

Harlequinism

THE QUADRENNIAL All-American propaganda circus is under way. The side shows have pitched their tents, under one of which exhibitions of the legal freak of New York have already begun. Rivaling this unique slayer of sinister unsocial snakes of the modern Sodom are a number of other attractions raucously proclaiming their more than money's worth for the people's votes.

Lusty Bridges, granitorial senator from New Hampshire, riding an anti-New Deal chariot gilded by two young and wealthy Republicans who share his hate for the present tax collectors of Washington, does a stentorious stunt from the "Rock-bound Coast to the Golden Gate." Fish, of New York, than whom there is no whomer in the matter of being one hundred per cent, has headlined his show: "Keep America out of the War." Vandenberg, as ruggedly individualistic as the plutogogues of Michigan and the Republican Party will permit him to be, leads a cacophonous band in the rendition of "Liberty (for Us)." A funny-man from Rochester, N. Y., yclept Frank Gannett, has started entertaining with Anglophile jokes in his editorial columns. In another tent the dignified son of a former president of ponderous proportions holds forth with promising platitudes. There are more side shows in the offing.

And so, the big tent of the Republican Party, for which these minor attractions are in training, promises to be a many-ringed circus. As for the rival show next June, preparations are in abeyance because its maestro has not yet announced whether or not its attraction will be a one-ringed affair with himself as the sole performer. Since he is both "angel" and producer, the chafing clowns who are thus being restrained from even rehearsing their stunts must await the crack of his whip.

In ordinary circuses there are many funny quips. But in this one big show, that is, the culminating performance next November, all the antics of all the performers in both parties are singularly uniform in their funprovoking motif. This, briefly, is the "snapper" of all the jokes: "Vote for me because

I know best how to spend your money for you."

In the past the joke had some wit because the successful candidates spent only a small portion of our money for us. We could laugh at the gibe at our expense because it didn't cost us much. But nowadays they propose to spend our money for many things that we used to buy for ourselves, and did pretty well doing it. The present prospect is that we will be electing clowns who undertake to provide for us, with our hard-earned money, nearly everything from our first diaper to our ultimate coffin. They won't leave to us the pleasure of making mistakes and getting mad at ourselves for making them.

Yes, it's the taxing power they're all after. And to get it they assure us, each of them, that for the wise use of this taxing power he and he alone is divinely gifted. We listen, we are thrilled, we believe one or the other. And then the laugh is on us. For the taxing power never was, never can be and therefore never will be wisely used. Because, to begin with the power to tax is folly. Nobody knows better than we do what desires we have, how we shall spend our wages to gratify these desires.

Would there be any circus, would the welkin ring so loudly, would the mock bombast of election campaigns disturb our sense of decency, if the political power of taxation were abolished? If we could get behind the scenes we could hear these circus clowns laughing at us—and he who is elected laughs loudest.

