

## Reflections at the Bonfire

FOR THE NEXT FOUR YEARS those who voted for the successful presidential candidate, and expected some betterment in our social or economic life, will have opportunity enough to hang their heads in shame; while those who cast their votes for the loser will have equal opportunity to soften their disappointment with a croaking "I told you so." If the result had been reversed the only difference would have been that those who will now croak would have hung their heads.

For a century and a half we Americans have indulged with constitutional regularity our prerogative of throwing out rascals. Yet rascality has been with us always. Political parties, leaders and platforms have come and gone; the graph of our social and economic history shows a constant downward slope. There have been short periods during which getting a living has been attended with a little less hardship than at other times, but these "peaks" of prosperity are more than offset by the "valleys". The panorama is a convincing demonstration that our democratic method is in itself no security against that constant menace of poverty which at the inception of our form of government was associated with monarchies and other forms of centralized political power.

Indeed, we find that the centralization of political power in a democracy can be greater than was ever dreamed of by the Pharaohs; we find that the very instruments of democracy are being used to deprive individuals of that "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" which those instruments were presumed to safeguard. Our one hundred and fifty years under the democratic formula has been attended with constant internal strife, recurring periods of industrial depression, increasing unemployment and misery, and a spasmodically interrupted succession of those complete breakdowns of civilized existence—wars.

Since absolutism—of which the modern styles in Statism are merely variants—gave us no better, we are forced to the conclusion that man has not yet devised a political arrangement that makes for human happiness. We must look to the economy of existence for a better way. Politics is an exploded theory.

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Naive indeed is the one who believes that any president can prevent our suffering the scourges of the war in which we are already engaged. No man makes war, no man unmakes it. It is a disease in-

herent in an economy which makes for a large class of workers who have little, and a small class of non-workers who have much. The germ is ever-present in our social order; and the so-called leaders are as impotent to mitigate its ravages as are the bewildered mob supplicating these leaders for relief. It must run its course.

In what way or to what degree can any president shape or direct the inevitable developments of the present conflict?

Assuming that Britain holds out and the air-war becomes a stalemate, any British move toward victory would require a land invasion. She cannot attempt it single-handed. Since we are in the war—in it because we could not solve our unemployment problem—there will be an American expeditionary force whenever military expediency warrants it.

Or, the hungry Russian bear, led by the gore-dripping Hitler, may pounce upon India, the rich dish at which the Lion has long feasted, while desperate Japan attempts an excursion into the lucrative Dutch Indies or the Pacific possessions of American exploiters. Can our political leader prevent our navy from moving in? There are tin and rubber and other nice things in "them thar hills."

Vichy is trying to find a formula for living with-