

Fiddling While Rome Burns

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I went into a store the other day to buy something, and received the usual answer of the present time, "We have none and what's more we don't know when we shall have any." The gentleman who gave me the all-too-common reply added with a smile, "Why don't you write about these things in your column?" I laughed and replied that such language as I felt like using concerning the matter would not be allowed in print, and besides, what good would it do.

Everyone knows the conditions now; they know that something will have to be done, but most of them "pass the buck" and go gaily on their way. One wonders if our people ever really think. You hear growls and howls on every side, but seldom a constructive idea, nor does there seem to be any attempt toward finding a solution of our difficulties by the majority, and those few, who do think and plan for the future, seldom find many who are sufficiently interested to listen.

Some time ago there was a lecture given in our town concerning the present conditions and offering a possible solution. We know that our present system of economics is a tottering rat-ridden shell, and it is clear to any thinking person that we must find some new and workable system to replace it, but did any of our citizens take the trouble to go and

listen, discuss the matter and decide for or against? A few, yes, but darn few. Yet the beer halls were doing their usual business, card clubs were battling over prizes, study clubs were gleaming the gems of literature, etc., and the movie theater had its usual quota of patrons to see Micky Mouse. I do not say this particular lecturer presented the only possible solution of our problems; my wall is only against the deadly indifference of the average person to all efforts toward evolving a suitable working system. Their attitude seems to be, "To heck with our Rome. Let her burn. It's lots more fun to just keep on fiddling, so why should I bother about it? Let "George do it." But it has been my experience that if we don't pay attention to what "George" is doing, if we don't back him in the constructive labor and in his efforts to bring forth desirable results, and crack down on him when he goes too far wrong, then "George" is going to pass the buck on to something or somebody else. We are going to run out of "Georges" one of these days and the whole darn stinking mess is going to land just where it should land, and that is on our own heads.

My word, how we do play around with trifles these days when our whole world is rushing toward some terrific change. It rests with us, the people, the millions upon millions of us common people, as to what this change will be. We howl because we can't get this or that, because there isn't enough sugar, and

prices are too high on everything we can get, but do we stop to really think about the conditions which have brought about these shortages and these high prices? Men go on strike for higher wages, but you cannot blame them because they have to have more money in order to meet the higher prices. Then, in turn, prices go up. It is a vicious circle and we run around it like rats, just as we have always done. How many of us "rats" try to think out a path that will lead us away from this unending circle? Sometimes I wonder why the good Lord ever bothered to endow human beings with brains, for we certainly never seem to use them.

Civilizations greater than ours of the present day have fallen, the sands cover the stones of their giant buildings and only legends remain to tell us of their glory. You may think this cannot happen to us, but it can. A country oblivious of its own internal decay makes an easy prey; a people who pay no heed to the cause of conditions, who are content to play and to think of trifles while the turmoil of changing worlds swirls about them, can never be of any constructive use in averting the chaos which may come. I once watched a bunch of sheep pour over a precipice. The leaders saw their danger too late and tried to hold back but the silly empty-headed fools behind them could not seem to understand, they would not change nor seek a new path, and so poured themselves on the rocks below, carrying their leaders with them. Only a few were left to start another flock. If you have ever read history, you will see that civilizations act in that same senseless way. Will we never learn to thing, to really think? Will we never learn that always there is change and that it lies with us, with each individual one of us as a part of the whole, to see that the path we take is toward better conditions of living, toward a better type of government, a wiser economic system, rather than toward the precipice of destruction?

All right. I have had my say again. Some of you will yawn and say, "O heck, that woman makes me tired" and pick up the funny paper to reread the adventures of "Little Annie," or

turn on the radio to find out if poor little Lotta Weepmore has escaped the clutches of the panting villain, but, please God, there will be some who read this who will understand whereof I speak and who may even dare to think and to act. To those I say, "Carry on, brother. You will be called a crank, a radical, or a fool, but when we get shoved over the precipice with the rest of the world, it may be some consolation to you to know that at least we tried to turn them into a safer path, although that thought will, I fear, be of small comfort, since we also shall be numbered among the dead."

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