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Innocence in Two-Part Time

By JAMES THRASHER

Whatever can be said for or against the so-called Lea Act, one thing must be admitted. It was tailored to the measure of James C. Petrillo and some of his practices as head of the American Federation of Musicians.

Mr. Petrillo says this anti-feather-bedding law is unconstitutional. So he called a strike at a Chicago radio station to test the question, and said as much at the time. He was tried and acquitted by Federal Judge Walter LaBuy. The Supreme Court refused to rule on the law's constitutionality when the verdict was appealed. Instead it ordered a new trial on the facts of the case. Now Mr. Petrillo has been acquitted again.

This probably makes the government attorneys unhappy. Maybe Mr. Petrillo is unhappy, too. For he took great pains to break a law that he considered unlawful. Now the judge says he didn't break it at all.

The whole thing is pretty puzzling. Here was a small local station that employed three AFM members to turn records. Mr. Petrillo told the station it would have to hire six union musicians to put the platters on the phonograph. The station refused, so the boss man of music called a strike.

The strike is still on. Meanwhile, other members of the station's small staff are performing the arduous artistic duties of the striking musicians in their spare time.

The reason Mr. Petrillo is not guilty, says Judge LaBuy, is that the station did not disclose to the defendant "the lack of need for additional employees as a reason for rejecting the defendant's demands."

It seems evident from this that Mr. Petrillo never asked whether the station needed twice the record-turning help it already had. At least Judge LaBuy said nothing about Mr. Petrillo inquiring and getting no reply.

To be fair, let's stretch the imagination and suppose that the czar of tunedness did go to the station and say, "Don't you need three more record-turners?", and that the station manager said to himself, "We certainly do, but I'm not going to tell him so."

No, that's too hard to believe, for reasons mentioned above: the fact that the station is doing all right without the three strikers, and the fact that Mr. Petrillo made no secret of his deliberate intent to test the Lea Act's constitutionality.

If this isn't puzzling enough, let us remember that in the first trial Judge LaBuy ruled that the Lea Act was unconstitutional. This time he says nothing about that aspect; he simply rules that the law was not broken.

We don't know what happens now. But we doubt that Mr. Petrillo will try the same tactics again, for Judge LaBuy's decision implies that a precedent has been set. Next time an employer will only have to say, "No, we don't need more help" to Mr. Petrillo. Then if he still tries to force more men on this employer it will be rather hard to prove that the Lea Act hasn't been violated.

So we would guess that James Caesar isn't altogether happy in his victory. But we can't imagine anything but smiles at station WAAF, Chicago, which is getting all its work done without three extra salaries to pay.

Reader Editorial

QUESTIONS DIRECTED TO MORSE

EUGENE—(To the Editor)—Senator Wayne L. Morse is a smart politician who puts a little life in the Washington Merry-Go-Round, because he thinks a bit more progressively than some of his distinguished colleagues. The senator is a man of intelligence who knows politics and politicians. Why then did Mr. Morse mount the platform at the University of Oregon last Wednesday evening and disappoint his audience by saying nothing new?

Possibly the senator tackled too much material and could not thoroughly elucidate his opinions in so short a time. Possibly, too, Mr. Morse was trying to placate everybody by promoting himself as a liberal Republican, which we all know him to be. Or possibly Senator Morse should have added to his statements the why's and wherefores of his idealistic declaration of independence.

The senator announced that he is behind the Marshall Plan and against anything which may sabotage it. He is to be congratulated for his firmness of purpose, but just what does he consider to be an act of sabotage to the European Recovery Program? Is the fact that some of his own strong party members have come out against the Marshall Plan an act of sabotage in the eyes of Senator Morse?

No one, even among the most conservative of the conservatives, particularly wants to walk out on Europe, but some of the deep thinkers have been wondering if our economic bid is the answer. If the Marshall Plan could help pull Europe up by the bootstraps by providing hungry mouths with the will to live and rebuild, the economists would be happy. That would be money well spent. But leading economists who are not afraid of politics or the politicians look upon the Marshall Plan with nurse-marks forever. They say we can't play nurse-marks forever. At present the Marshall Plan offers little in return except promises, and yet if some agreement is not reached soon, we may lose out altogether.

Senator Morse says the number one domestic problem is inflation. Everyone will agree to this, but not to the solution. The senator offered no concrete solution to the home problem, unless it be higher taxes, though he says the problem must be solved in order to fulfill our international obligations so necessary to winning the peace.

Isn't that looking at things through the wrong end of a telescope? Just what does Mr. Morse think is the cause of high prices? He did shake a finger at labor for asking continual wage boosts,

but has not the price spiral been necessitated and aggravated through the large sums of money, which we politely refer to as lend-lease, that have already been poured into Europe's depleted coffers? And what does the scoreboard show so far? Zero to zero. Our side wants to give money and food to Europe's needy, and it's a very patriotic thought. But for what we give, Russia gives more. The score still remains zero to zero. If food and money to Europe is the immediate answer, then let's give. But let's not pamper Europe's recovery. Even one home run is better than a zero to zero score.

In that case, however, prices will stay up. You can't get blood from a turnip, and you can only grow so many turnips. You can't give all your turnips to your neighbor and still expect to feed turnips to your own family. Who's kidding who, Mr. Morse, or are you an eternal optimist? Sallie Carter Timmons.

WALLACE DUBBED CHAMPION OF CONFUSION

PORTLAND—(To the Editor)—If the leadership of this country were so confused as is Henry Wallace himself, there might indeed be both call and chance for a third party. But that leadership, despite weaknesses and mistakes, is not so muddled as is Mr. Wallace, nor does it deserve his indictment as to spirit and purpose.

President Truman, Secretary of State Marshall, Warren Austin and their colleagues have very different ideas about preserving peace and preventing war from those of Mr. Wallace, but of their devotion to that end there can be no doubt. They have shown a remarkable patience and tenacity in that devotion. The fundamental question between them and Mr. Wallace's movement, therefore, is as to who offers the sounder methods of seeking peace.

Mr. Wallace failed to give any concrete convincing ideas at all as to how he would proceed in that quest. Just how would he deal with the tough Molotov? Does he actually believe that the Russians would yield simply to good will? When he speaks of strength for this country, pending agreement with Russia and denounces universal military training, just what kind of strength does he have in mind?

When he tries to get down to the specific—which is rarely—his own inadequacies quickly show themselves.

We would not minimize his high purpose, his courage and even the soundness of certain of his basic aims. Undoubtedly, peace is the prime need of all the world. Agreement with Russia which will afford a just and dependable foundation for practical cooperation for peace, despite differences of systems and views, is the overshadowing objective. Henry Wallace does a service in continuing to emphasize the inexpressible critical importance of the utmost endeavors in behalf of peace. But when he implies that he alone has adequate awareness of the grave urgency of international cooperation, he is yielding to delusions which must have been stimulated by admirers and others less sincere who would make use of him.

When he fails to be more concrete on how to advance agreement with Russia, he emphasizes the great weakness of his position.

He seems to have been carried away into a quite unreal conception of himself and of the political situation in this country when he thinks of himself as the great creative leader of a new party destined to endure as a mighty agency of "peace, prosperity and progress."

Tremendously influential leaders have more or less suddenly emerged in this country; there have been new parties which have lasted, but Mr. Wallace scarcely seems likely to become a dominant figure in America, and his party, like many others, may rise only to fade away rapidly.

As for the political effect of his activities on the two parties, it is evident that he will take some strength from the Democrats, but not enough to defeat the Democratic party. It is a commentary on his consistency that he himself not long ago acknowledged that a third party would strengthen the chances of a victory for reaction. But Mr. Wallace, in various ways, has been alienating sentiment and confidence steadily in recent months. His latest move may accelerate that process. It may even be that he will turn out a relatively minor factor in the 1948 campaign.

—CHARLES T. McPHERSON
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WASHINGTON LETTER BY PETER EDSON NEA Washington Correspondent

No Progress in Housing

WASHINGTON—(NEA)—America's housing shortage now appears to be just as bad as it was two years ago, according to Census Bureau surveys and government housing agency estimates. If anything, the situation is perhaps a little worse than on V-J Day.

In October, 1945, a survey showed 1,200,000 families were living doubled up. The number is believed to be just as high today. In December, 1946, a survey showed 2,900,000 families in need of housing. The number is put at 3,000,000 today. This situation exists in spite of all the construction activity of the past two years. It is due to the fact that new families are being formed faster than the older families, who have been living doubled up, find new accommodations.

In 1946, only 437,000 new permanent houses were completed. An estimated 860,000 were completed in 1947. But even this isn't as good as the record of 20 years ago. In 1925, new housing units completed numbered 937,000.

The need is put at 1,250,000 units a year for the next 10 years. The industry will have to do about a third better than it did last year to meet this goal. These are the highlights of the situation as New York Congressman Ralph A. Gamble's Joint Committee on Housing opens a final 10 days of investigation hearings, prior to writing a report on what's wrong.

Materials Shortages Almost Licked
It is now possible to get a house built in four or five months, which was normal before the war. Materials shortages are pretty well licked, save for nails, sewer pipe, plumbers' supplies and other metal products. But prices are still too high, and there is no indication they are coming down. Labor and materials' costs are 88 per cent greater than prewar.

Goal of the Veterans' Emergency Housing Program, which was abandoned in one year, was to increase the housing supply by 2,700,000 units in two years. This figure was to include new permanent housing, conversions, temporary housing, trailers and 800,000 prefabricated units. What has been delivered in the past two years is 1,900,000 units—1,500,000 of them permanent construction. The prefabricated program was a complete flop.

There is no use crying over that now. There is sincere doubt if the prefabricated program could have been carried out, for lack of materials. Or if materials had been available, there wouldn't have been enough labor.

The poor materials and faulty construction going into much of the postwar housing may yet develop a major national scandal. If the veterans' program had succeeded 100 per cent, there still wouldn't be enough housing.

This does not mean, however, that the whole veterans' emergency program should be considered a bust. Many of the things it accomplished do not show as completed houses. But it did much good in arranging priorities and getting the building materials' industry back on its feet, after being out for the duration.

For Want Of A Nail . . .
The nail situation offers an excellent example. In January, 1946, production was 25,000 tons. In April, 55,000. Then the premium-payment plan went into effect in July. Production jumped to 79,000 by January. Premium payments went off last March. Production flopped. It was down to 57,000 tons in August and September, is between 60,000 and 65,000 tons now.

Nails used to sell for \$3 a keg. They're now quoted at \$14, but have sold as high as \$35 on the black market.

Surveys at the end of the war indicated that about 50 per cent of the people in need of housing wanted to rent, though 70 per cent wanted to own their home eventually.

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