

TODAY and TOMORROW

— by —
Don Robinson

POLITENESS — — — subways

As I was being pushed into a New York subway train the other day, I began wondering what had happened to old-fashioned politeness in the city—things like giving seats to ladies, hat-tipping and other little courtesies of the past.

In the small town in which I live good manners are still considered creditable qualities, and I suppose they are "after hours" among some New Yorkers.

But in the heat of the subway rush politeness is out. No holds are barred in the battle for seats, straps and standing room. Men, women and children must fight as equals. It's a survival of the fittest tussle and the women who win seats squeeze into them with a smile of achievement on their faces. By using their elbows, their umbrellas and by watching for holes in the forward wall, they have crashed through to a glorious victory.

Whether the women push and shove and fight because they know that no man will ever give them a seat—or whether no man ever gives them a seat because he has been pushed and shoved by them so often, is a moot question. The one clear fact is that when the subway trains rattle in all forms of politeness are cast to the winds.

NERVES — — — crowds

But it's not just in the subways of New York that fighting has been substituted for politeness. You'll find it in the shopping crowds, in the motor traffic (where the policeman confines his helpful advice to confusing drivers to shouting "Where the d'ya think you're goin'?" in the theatre lobbies, in the restaurants—in fact anywhere where people's nerves are on edge from their contacts with crowds.

During the World's Fair in New York, strange things happened. Quite often men were seen to get up and give seats to ladies. I saw men take off their hats in elevators and sometimes a woman would pardon herself when

she accidentally bumped you with a package. Motorists were seen to make a strange gesture of putting out a hand to inform taxi drivers that they were going around a corner and pedestrians were seen to wait for green lights before crossing the streets. There were all sorts of unusual goings-on during the Fair, and whenever dyed-in-the-wool New Yorkers saw these happenings they immediately exclaimed "out-of-towners!"

New York is no place for a Sir Walter Raleigh. If that Elizabethan gentleman were to show up in the city today he would undoubtedly end up by having his coat stolen!

INDIVIDUALS — — — strangers

If anyone bothered to make a survey on the subject, he would probably find that the courtesy of a group of people decreases as the population of the city increases. I say "group" of people because I suspect that individuals in the city do show some courtesies toward their friends—it's when they are part of a crowd of strangers that courtesy seems to them to have no useful function.

Manners are not inborn—they are merely a set of miscellaneous actions which we have adopted to make our relations with one another more pleasant. Some of them are admittedly leftovers from other generations and are rather useless today. But they are continued because they have a sign of good breeding. Others are gestures of kindness or helpfulness.

Handshaking was first started as a means for men to demonstrate that they were not carrying weapons. Now we don't suspect a man of totting a gun if he doesn't shake hands with us, but we still think of hand-shaking as a gesture of friendliness.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said: "Good manners are made up of petty sacrifices." In the city it is quite possible that a person would spend most of his time making petty sacrifices if he applied the dictates of action, which most of us think of as good manners, to his contacts with the crowds.

NEIGHBORS — — — reputation

People who live in small towns have to get along with their neighbors.

In a big city you can push people around, step on their toes, mumble nasty names at them—and then submerge yourself in the crowd with the realization that you'll never see those people again anyway.

In the small town, if you are unmannerly in any way, it becomes part of your permanent record. Those to whom you are impolite hold it against you. If you are impolite often, you build a reputation for it and the whole town begins to look down on you. It's no fun living in a small town if you are disliked even by some of the people. For in a small town you can't escape from anyone.

The big difference is: in the small town an individual must do his best to get along with all of the rest of the people. In a big city an individual tries to get along alone—not without friends, but alone as far as the milling crowds are concerned.

When a country family visits city friends who live in an apartment house, one of the first questions is: "How do you like your neighbors?" The usual answer of the city family is: "We've never met them."

It seems strange that two families can live on the same floor with only a thin wall separating them and never know each other and perhaps never see each other. But that is the case in thousands of city homes.

Perhaps a new code of manners for coping with crowds will gradually develop in cities like New York. Meanwhile in the small towns we should guard against accepting the present city version of politeness. No matter how our city brothers act, it isn't smart to be rude.

This Week IN WASHINGTON

WASHINGTON—The effects of President Roosevelt's fireside chat, delivered on the night of December 29th, are still being debated in Congressional circles here. Obviously designed to put an end to talk of an early peace between Germany and Great Britain and to arouse what some Congressmen have called an "apathetic America" to the dangers of a Nazi victory, the talk has at least aroused Congressmen from any apathy. Most are paying strict attention to the mail from home to see if there is any sudden change in the opinion of their local communities, while those with defense bills are vigorously pushing them through committees.

The President's message to Congress again emphasized the necessity of continuing and increasing aid to Britain, and the need for a tremendous production effort here at home. All of this seems to presage the repeal of the Johnson Act which forbids credits to a nation defaulting on its war debt, but the Johnson Act will not go by the boards without some of the fiercest debating since the controversy on American conscription of manpower for the army.

Precedent Set

Some quarters believe that the President will not risk a defeat by backing outright repeal of the Johnson Act, but will find some means of circumventing it through an opinion of Attorney General Jackson. The destruction of legal precedent which can be followed without any question of legality.

In the meantime, the more mundane matter of money has come to Congressional attention. One of the first appropriations that the new Congress will have to make is for \$1,000,000,000 to cover the deficiency of 1940. Although the past Congress appropriated \$9,000,000,000 to cover defense expenditures, this proved insufficient in the light of rising prices. These same rising prices have brought the question of price control to the fore, but it is not expected that this will be more than a passing issue—at least, for the present.

A new tax bill will have to be passed to pay the expenses of the current year, but this will not be brought before Congress until after the March 15th income taxes are in. A new bond issue may be floated to care for present expenses. This will require an almost immediate expansion in the present \$45,000,000,000 debt limit to the \$65,000,000,000 proposed by the Treasury Department. There seems little doubt that this extension will be permitted immediately.

Nor does there seem much doubt that a new reorganization bill will be pushed through Congress before January 21st, along with a bill to continue the emergency powers granted the President during the past eight years.

A number of these powers expire on that date, among them the power to devalue the dollar further and to control the \$2,000,000,000 currency stabilization fund. The new reorganization bill will probably not exempt any specific governmental agencies from its provisions as the past one did. In 1940, twenty-one agencies were exempted from the bill's provisions, but it has been made clear that the President wants none of them excluded in 1941.

The Dies committee is reasonably certain of obtaining the \$1,000,000 it has asked to continue its investigation of subversive activities. There will be some opposition to the appropriation, but Dies has sold himself and his committee to the American people so firmly that few Congressmen dare to take an open stand against him.

Then too, the House will have to act on the committee report condemning the set-up and the administration of the National Labor Relations Board. Shortly before the close of the last year this committee completed a year's investigation of the Labor Board's activities and delivered a scathing denunciation in part of its report:

"The committee concludes that when an administrative agency of the government so far forgets its proper function as to defy the will of Congress, harbor and protect avowed enemies of constitutional government, invent and devise extra-legal (and even unlawful) methods of tormenting and quining employers, foment and perpetuate industrial strife and oppress and penalize certain labor groups to favor others—then the time has come when the people of this country must raise their voices in insistent protest against industrial peace, and with it, the entire program of national defense be jeopardized, and the fundamental concepts upon which their government is based be ultimately and utterly destroyed."

Restrictions on Labor
The committee report, scathing as it is, would undoubtedly have little effect on this new Congress were it not for the stress now being put on national defense. With several bills pending (with at least inferential official approval) which would prohibit strikes in defense industries and which would put stringent restrictions on the activities of labor, it seems likely here that the Wagner Act and the whole Labor Board is due for a vigorous shake-up.

Yet through all the controversial issues offered, one thing remains clear here in Washington—that the final word on the grave issues of national policy will rest with the White House. President Roosevelt, elected for a third term, is as firmly entrenched in his power over Congress as he has been throughout his first two terms. Occasionally, President's desires may be overridden, but for the most part, the President will rule the Congress.

This weeks Sermon.

Christ's Valuation of Personality.

Lesson for January 19: Luke 14: 1-14.

Golden Text: Matthew 6: 25.

In last Sunday's lesson we learned that the enemies of Jesus were outspoken in their condemnation of him for healing on the Sabbath. Today we find they condemned him by their silence. But Jesus read their thoughts and suggested a comparison be-

tween the worth of a beast and that of a man. They who would draw a beast from a pit on the Sabbath but condemn Jesus for healing a man were hypocrites indeed.

The parable aimed at the bad manners of the guests, and the counsel of Jesus to invite to a dinner, those who cannot return the courtesy, condemn selfish policy. Swapping gifts at Christmas is common enough it leaves the needy out and it merits no heavenly reward.

In unselfish giving we shall not receive a reward. Wondrous stories might be told of bread cast upon the waters and found after many days. But if not in this life, we shall be recompensed, Jesus says, in the resurrection of the just.

In the whole of the lesson we see that Jesus sets an infinite value upon personality. The denial of all the privileges of democracy to any man is a breach of democracy. At this time when the fate, not only of empires, but also of democracy in the world, is at stake, let us be concerned to make our democracy in this country real—something more than a name to be defended and fought for, a way of life that draws its authority and inspiration from Jesus himself, joins in setting an infinite worth upon every man of our people, and seeks to extend the blessings of democracy and of the kingdom of God to all.

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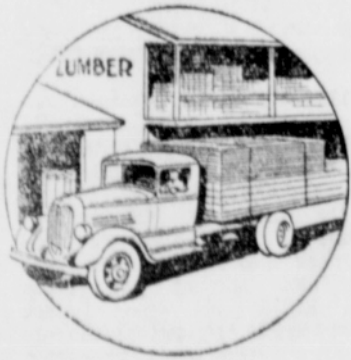
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