

Extortion - Legal and Illegal

NOT ONLY has the conviction of two motion picture labor racketeers for extortion claimed much front-page notice, but the hi-jacking practices of labor leaders as a whole have also been featured to crusade proportions by magazines and newspapers.

Why? To few people who have any acquaintance with the history of unionism is this news. It must be remembered that a union is by design a pressure group. Its threat of "more money or we tie up your capital" is an instrument of force, not of reason.

The power of the union to enforce its decisions springs from the submerging of the interests of the individual members in the interests of the group. This power in practical unionism is lodged in the person of the leader.

The leader may be honest; he may be a crook. How he uses the power at his disposal is a matter of choice, particularly if he has built up within his organization the political means for the continuous enjoyment of that power.

The very existence of that power is an invitation to skullduggery, as the history of unionism long before the present exposé testifies. From the guilds of the Middle Ages to the modern labor organization instances of labor union black-jacking of both its members and the owners of capital are numerous and nauseating.

What significance is there in the present crusade to show up these practices? Can it have the purpose of arousing public opinion against unionism as a whole, against the futile attempts of workers to get a few more crumbs out of life, so that political pressure may safely be used to bring them in line?

But note the economic effects on all workers, on society as a whole, resulting from extortion by union leaders. Like all brigands, they merely raise the cost of living. What they take is exacted from the products of labor, directly or indirectly. In the final analysis everyone who lives without working must do so at the expense of the producer; there is no other way.

The labor union extortionist differs from the beneficiary of a tariff monopoly only in that his extortionism has neither the sanction of law nor the approbation of society. Yet it is just as detrimental to our economy, and therefore just as immoral.

If a Senator from Massachusetts agrees with a Senator from Louisiana to vote for a tariff on cane sugar in return for the other's vote for a wool tariff,

is this not an immoral, though legal, act? Particularly so if both Senators profit directly through business interests, or indirectly through the political support of the beneficiaries. The whole thing is within the law. But by what ethical standard can it be justified?



And, do not tariffs raise prices? Then they reduce the purchasing power of wages, and lower the worker's living standard. Sometimes the extortion price of the labor racketeers cannot be passed on by the capitalist; competition from other capitalists, who are not similarly victimized, prevents it. But a tariff is always passed on, because none of the competitors in that field is exempt.

So, while we are correctly excoriating the extortionist as a menace to society, let us not forget that the legal extortion which monopoly privilege is able to demand of society is of greater volume and therefore more detrimental. And by the abstract standard of right and wrong it is just as reprehensible.

Controlling the Hole

THOSE OF US who have pondered upon the importance of the hole in the doughnut, or upon its correct radius, must not become discouraged; a government agency gives promise of a solution of this problem.

The promise is involved in the unravelling of a similar geometric intricacy by Federal Security Administrator McNutt, who is at present struggling with the hole that surreptitiously creeps into spaghetti and thus metamorphoses that edible into macaroni. That should not be. The Food and Drug Administration, it is reported, is looking into the matter.

This august body recently held a hearing on the spaghetti-macaroni controversy. Vermicelli and egg noodles also had their arguments put in. We may now sit back in comfort and wait for a law. All apertures will be under control.