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Editor and Proprietor



EDITORIALS

COUGHING UP WITH THE SMITH BROTHERS

"The Smith Brothers Cough Up," thus did the Wall Street Journal headline an editorial concerning the taxes paid by the Smith Brothers of cough-drop fame. And the facts show that the concern must cough long and hard indeed.

Recently the Smith Brothers posted a sign in a restaurant they own, listing their various taxes. There are 24 of them, and each is distinctly different. They include a federal, a state and a city tax; an oil, telephone and check tax; gasoline tax; stock and franchise taxes; proceeding and gross receipts tax and so on. At the bottom of their list was printed "We Do Our Part."

The Smith Brothers are in no different position from thousands of other businesses, large and small. These businesses are reaching the point where taxation is becoming the largest single item of expense—many examples are recorded where more is paid to government than to workers, with little or nothing, or deficits left to the owners. Many of these businesses are reaching the point where it will be impossible for them to meet the tax collector's demands—where they will find it cheaper to go out of business and salvage what they can now, than to keep on operating.

The entire cause of economic recovery is bound up with the tax problem. We want employment, investment, industrial development—but we cannot have them by establishing taxation policies that throw men out of work, frighten investors, and paralyze industry.

All of us are coughing up with the Smith Brothers.

PERSONAL LIABILITY FOR FIRE

Personal liability for fire, as the National Board of Fire Underwriters points out, is a principle long established in Europe. In France, for example, if it is proven that a person's carelessness was responsible for a fire, he is held financially responsible for all the damage done to the property of others.

That principle has never been greatly accepted in America, but there are one or two scattered instances where it has been applied. In 1926, in Cincinnati, a citizen was ordered to comply with certain fire-preventative ordinances. He failed to do so, and fire broke out on his property. It was put out by the fire department, which sent a bill for \$650 to cover the expenses involved. The case went finally to court, and the city was awarded damages of \$500. A similar instance occurred in New York. A company was ordered to install fire sprinklers, did not do so, and sustained a major fire. Under a 50-year old law, the city sued and received \$1,500 for extinguishing it.

Law or no law, fire is a matter of personal responsibility. Every individual owes his community a definite duty so far as eliminating hazards from his property is concerned. In most cases, it costs little in either time or money to make hazardous property safe.

Fire Prevention Week was recently observed—and all of us should resolve to retain and use the information that was disseminated then. Fire is the great destroyer—most of its destruction is unnecessary. Every citizen must become his own fire marshal, cooperating with the constituted authorities to see that his neighborhood and own are made safe.

THE TRAGIC TAX

We all kick over the taxes added on us by the politicians—but how many protest about taxes we impose upon ourselves? There are any number of these, and one of the heaviest is due to the economic cost of the nation's automobile accidents. It is the tragic tax.

Investigators say that at least 95 per cent of motor accidents are

avoidable. They cannot be blamed on the automobile, but on the driver. They are due to some failure, some sin of omission or commission on the part of the man or woman behind the wheel. In spite of intensive work by the authorities and safety associations, we go on just the same, smashing and crashing, killing and maiming, flaunting the laws and regulations.

And we are paying plenty for it. According to estimates compiled by the National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriters 35,000 or more persons will be killed this year, and more than a million injured. Statisticians estimate the total economic cost of all this to be between one and a half billion and two and a half billion dollars when all the items are added. Assuming that two billion dollars approaches the correct figure, it means a cost of about \$16.66 for every one of the 120,000,000 persons in the United States. That is indeed a tragic tax to pay for our own recklessness.

THE REAL ENEMIES OF THE PUBLIC

In a recent editorial, the Saturday Evening Post observed that American business is much cleaner and better than the politicians, through their investigations, have tried to represent it.

The investigations of which the Post speaks have been carried on spasmodically for a number of years, and during the last five years have increased in number. For the most part, they have been used to manufacture political ammunition. The investigators—and members of both major parties have been involved—have been less interested in giving the people a true picture of affairs than in seeking to enhance their own reputations as enemies of corruption and friends of the people. The result is that, when evidence was brought forth that in any way indicated that some individual concern was dishonest or unethical, the idea has been subtly disseminated that it was representative of all industry. By this process, public opinion in the character and integrity of our business leaders has been unwarrantedly shaken.

It is unfair to say that because one banker failed his trust all bankers are crooked, as it would be to point to a public official who accepts a bribe and say that all public officials are of the same stamp. In both business and government there are corrupt men who should be punished, but fortunately they are rare. No one opposes the prosecution of those who have failed their trust—but the ends of justice and decency are certainly not served by making it appear that honorable and honest men, in business and politics, are equally bad citizens.

What this country needs more than anything else now is confidence. Those who seek to destroy confidence to advance their own ends, are the real enemies of the common welfare.

THE ROOTS OF FARM PROGRESS

Unprejudiced reports from many agricultural areas indicate that an increasing number of farmers are becoming dissatisfied with political farm relief.

That is not entirely the fault of relief measures, the promises held out were too rosy. Thousands of farmers, with or without reason, expected the immediate creation of Utopia, and when that didn't happen they were bitterly disappointed. Such

relief efforts, no matter how sincerely or wisely they are carried on, are doomed to a least partial failure because political considerations inevitably appear, and often outweigh practical considerations. Again, all political parties hold power for comparatively short times, and they cannot plan for the "long pull," but must seek to speed up the action of economic law—something no one has yet done successfully.

It is possible that our farmers are coming to see that their best chance for relief lies in their own efforts. They have the instrument of progress ready at hand—the Farm Co-operative. It is permanent. It is non-political. It does not have to seek temporary benefits at the expense of permanent good. Farm legislation is passed and is replaced, administrations come and go, but soundly established Co-ops remain.

Out of the farmer's own work, reflected in cooperative actions and policies, will come real and permanent farm progress.

"Challenge" Warns Of Danger from Centralized Power

(Continued from page one)

made:

"To create corporations for a wide variety of business activity heretofore the exclusive field of private enterprise;

"To install services and to manufacture commodities in competition with citizens"

Assumption of Powers
Here, without once referring to the NRA and the AAA, Mr. Hoover enumerates further assumptions of power by the Executive in the field of these two endeavors:

"... to fix minimum prices for industries or dealers; to fix handling charges and therefore profits; to eliminate 'unfair' trade practices;

"To allot the amount of production to individual farms and factories . . . ; to destroy commodities;

"To stop expansion or development of industries . . . ;

"To establish minimum wages; to fix maximum hours and conditions of labor;

"To impose collective bargaining; to arbitrate the effect of the antitrust laws."

At some time or place, the former Republican President says: "All of these authorities have been used.

Powers once delegated are bound to be used, for one step drives to another."

Calls It Coercive Cooperation

Concerning "regimented industry and commerce," Mr. Hoover says "in this mobilization there has been constant use of the term 'cooperation' . . .

"At best," he continues, "it is 'coercive cooperation.' Free will and consent, the essential elements in cooperation, have not often been present."

"Ample evidence of coercion is to be found in the bludgeoning proceedings of many important code conferences, in the changes forced in some codes, from which there was no appeal or refuge; in the incitement to public boycott . . .

"All this," he writes, "is the most stupendous invasion of the whole spirit of liberty that the nation has witnessed since the days of colonial America."

Then, of "regimented agriculture," the former President says the whole thesis behind this program is the very theory that man is but the pawn of the state. It is a usurpation of the primary liberties of men by government."

The Government, he says, enters the field of Socialism in its "deliberate entry into business in competition with the citizen."

"As an instance," he adds, "we may cite the Tennessee Valley Authority, where the major purpose of the Government is the purchase, construction, operation transmission and sale of electricity."

If the Government leases this power under proper protections to the public, competition with the citizen is avoided, Mr. Hoover says.

"Here is one of the definite boundaries between liberty and socialism," the former President writes.

"Under liberty the citizen must have strong regulation of rates and profits of power companies to protect him from oppression by the operator of a natural monopoly."

Banking Needs Explored

"But where the Government deliberately enters into the power business as a major purpose in competition with the citizen, that is Socialism."

It is not yet clear, Mr. Hoover says "how far the regimentation of banking and the government dictation of credit through various agencies may extend."

"There are national stresses," he continues, "in which the Govern-

ment must support private financial institutions, but it is unnecessary for it to enter into competitive business to accomplish this.

"And lest the Government step over the line into Socialism, this support must be limited to activities where there is no competition, or so organized as ultimately to be absorbed into the hands of private ownership."

"The original Reconstruction Finance Corporation is an example of the former and the Federal Reserve banks, the Home Loan banks, the Federal Land banks of the latter. There are, however, some of the new financial agencies and some uses being made of the old agencies which forecast occupation beyond these fields and threaten dictation as to who may and who may not have credit. The threat to farmers of withholding credit to force them to sign crop contracts with the Government is a current example of possibilities."

Currency and Credit

To sum up his views on "managed currency and credit," Mr. Hoover states:

"Executive power over the coin is one of the oldest components of despotism."

"This brief survey of examples of experience up to this time is sufficient to make clear the definition of national regimentation and its progress in the United States," Mr. Hoover says.

"These instances are certainly sufficient to show that its very spirit is government direction, management and dictation of social and economic life."

"Its vast shift from the American concept of human rights which even the Government may not infringe, to those social philosophies where men are wholly subjective to the state. It is a vast casualty to liberty if it shall be continued."

After stating that such a course

leads only to Fascism, Socialism or Communism, Mr. Hoover gives as his last word:

"We have in our lifetime seen the subjection of liberty in one nation after another. It has been defeated by the untruth that some form of dictation by government can overcome immediate difficulties and can assure entry into economic perfection. America must not and will not succumb to that lure."

"That is the issue of our generation, not a partisan issue but the issue of human liberty."

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