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TODAY AND TOMORROW

SOME of the questions discussed may seem of secondary import and irrelevant to matters which brook no postponement, but their neglect can easily lose the war. The struggle is almost as much one of production as of arms, and, as Senator George warns, "we can lose this war by waste." To close our eyes to any proposal which will hasten victory is madness, and when a program which will aid in the prosecution of the war will also lay sound foundations for peace, its consideration today is imperative.

The years following the last war teach many lessons, for the future will parallel the past. Millions of men will be demobilized to find their places in civilian life; industry will call for a complete reconstruction, and, without foresight, another depression will bring all the suffering of the last, but it will be more widespread and more acute, for this is an all-embracing struggle covering all the world. Furthermore, at the time of the last war we were comparatively healthy and prosperous, with a trivial national debt, but the present war came upon us tremendously augmented by the follies of depression years and with our people demoralized by a habit of looking to the government to do for them what it is every man's duty to do for himself. If our heritage of freedom is lost, whether by the usurpation of our own government or by our own inertia and indifference, what will victory mean?

We give uncompromising allegiance to personal liberty and to the principles of self-government, but in a crisis

where everything is at stake concessions must be made. Normally, each should labor at his chosen task, supporting himself by production, service, and exchange, but when fundamental liberties are set at naught by circumstances wholly beyond our control, corollaries cannot be deduced from premises which have lapsed. In emergency, we may well set aside some rights for the time being that all may not be lost. Sailors in a storm-tossed lifeboat are not free. In such straits, property, liberty, and even life must sometimes be sacrificed for the safety of all, and so in wartime we cannot hope to live by the ordinary rules of life. The state has unquestioned right to commandeer what it must have to live, but sacrifices should be spread as equitably as possible and compensation made for whatever is taken. Property requisitioned must be paid for, now or in the future; labor in armed forces must not go unrewarded, and when hazards of war take their toll in maimed bodies or in life itself, victims and dependents must be compensated so far as is humanly possible.

These principles are generally recognized, however imperfectly they are followed, and yet we go on trampling upon justice and destroying liberties in ways which impede rather than help the war effort. Privilege is perpetuated and extended: from the universal call to sacrifice many are exempted, and we fritter away energies and resources in a game of petty politics ruinous to harmony and united effort. It is openly acknowledged that action on vital matters was long held up in "an election year," with more thought of political advantage than of burning needs. Solution of the rubber problem was long delayed by factional squabbles; decisions on draft questions are deferred, and in all our rationing and price fixing, be they wise or foolish, there is perilous delay while politicians quibble.

Congress, and more particularly the Senate, is getting in-

creasingly touchy of the criticism which is the life of democracy, and while specious pleas are made for nonpartisanship, we see our lawmakers play the very game which they decry. The farm bloc receives attention, the silver states are subsidized, favored groups are told to relinquish no privilege, and group after group continues to win favor at the hands of Congress and of the Administration. Precious time is wasted, resources which should go to defense are diverted and squandered, and high officials find time, in the midst of a war-torn world, to meddle in local politics and interfere in nominations for local office. Consider the plea of a Cabinet member "to keep up the fight for New Dealism regardless of the war," and his frank statement that "the New Deal is a political party tied up with the labor movement under an able political leader."

Can we wonder, in the light of such a statement by an Administration spokesman, that even military affairs are sometimes subordinated to politics and that we are often kept in the dark regarding true conditions?

The wise householder, confronted with rapidly soaring necessary expenses, curtails all luxuries and expenditures which may be saved or deferred. When the house is on fire we give no thought to the selection of wall paper, nor do we think about amusements and luxuries when we are at the point of a gangster's gun. The same course should be followed by government today, and every expenditure which diverts men and money from supreme needs should be shelved. First things must come first. There is constant bickering about how tax revenues can be increased, but funds can be raised far more easily for burning necessities than for squandering on this and that with partisan motives. Many responsible agencies, including a joint commission of both Houses, show how readily some two billions could be saved each year by ending activities which, even if they have

some small excuse, can certainly be held in abeyance for the present.

An instance of crazy spending is cited by Senator Tydings in expenditures for press releases, often another name for political propaganda. We are urged to save paper, yet each week some seventeen pounds of "canned publicity" goes to every one of the great newspapers, while lesser journals receive proportional doses. Much is absolute rubbish, such stuff as a five-part opus on "How to Spend the Week-end Without a Car," exhorting us to dig in our gardens, play games, start discussion groups and collect stamps instead of motoring. Such gems as nubbins about a Venezuela income tax, farming in Guatemala, and bicycling in the Canaries are found in these precious effusions though to produce such pearls absorbs badly needed paper, man power, machinery, and office space, and for it we spend some twenty-seven millions each year. Small wonder that the government must call in typewriters to keep bureaucrats and parasites busy! Twenty-seven millions may sound like small change in these days, but this is only one of countless items, and it takes time, effort, and self-denial to sell a hundred million twenty-five-cent defense stamps. There is an old saying about a penny saved being a penny earned which might well be paraphrased to read, wasting a million to save a thousand. It is high time that we give ear to the warning of Representative Baumhart that "this war will be won or lost in Washington."

Taxation will be a problem for generations to come. We are told to produce, produce, and produce—metals, munitions, ships, and everything—and herein George has a vital message: "We labor for the reward which toil brings and the full fruits of labor will give greater incentive to production than only the small part retained after taxes absorb the lion's share." No one wants a profiteering which takes

advantage of the stress of war, but were both labor and capital to derive the recompense which is justly theirs, production would forge ahead.

Our national debt has reached astronomical proportions. To state it accurately is impossible, for it rolls up every day and many commitments have been made which are not yet included in actual bookkeeping charges. It is safe to say that it amounts, or will soon amount, to some two hundred billions of dollars, and such figures can be grasped only by comparisons. Had some good fairy started when Christ was born to put aside for the treasury of the United States one dollar every second, night and day, we would have today only enough to make a small partial payment. Final liquidation would have to be postponed for four thousand years, and even if we were to balance our budget now, we would not be out of debt until about A. D. 6000. There are mitigating factors, it is true: we owe it to ourselves and what we pay out we shall ourselves receive, which is very different from owing it to others, but, nevertheless, the situation is fraught with grave dangers. We are paying as we go, for we cannot draw on the future, and today's needs must be met from past and present production, but the allocation of these appalling expenditures is deferred by borrowing, and their distribution and the way in which they are to be collected must be left to those who follow us. Unless they are wiser than we of our generation, these costs will be allocated in a way which will impoverish all.

In a recent magazine article two alleged experts prominent in academic circles argue for a great public debt—and goodness knows we have it today—saying that “whenever private business requires and can justify the use of investment funds, of the kind which would be invested in government bonds, it can probably get them.” Such a statement is too transparently ridiculous to merit any consideration. How

can business justify investment when often all profits are eaten up in taxes? Would not even the canniest trustee view with favor the obligations of many corporations if it were not that the tax collector often exacts far more of the profits than is left to the owners, and not infrequently takes all. Again, they complain that "business enterprise has suffered from lack of confidence," but can we wonder? Listen to Winston Churchill again: "The warfare between big business and the Administration continues at a grievous pitch. The President continues blithely now to disturb, now to console business and high finance . . . and confidence does not return." Again, speaking before the outbreak of war, he says: "Even the most enthusiastic New Dealer might ask himself whether . . . this is a good time for the United States to indulge in this devastating internecine war." If such policies were disastrous in earlier days, how is it today?

That many spend rather than save is common knowledge, and who can say that they are not wise, when all the income from saving is exacted in taxation and often the principal itself is destroyed by the persecutions of government? Spending, if it be done wisely, is the better choice, when investment only courts disaster. To some muddled minds spending must be encouraged "to put money in circulation," but this is the sheerest nonsense, for money invested in capital is as truly spent as what goes for bread and butter. Under normal conditions no rational man saves to hoard but to put his savings at work to earn interest, and, to do this, savings must be spent for factories, houses, machinery, power plants, railroads, and a hundred things. Such funds are not withdrawn from circulation.

Whether the collection of ground rents—the single-tax if you so like to call it—would yield enough to support government is a question which we do not argue. In normal times

we think it would, if government were shorn of its illegitimate functions. But three things are indisputable: We should collect for the common use the common income from a common heritage before we confiscate private property; the taxation proposed would bring our resources into wiser and more productive use, to the benefit of all; and a direct tax makes for honesty and economy in government, while indirect taxation means waste, corruption, and speculation.

But there are encouraging signs. We are beginning to grasp the gravity of the times and our people are increasingly willing to make sacrifices. This is borne out by polls of public opinion, indicating that the rank and file are considerably in advance of political leaders, and more ready to forget partisanship and forego privilege. It looks as if corruption were more often the result of the seduction of the people than of innate depravity, and there is a difference between asking for the plums of privilege and accepting them when offered. Eve did not hanker for the apple until tempted by the serpent, and many will take a bribe dangled before their eyes who would not solicit it. Seldom does the workingman make unreasonable demands of his own volition: it is the organizer and agitator who calls strikes and engineers rackets. The farmer does not often curtail production to create higher prices by hunger but blocs curry favor by preaching "farming for famine." Industry is often led to corrupt lobbying by threats and by promises.

It is doubtful that there is any way in which those ill-fitted to bear arms or to make munitions can as well serve the nation as by bringing home to those in office a realization that this is an "all-out" war and that they too must make sacrifices. If we give more than lip service to the ideals upon which our republic is built, if we believe in man's rights and liberties, and if we have faith in government "of

the people, by the people, for the people," the responsibilities of supporting these standards are shared by every citizen. The government is as we make it, and its responsibilities are ours.

To those who will face what is both a duty and a privilege a few concrete suggestions are offered. It is an obligation incumbent on all of us to make felt whatever influence we have, doing our utmost to see that those in office are men of vision, character and conscience, displacing the incompetent and unscrupulous by men of intelligence and integrity, worthy of trust, and retaining in office those who serve the country well. Write to your Congressmen unhesitatingly in condemnation of what is evil and in commendation of what is good, and remember that the latter is often quite as fruitful as the former. Weigh the merits of those seeking office and the record of those in office by the supreme test of today's dire needs—the waging of the war and the sidetracking of nonessentials—and pay no attention to party tags. Underlying action, however, there must be clear, intelligent and unbiased thought, for we must know whereof we speak. Think, read, and study. And remember, it is not enough to act alone, for we must encourage others.

Our gloomy outlook may seem like an unjustified jeremiad, but it is shared by many thoughtful observers, including some of our ablest journalists. Weigh Raymond Clapper's words:

"For the first time since I have been reporting in Washington, I believe we are in danger of going over to dictatorship. I don't mean the temporary and quasi-dictatorship that war always brings to a brief life. I mean a dictatorship period."

He then speaks of the power of lobbyists, saying that "they are the Congress." Of their power to dictate legisla-

tion he says, "To see this thing happening at a critical time like this is an appalling event which sends a shudder through your frame if you want to keep this a democracy."

Commenting on these statements, Mark Sullivan writes, "We have a President in office exceptionally disposed to expand the executive power," and Walter Lippman said years ago of a proposal of President Roosevelt's, "It is a plan, as I see it, to gather together an irresistible power over the economic life of this country and to consolidate the power in the hands of his own following." Dorothy Thompson, writing in 1937, saw "the picture . . . of a tremendously centralized government, with a power and authority vested in the President not far from equal to the power and authority vested in Mussolini or in Stalin."

These are the views not of ordinary run-of-the-mill reporters, seeking sensationalism or biased by partisanship, but of outstanding students of public affairs, who bring to their work keen minds, scholarship, long experience, and integrity. Shall we ignore their warnings?

If we appear almost fanatically zealous in urging attention to George's teachings it is only because, after long years of study, we can find no other way. In all the welter of schemes and isms, in the hodgepodge of "planning," and in the many programs offered, we find nothing but confusion, injustice and oppression. George's proposal is the only one which meets every test: it is soundly and logically developed from incontrovertible premises; it is simple and practicable in execution; it will bring benefit to all and not only to a few, and, above all, it is honest, ethical, and Christian. Though we give it unqualified support in its broad principles, there is not the slightest desire to impose ideas on others. Such a course is as useless as it is unethical, and it can be said of the Georgists that, unlike many groups, they put emphasis on the shaping of opinion and not on political

pressure. The movement is one primarily of education; agreement or acceptance is not urged but only fair-minded study with open mind. From George's unshakable premises no program of action has ever been deduced which offers a better, simpler, fairer, and more practicable way of execution than his. If there is a better way, in heaven's name, let us have it; but any proposal must be weighed in a fair balance and judged from every angle and by every worthy standard. It must respect human rights and the sanctity of individual life; it must be just; it must be capable of execution, and it must conform to the best and highest moral instincts of moral law.

In closing, we can do no better than to adopt the dedication of *Progress and Poverty* and inscribe this little book, as George did his immortal masterpiece:

"To those who, seeing the vice and misery that spring from the unequal distribution of wealth and privilege, feel the possibility of a higher social state and would strive for its attainment."