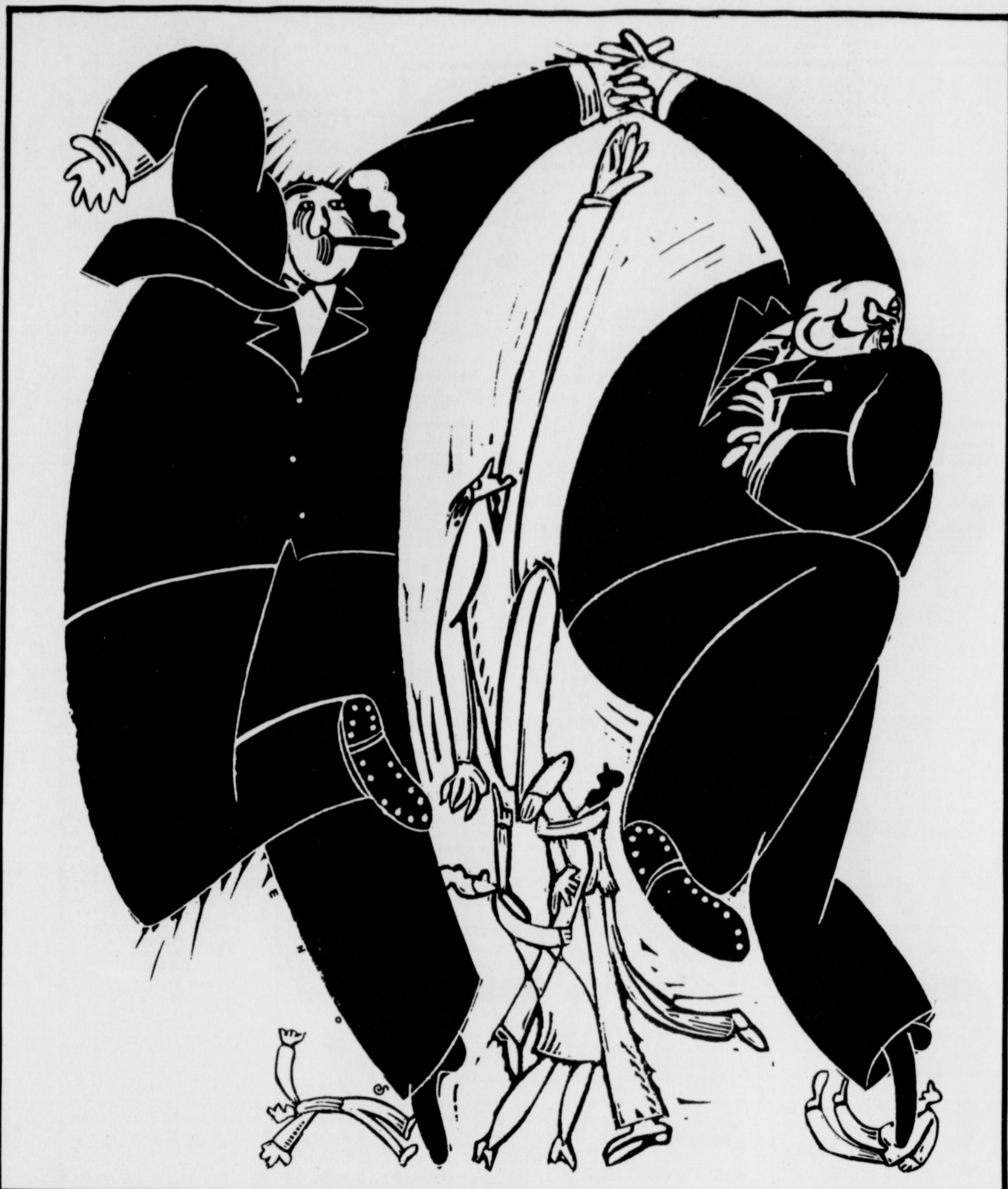




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THE BUSINESS\$ OF AMERICA

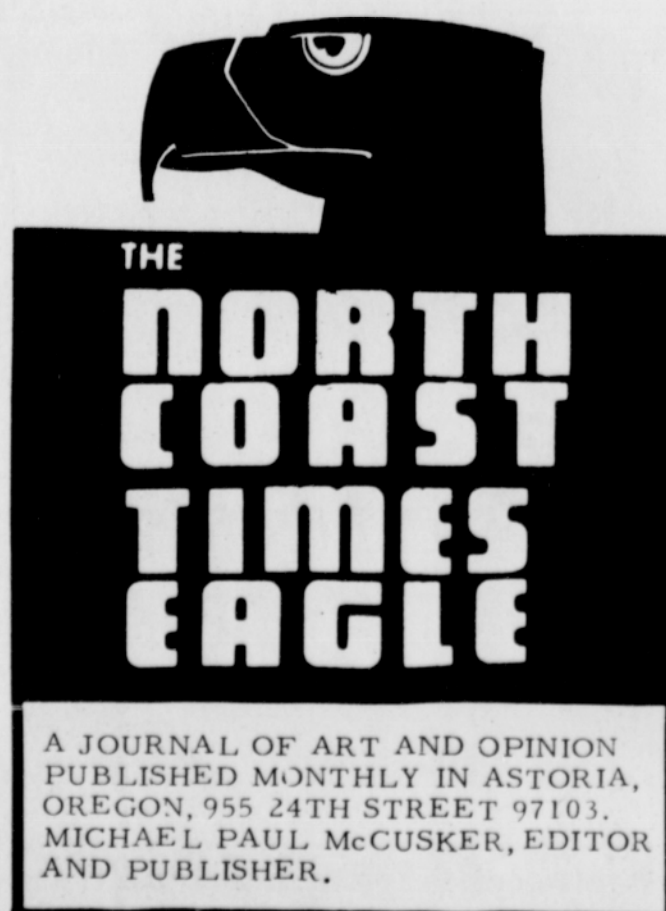
by Arthur Honeyman

I am as guilty as anyone of not expressing my deep-down concerns about the longrange dangers of "Reagonomics", dangers which I believe amount to defacto treason against the citizenry of the United States. This betrayal may or may not be a conscious effort of conservative members of American society to reduce the numbers of classes from several — which constitute an ability for citizens to easily move from one economic status to another — to only two, which constitute the very rich, and therefore powerful, minority and the very poor and powerless majority. You see, the ultimate goal of conservatives is to return to eighteenth century so-called laissez faire principles. From what I understand as an individual whose knowledge of economics is minimal, this mercantile hands-off policy not only glorifies the free enterprise system but also allows the top dog to squelch all opposition by whatever means it takes to remain on top. Under such conditions the status quo has no place for regulations which promote and legitimize economic mobility between classes.

Conservatives are correct when they hold that it is liberals who are primarily responsible for regulation in this country. Right from its founding, the U.S. government has been mandated to establish laws to protect the interests of its citizenry. As stated in that famous historical document held so dear to Americans, "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal...", we have indicated that we fully expect certain rights to be legally enforced in order to ensure an opportunity to pursue a variety of avenues to success without fear of being trampled upon by a top dog. Although Teddy Roosevelt, for example, was an expansionist of American territory, it was he who recognized the need to curb gigantic conglomerates through regulation in order to prevent corporate monopolies from swallowing smaller business entities. Famous is the statement of Calvin Coolidge when he claimed that "The business of America is business." Then Wall Street crumbled in 1929 and the Great Depression hit.

It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt who could plainly see that the business of America is people. Immediately, he took steps to ensure that Americans would get back on their feet. His famous promise of a "new deal for Americans" is indicative of the direction he was headed. It was toward economic regulation in several areas.

Possibly there are those who will claim that it was World War II which wrought our economic recovery, not Roosevelt's economic regulations or work programs. The war may have been a temporary stimulus to the economy (although I contend that war is always a drain on resources and human power), but history indicates that we were recovering anyway.



The point, however, is that perhaps for the first time in history a government realized the value in subsidizing its populace in order to step up its economy; it takes possession of currency to establish a flow of currency and therefore a fluid economy. The greater the cashflow the more mobile a society is. By the same token, the more mobile a society is the greater the opportunity for individuals to move up the social and economic ladders, which results in the defacto decrease of differences between classes — a condition considered anathema by most conservatives.

But Roosevelt did more than upgrade the economic standard of living for Americans. He also initiated the process which enabled the average citizen to receive a college education. This brilliant and ethically farsighted move was loudly protested by conservatives who hastened to assert that it was an unnecessary waste of time and resources — unnecessary because this was America and in America you did not need a college education to be financially successful, and once you acquired wealth you could afford to pay for it yourself. On the surface this line of thinking was okay; but Roosevelt recognized that an ever-increasing technology was requiring a formal knowledge not adequately available.

But it is clear to me that educated conservatives must recognize the role which knowledge almost intrinsically plays in a mobile society, and especially as a tool to enable individuals to achieve some of their dreams. If this assessment is indeed correct, then it is clear that they must also understand the role that the lack of formal education plays in keeping a society stagnant and in keeping most individuals safely locked into the classes into which they were born. And naturally, they understand what Roosevelt understood, that it costs money to go to college.

Although Roosevelt was not directly responsible for creating most of the programs instituted by his liberal successors, he established the climate in which they operated. Historians

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