

It was not the purpose of the editorial in question to belittle the advantages of free markets, or even of municipal markets when operated according to the natural laws of trade, but to show the futility of the efforts of certain zealous and well-intentioned persons to eliminate the "middleman." The opinion prevails among a large class of people that the middleman, because of his excessive charges, is responsible for present high prices. And that even though he have no legal monopoly he still has the power to say to the producer, accept my offer or your stuff will rot on your hands, and to the consumer, pay my price or go without. But is not this to question economic law itself? What has become of the "higgling of the market"? If this position be true we may as well go at once to Mr. Roosevelt's system of boards and commissions to regulate and control all things. Nay, we shall save time by at once adopting the complete Socialistic program.



No middleman can fix the price at which he buys and at which he sells except when the law prevents others from entering his line of business. Such power exercised by any dealer on the open market means profits greater than the average. Greater profits tempt others to enter that business. They can enter only by cutting prices to consumers and offering more to producers. And this will continue until the profits in that line of business are reduced to the average returns on capital and labor. But this is not to say that middlemen always conduct their part of exchange in the best possible way. They are human, and they are limited as are producers in grasping all the possibilities at hand. Whatever increases competition, whether it be curbstone markets, or municipal markets, spurs all dealers to increased endeavor and better service.



Custom and habit have their place in exchange. A city accustomed from the beginning to municipal markets has little use for the greengrocer; whereas, cities without markets find it next to impossible to introduce them. This difficulty has been increased by the modern habit of phone buying. Busy, as well as lazy, people order by phone, and have goods brought to the door. This is a convenience, but it is expensive. The consumer must say whether he will give his time or pay for the time of the middleman. To those consumers who have no telephones, and who delight in close bargaining, the display of the many-stalled market has attractions aside from the saving itself.

And if markets be properly situated, and well managed, they may increase somewhat the efficiency of service. But has anyone noticed a difference in the volume or intensity of the protest against the high cost of living in market towns and non-market towns? The public market is a success only where there is a public demand for it. In no place will it solve the high cost of living.

S. C.



Free Speech and Legal Equality.

The right of free speech has been upheld within the past two weeks by two juries; one in Chicago and one in Tarrytown, New York. In both places officious policemen arrested open air speakers on charges which were merely intended to give color of legality to the illegal purpose of suppressing free speech. The juries did their duty well. It does not matter who the speakers were. It is immaterial what they said, whether true or false, wise or unwise. They had a right to express their views. If they spoke truth they performed a public service. If they spoke falsely, it was the right of those knowing it to be so to reply and to expose them. In neither case was forcible suppression justifiable. On the contrary, the policemen who interfered with the meetings were the wrong-doers. What is considered a proper penalty for such wrong-doers? Perhaps that question may be answered by considering a recent case involving disturbance of a public meeting.



A few months ago a meeting was disturbed at New York's Fifth Avenue Baptist Church. The disturber, Bouck White, had previously written to the pastor, Dr. Woelfkin, asking permission to publicly address some questions to him. Mr. White honestly believed this permission had been granted, and, under this erroneous impression, unintentionally disturbed the meeting. He is now serving a sentence of six months at Blackwell's Island for this mistake. Mayor Mitchel and Governor Glynn are so sure that this is a proper way to treat disturbers of public meetings that, in spite of the mitigating circumstances, they will not use their power to have White released. The higher courts are so sure that White has been legally and justly dealt with that they will not interfere. Why are not policemen who break up street meetings dealt with in the same way as a man who disturbs a meeting in a fashionable church? In spite of the fact that the misdemeanor committed by these policemen was far more outrageous than the one committed by White, the suggestion that

they receive similar treatment, will probably never be entertained by any court. The principle of equality before the law is not applied as generally as it ought to be.

S. D.



Still Explaining.

Explanations are still flooding the newspaper offices concerning dealings with strikers by the mine owners of Colorado. Since the Ludlow affair a press bureau has been busy sending out these explanations. There surely seems to be much to explain. The explanations are designed to show that devotion to principle and the interests of their employes underlies the mine owners' course. There is so much skepticism concerning that, that voluminous explanations are necessary. But why try to prove anything so difficult? Why do not the mine owners frankly admit that they are looking out for themselves first of all? That existing conditions give them power to adopt the course they have adopted, and that course happens to be the one which seems the best for their own financial interests? No reasonable person would think of questioning such an explanation. They can further say that the conditions which so favor them are the kind that the people of Colorado have declined to change. Consequently, as mine owners, they are not responsible for the existence of such conditions; and they intend to keep on taking advantage of them until the people deprive them of their advantage. Such an explanation would not only be believable but commendably candid as well.

S. D.



Where the Credit Belongs.

The proceeds of a number of heavy taxes levied on the American people are to be used in buying food for starving Belgians. The tax has not been levied by the government but by the Rockefeller interests backed by the power of certain privileges conferred by Federal and State governments. The Rockefeller Foundation will attend to all details of the distribution, and does not seem averse to assuming credit for the philanthropic act, which belongs properly to the overtaxed American people.

S. D.



The Gentle Art of Making Mendicants.

Those sturdy Norsemen who frowned upon the introduction of the Church because it brought beggars would have their patience sorely tried, had they lived in this day and age. Not only do we have beggars, but we have asylums, poor farms,

and pensions. We started with free schools, but now the children have free text books, free medical service, and free dentistry; and the adults have free hospitals, free visiting nurses, free clinics, and free dispensaries, not to mention free libraries, free employment agencies, and free lodging houses. Those English Socialists who are declaring for free bread are not so very far ahead of us. Nor should it be a cause for astonishment when two sons with large property holdings billet their aged mother on the county farm, nor that a woman with an income of twenty-five dollars a week should draw fifteen dollars a month from the county agent. And those persons who express surprise at the number of rich and well-to-do people who attend the free clinics and patronize the free dispensaries simply betray their ignorance of human nature.



It may well be said that no child should be handicapped in his start in life. He should not be deprived of the fullest possibilities of the free schools for want of text books. And if the child's bad teeth lead to poor health, they should be mended. The London school board discovered that some children could not study because of lack of food, and so provided free lunches. The same logic might find that ragged children suffered a mental depression that interfered with their study, and so require free clothing. There seems, indeed, no place to stop logically short of universal communism. But if we do not stop, where shall we end? What will be the moral effect upon the people? If unearned wealth tends to corrupt the rich, will not unearned public largesses weaken the moral stamina of the poor? The rich have many alternatives, if they will to save themselves; but the poor have but one, and we have made that one very difficult.



Why so much "assistance"? Men and women made a descent living in this country a hundred years ago. There was then very little call for public assistance. Families were not then afraid of having children. Judging from the number, they invention have added enormously to the power of were welcome. They were an asset, instead of a liability. Between that day and this science and labor in the production of wealth. Yet, with all this added power at his command, the laborer is unable to lay by anything for sickness or old age. If he dies in his prime he does not leave enough to educate his children. The comforts of modern civilization are beyond his reach, and he must depend upon the charitable rich or the State for