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Who Is the Forgotten Man?

Governor Roosevelt has introduced the phrase, "The Forgotten Man," into his speeches and others have taken it up as a peg whereon to hang various sentiments, arguments and denials common to politicians.

The words were originally used by William Graham Sumner in an address made in 1883 when he was Professor of Political and Social Science at Yale University. The address has been reprinted by the Yale University Press, and it is well worth reading at this time when the Forgotten Man finds himself among the unemployed and in need of both charity to supply his immediate wants and legislation to correct the fundamental ills that have brought him to this deplorable condition.

Man is the emotional and imaginative animal. When death and destruction appear in dramatic form they attract attention and arouse sympathy. Even in normal times, many appeals are made for relief funds and for special legislation to aid individuals and groups. Prof. Sumner calls our attention to the fact that it is the honest, hard-working, law-abiding citizen who must meet these expenses, who must provide food and shelter for the shiftless, the lazy, the criminal, the good-for-nothing. "The philanthropists and humanitarians have their minds all full of the wretched and miserable whose case appeals to compassion . . . But we stand with our backs to the independent and productive laborer all the time."

Someone must pay for the police and judiciary departments that protect us from the criminal; someone must pay for the institutions that house our paupers, and our physically and mentally deficient members of society. "Out of nothing comes nothing. We cannot collect taxes from people who produce nothing and save nothing." Prof. Sumner designates as the Forgotten Man, the quiet, virtuous, domestic citizen, who pays his debts and his taxes and is never heard of out of his little circle. . . . He works, he votes, gen-

erally he prays—but he always pays—yes, above all, he pays. He does not want an office. . . He keeps production going on. He contributes to the strength of the party. He is flattered before election. He is strongly patriotic. . . . He is a commonplace man. He gives no trouble. He excites no admiration. He is not in any way a hero . . . or a problem . . . nor an object of charity . . . Therefore, he is forgotten. All the burdens fall on him, or her, for it is time to remember that the Forgotten Man is not seldom a woman. . . . If it is desired to bring about social improvements, bring us a scheme for relieving the Forgotten Man of some of his burdens. He is our productive force which we are wasting. Let us stop wasting his force. Then we shall have a clean and simple gain for the whole society. . . . Let us take some of the burdens off him."

This is the main point of Prof. Sumner's address but he makes some very significant suggestions that fit well with the present situation in which we find so many of our industrious, law-abiding citizens unable to pay their debts and their taxes, literally millions of them unable to provide bread for their families. This is not a problem that calls for emotional reaction or sentimentalizing. It needs cold, scientific reasoning. "Our laws and institutions," says Prof. Sumner, "by which we attempt to regulate our lives under the laws of nature which control society are merely a series of haphazard experiments. We come into collision with the laws and are not intelligent enough to understand wherein we are mistaken and how to correct our errors. We persist in our experiments instead of patiently setting about the study of the laws and facts in order to see where we are wrong. Traditions and formulae have a dominion over us in legislation and social customs which we seem unable to break or even to modify. . . . the Forgotten man would no longer be forgotten where there was true liberty."

Most of our legislation intended to improve social conditions, has been class legislation; it has been regulatory in nature; it has been designed to promote the welfare of one group very often at the expense of others. We have been trying to brace up the superstructure of a tottering social condition without attempting to replace the rotten underpinning with a safe and solid foundation. Until we do that, we cannot tell what alterations are necessary upstairs. Many of the weaknesses will disappear without further local repairs; the strain that is sapping the strength of society will be relieved when general equilibrium is restored by working at the foundation, not tinkering with the roof.

"Civil liberty," says Prof. Sumner, "is the status of the man who is guaranteed by law and civil institutions *the exclusive employment of all his own powers for his own welfare.* . . . There is no such thing on this earth as something for nothing. Whatever we inherit of wealth, knowledge, or institutions from the past has been paid for by the labor and sacrifice of preceding generations. . . . True liberty means that a man's right to take power and wealth out of the social product is measured by the energy and wisdom which he has contributed to the social effort. . . . The institutions of civil liberty leave each man to run his career in life in his own way, only guaranteeing to him that whatever he does in the way of industry, economy, prudence, sound judgment, etc., shall redound to his own welfare and shall not be diverted to some one else's benefit. . . . Wealth comes only from production, and all that the wrangling grabbers, loafers and jobbers (those occupying political jobs) get to deal with comes from somebody's toil and sacrifice. . . . Nature has done a great deal for him (the Forgotten Man) in giving him a fertile soil and an excellent climate and he wonders why it is that, after all, his scale of comfort is so moderate. He has to get out of the soil enough to pay all his taxes, and that means the cost of all the jobs and the fund for all the plunder."

We have quoted rather freely from Prof. Sumner's address, partly because the now popular phrase, The Forgotten Man, was his own, partly because Prof. Sumner has presented so clearly the case of the average citizen who is trying to obey the laws he sponsors and keep up the struggle for existence under the domination of those who have gained "power over their fellow-men in order that they might win the joys of earth at the expense of others and might shift the burdens of life from their own shoulders upon those of others."

We may say with Prof. W. B. Munro of the California Institute of Technology that the Forgotten Man deserves to be forgotten since he has given so little thought to economic and social problems. True, he has been most negligent in

performing his duties as a member of society. He has continued to vote, year after year, with the same party, usually the one his father approved, without taking the trouble to study the issues or the men that proposed them. He has swallowed without question the most absurd, the most erroneous ideas regarding government, protection, taxation, municipal ownership; but it is also true that if he had turned to the brotherhood to which Prof. Munro belongs he would be found "following wandering fires, lost in the quagmire." The academic economist is either ignorant of the truth or afraid to express it. If the Forgotten Man turns to organized labor or to the Socialist or Communist or to those who pass under the general appellation of reformer, he finds merely such plans and schemes as benefit some by injuring others. These are the class or group reforms. As Prof. Sumner says: "If you undertake to lift anybody, you must have a fulcrum or point of resistance. All the elevation you give to one must be gained by an equivalent depression on someone else."

If, then, we are to raise society as a whole with benefit to all and injury to none, we must find our leverage in something that is common to all mankind, that does not morally belong to any class or group, race or nation. Let us take the earth, itself, call it the lever or the foundation or what you will. It is the common storehouse from which all wealth must be produced by human labor, and to which all men should have equal access. Give every man the opportunity to use the earth with the right to produce as much wealth as he can or will. Let him pay for this privilege by putting a small part of his production into the common treasury, not into the pockets of individuals who have not labored to produce it. In this way, alone, can a man employ his own powers exclusively for his own good and the common welfare. Nature has, indeed, been good to him. Nature and science have made the return to his labor come close to miraculous, and when we guarantee to every man, the full return to his labor, we will not be troubled with striking farmers who cannot dispose of their bumper crops while millions suffer from malnutrition.

Only through a clear understanding of the use and ownership of the earth, itself, can the Forgotten Man arrive at the solution of his social problem or hope to wrest his government from the control of special privilege. Only when he realizes that selfishness and greed are common to all mankind, will he understand that: "there can be no civil liberty anywhere unless rights are guaranteed against all abuses, as well from proletarians as from generals, aristocrats, and ecclesiastics." This present economic crisis that has come very close to disaster should have proved to us the need for fundamental readjustment that

will help us all, producer and consumer, capitalist and laborer, merchant and professional man. The cry once was that the Union could not endure half slave and half free. We are beginning to realize that no civilization can long continue part millionaire and part pauper. Both will disappear with the right kind of leveling process, and the Forgotten Man will come into his own.

CONSOLATION

Unable to assume credit for prosperity that did not come—as promised and predicted by himself three years ago—the best that Mr. Hoover can say of the results of all the efforts of himself and his party to stem the tide of depression is that it might have been worse. We are earnestly besought to find comfort in that barren thought. "Let no man tell you that it could not be worse," said Mr. Hoover at Des Moines. "It could be so much worse that these days now, distressing as they are, would look like veritable prosperity."

Here is a clipping from the Los Angeles Times, November 29, 1929. The headlines read: "Golden Era Dawning. Hoover Reveals Rich Future. New Heights in Prosperity Indicated as Result of His Conferences. Coming Year Now Looms as Beginning of Record National Advance." The article goes on to tell us about "Concrete facts and figures developed by President Hoover during the last ten days and new policies initiated by him form the foundation upon which the country may look to the year of 1930 as the beginning of a period during which a hitherto unrivalled prosperity may be expected to reach new high levels."

Mr. Hoover, it seems, had called together the leading business men of the nation and secured their promise to spend over six billion dollars in "new construction, expansion and maintenance during the next year and months immediately succeeding. The grand total of these figures, a vast sum to be spent in the interest of peace and prosperity, resembles an amount which ordinarily we would associate only with war. . . . When the country was threatened with financial hysteria, the first result of which would have been decreased production and consequent reduction of employment, Mr. Hoover set about marshalling the resources of the nation. First, he emphasized his faith in the country by approximating a tax cut of \$160,000,000." Congress was not then in the throes of wrestling with the new tax bill in a vain attempt to balance the budget.

Mr. Hoover realizes that he was slightly mistaken about this "era of unprecedented expansion in every field of commerce and industry and accompanying prosperity of unbounded propor-

tions." Since conditions are so deplorable they cannot be hidden nor denied. Mr. Hoover can merely declare indignantly, over and over, "things *could* have been worse. I tell you they *could* have been worse." This, after all, is not very comforting to the honest, industrious family man who faces the approach of winter without a job, without the savings he entrusted to the bank that closed its doors. You can't expect the man in the bread line to work up much enthusiasm about the gold standard when he hasn't any dollars of any variety and can't get them. We are very glad that Mr. Hoover and the Republican party "held the Gibraltar of world stability," but when do we eat?

We are reminded of a scene in Dickens' *Hard Times*. Sissy Jupe was in tears because she couldn't understand National Prosperity as explained by Mr. M'Choakumchild. "Now, this school-room is a Nation," he had said to the children. "And in this nation there are fifty millions of money: . . . Girl number twenty, isn't this a prosperous nation, and a'n't you in a thriving state?" "I said I didn't know. I thought I couldn't know whether it was a prosperous nation or not, and whether I was in a thriving state or not, unless I knew who had got the money, and whether any of it was mine. But that had nothing to do with it. It was not in the figures at all," said Sissy, wiping her eyes. "Then Mr. M'Choakumchild said he would try me again. And he said, 'This school-room is an immense town and in it there are a million of inhabitants, and only five and twenty are starved to death in the streets in the course of a year. What is your remark on that proportion?' And my remark was—for I couldn't think of a better one—that I thought it must be just as hard upon those who were starved, whether the others were a million, or a million million. And that was wrong too."

Yes, Sissy, that was wrong too. It is quite possible that when a man has neither food nor money, the pangs of hunger will grow quite as acute when his fellow sufferers are only five and twenty as when they are ten million, but there are some things that are not in the figures of the politicians. Mr. Hoover and his friends will continue to offer us solace in the words: "Let no man tell you it could not be worse."

Not "World" causes lie at the root of the present widespread depression, but "Earth" causes, viz., the Land Question.—*Progress, Melbourne*.

Judge Lindsey says that six million Americans are too poor to get married. But he failed to add that most of them are married.—*Greenville Piedmont*.

After becoming partially civilized a Kongo tribe got heavily in debt and took to the jungle again. We can understand that impulse.—*Florence (Ala.) Herald*.

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RED MEN AND WHITE

The United States Senate Indian Affairs Committee has been investigating the condition of the Indians in Southern California.

Before the white man came, the Indians lived a normal and successful life. Natural resources, the forest with its wild game, the river with its fish, the prairie with its buffalo was accessible to every member of the tribe and each could satisfy his wants or fulfill his desires according to his ambition, strength and skill. Whoever heard of a tribe of Indians where an able-bodied man was denied the right to hunt or fish or set up his wigwam unless he paid another Indian for the privilege?

Hunger came to them sometimes, yes, but only when a long drought or unusually severe winter reduced the game or hampered their efforts to obtain it. In other words, what our insurance men call "an act of God" was all that brought economic disaster to the red man before the white man interfered with him. The All Year Club of Southern California has spent thousands of dollars telling the rest of the country about the wonders of this state, its scenery, its climate, its soil. One would naturally suppose that the Indians in Southern California, especially as they were here first, would be occupying some choice farm lands and living in plenty, yet Senator Frazier of North Dakota says that the Californians have driven the Indians off good lands and "back into rock piles." Mr. Lichtenberger of a Native Sons of the Golden West Committee (note the irony in that name) said in making his plea: "Get these Indians something to eat while policies are being determined; what they need is food right now—beans, bacon, meal and something to keep them from starving to death."

Why should those who are working and producing be asked to give to charity in order to feed the starving Indians who have been "driven back into rock piles" while there are millions of acres of fertile land in California that no one is using? These acres are being absolutely wasted. They are being hoarded by the owners, waiting for increased demand to send the price up and bring them a return they did not earn. Why not ask these dogs-in-the-manger to give the

Indians some decent land to live on where they can earn their own way in comfort and self respect, not humiliate them by robbing them of their land, then feeding them the kind of food we think they ought to have, paid for by charity as if they were insane or physically unfit.

Appropriately enough, 500,000 white men in California find themselves in the same predicament. We do not eat the same kind of food nor wear the same kind of clothes nor live in the same kind of houses that the Indians did in their palmy days, but all that we do use for food or clothing or shelter must come from the earth.

Let us release the poorly improved and vacant lots in our towns and cities and put our hungry and unemployed white men to work. The realtors report a housing shortage. The lumber and building material companies are almost bankrupt because they can't sell the things with which houses are made. There is all the land in California that will be needed for many times her present population. There are thousands of idle men begging for work, many of them skilled carpenters and builders. If the present owners of vacant land in California would give it away outright, they would set the wheels of industry turning at such a pace that the general increase in our prosperity would more than make up for the loss of the speculative land price that has been forfeited.

The treatment of the American Indian by the white race marks one of the most tragic and disgraceful pages in history, but it is paralleled by the treatment he has meted out to his fellow white men. Look about you, men of a once proud people, look about you and behold the hungry hoards of white men begging for charity and seeking a miserable shelter on the very land they stole from you. There is little hope that the white man will abandon his traditional land policy before he has suffered another and a worse depression than the present one. The individuals and the generation that robbed you will not share their plunder with their own people. The white man, like yourself, deprived of his opportunity to use the fruitful earth, is ahunger and acold. You may well believe that the wrongs inflicted upon you by a conquering race have been avenged. The conquerors are on their knees, begging for bread. They could cheat you, rob you, slay you, demoralize you with alcohol, offer you Bibles with one hand and bullets with the other, inflict upon you what Bret Harte calls "the helpless bigotry of Christian civiliziers, who would have regenerated the Indian with a text he did not understand and they were unable to illustrate by example." All these things could the white man do, but he could not and cannot break the laws of the Great Spirit with impunity. Your wrongs are not righted, but they are, indeed, avenged.