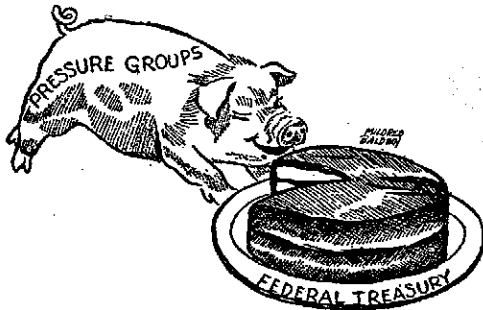


## The Farmers Get Parity Pay

WHEN THE TREK TOWARD DEMOCRACY began some two hundred years ago the rainbow promise of a more abundant life swelled its ranks.

There was some warrant for this promise. Every political upset results in temporarily dislodging those in control of the economic set-up. Property and property rights change hands and a few of the earth's disinherited finally get something; those who gain nothing in the new status quo are encouraged by the evidence that the thing can be done to seek further political change. The fight against absolutism did not abolish poverty. But because some who were poor got rich the belief grew that in democracy all could be rich.



Along with this historical struggle for political liberty came an economic change: the industrial revolution. To what extent these two movements were inter-related, and which caused the other, would make an interesting and fruitful subject for research. At any rate, increased production and somewhat higher returns for labor, resulting from technological advances, coming along with political democracy, convinced the under-dog that the right to vote and higher wages were cause and effect.

Some thinkers and all who deal in privilege have always known that politics is a legal method of transferring the wealth produced by the worker to the non-worker. But this method had become so sanctified by tradition that only in recent years has any light been cast on the true character of politics. The increase in the number of privilege-seeking groups in this country since the last war indicates that the nature of politics is more widely understood. Its social consequences are still hardly realized.

Before the World War No. 1 we voted with full assurance in our hearts that better times for all would come if "our party" were successful. Since 1918 an increasing number goes to the ballot box with tongue-in-cheek; the "lesser of two evils" doctrine guides our conscience, unless, indeed, we happen to have a sordidly personal interest in the outcome.

If we—any group of citizens—want a little more out of life, the way to get it is to strengthen our numbers, assure the politicians of this strength and its collective determination, and, presto, we get a special privilege. "We" might be landowners, farmers, ex-soldiers, manufacturers, unionists or bankers.

This accepted technique of government by and for pressure groups in a democracy differs from that in any form of absolutism in that in the latter the number of those who may claim privileges is limited by considerations of "blood" or of party affiliation; in a democracy it is the number of votes or the size of campaign contributions that decides. In either case the economy of the producers is depressed for the very simple reason that every economic advantage for some entails a corresponding disadvantage for others. The more privileges handed out by government, the more the workers have to pay.

This principle of democracy by and for privilege was demonstrated last month when our Congress

voted, and the President approved, the annual farm "parity" hand-outs. At a time of resort to fixing prices, when taxation and forced saving plans to hold down prices are contemplated, the government deliberately taxes the country to *increase* the prices of prime necessities. Why? The government needs support of its foreign policy from the largest pressure group in the country.

For the same or related reasons fabulous millions were poured into the NYA and CCC ventures, a million was appropriated to buy surplus canned oysters, a half-million was added to Congress's substantial allowance for franking publications printed at taxpayers' expense, \$86,000,000 went to develop 4-H clubs, nearly a billion dollars was on tap to make jobs for WPA "unemployables." Before this Congress adjourns, if it ever does adjourn, egregious pork barrel legislation to carry support will be passed with a paean for defense—at the expense of every pantry in America.

The incongruity of non-defense expenditures at this time makes sense only when the character of politics is taken into consideration. The sanction of the populace is the necessary support for political ventures; even Hitler and Stalin demand the signatures of their people. Imagine the demoralization of our government if the citizens stayed away from the polls en masse. The threat of punitive taxation would be upon us immediately.

And yet, the economic salvation of the people—the thing they thought they found in the Magna Charta and the Declaration of Independence—will come only when they realize that it is to be found in the market place, not the ballot booth. When they learn that their happiness lies only in the production and exchange of goods, services and ideas, when they refuse to authorize or accept privileges, then and only then will they be freed from slavery, political and economic. That is the lesson mankind must learn.