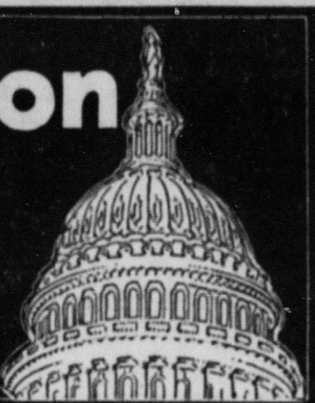


Washington Digest

National Topics Interpreted
By WILLIAM BRUCKART
NATIONAL PRESS BLDG. WASHINGTON, D. C.



Washington.—It is undoubtedly one of the fundamental foundation stones of democratic government that where a civic right or privilege is accorded, the persons who are granted those rights necessarily have some duty to perform under those rights. It is well established, for example, that workers may organize into unions; that those unions have the right to bargain collectively which means that a committee representing the members of that union may speak for it in dealing with the employers, and it is a right undoubtedly of unions to call its members away from work on strike. I think there can be no debate concerning these three premises. But since these rights have been granted to workers and accepted by them on the same inalienable basis as the right to vote, the obligations that go with these rights necessarily have been accepted by the workers.

We have just seen a settlement of one of the great strikes of this decade and the return of more than one hundred thousand workers to the plants of the General Motors corporation. Immediately after Governor Murphy of Michigan, had announced that General Motors and John L. Lewis and his Committee for Industrial Organization had reached an agreement, efforts surged and swelled in a movement on the part of each side to claim victory in the settlement. From all sources I have been able to tap, from every trustworthy observer of national affairs, I have obtained virtually the same story about the General Motors—C. I. O. strike settlement. As far as I can see after digesting all of the opinions within my reach, it seems to me that neither General Motors nor John L. Lewis won. What is much more important is that the American people lost by that strike and they are in a fair way to lose much more.

The General Motors strike was one of the costliest in history. I am told that the workers alone lost something like one hundred million dollars in wages, and, of course, the stockholders of General Motors likewise lost because during all those days, forty-four of them, that the plants were closed, no new cars moved into trade. That means that all the thousands of dealers and salesmen of General Motors automobiles earned no income.

The truth about the settlement seems to be that each side was willing near the end to accept Governor Murphy's proposition for settlement as a face saving proposal. It is undoubtedly true that John L. Lewis would have been sunk without a trace and his movement to break up the American Federation of Labor and take control of labor for himself would have been utterly ruined had there not been some concessions by the General Motors officials. He apparently attempted to break up the A. F. of L. before he had sufficient union men weaned away from the parent organization and that is the reason why his position in the General Motors strike was so precarious from his personal standpoint.

On the other hand, it is quite evident as well that General Motors was forced into a position where it had to make concessions or be charged by the federal government with responsibility for bloodshed and destruction of property in riots. Governor Murphy acted throughout the strike negotiations under the flag of President Roosevelt, saying his movements were at the wish of the President. General Motors did not dare attempt to run counter to the President's commands because it could not withstand public sentiment that could and probably would be built up against it should it be publicly criticized by the President.

And to support my statement that the settlement is a face saving agreement and that neither side won in it, it is necessary only to consider that this agreement will run just six months. It contains no elements of permanency nor does it show any signs of a basic understanding which will swing public sentiment to the Lewis faction.

Thus, there are many observers who feel that another crisis will arise along about the first of July and that in the meantime William Green, President of the American Federation of Labor, will have built up a considerable amount of strength on his side of the factional fight. What the future holds, therefore, is difficult to guess. It can be said only that in the recent strike and in the controversy that seems certain to lie ahead, General Motors again will be the goat and the public will pay.

I have been wondering whether many people recognize how they are going to pay for the cost of this strike. I have mentioned ways in which they have lost by it and it seems equally clear that when the Lewis unions get through with the use of force, it is likely to bring about an increase in the cost of the automobiles they produce. It is likely to go further than just automobiles. There is a move on now to attempt something of the same sort of labor attack on the steel manufacturers. If that materializes, it is easy to see how widespread the increased costs will be and how consumers will pay in the end.

This may seem to be an argument against increased wages. It may seem to be a defense of steel boots that used to be worn by industrialists and with which they trod upon defenseless labor. But it resolves itself into a question of justice and a consideration of the problem as it concerns consumers as well as workers. If there is anything in the theory that labor is entitled to a fair wage, there must be likewise some merit in the contention that the public which consumes the product of labor is entitled to an equal amount of consideration.

Political leaders have been quick at all times in recent years to sit astride the neck of business, especially big business. Corporations were held up as something to be despised, especially if they were large corporations. Lately there has been a definite movement for legislation in congress that would force corporations to have federal charters; that is, charters issued by the government at Washington which, therefore, could control such corporations with whatever regulations were deemed necessary. This legislation, it is true, has not approached the stage where a prediction of its passage can be made. The point is, however, that it represents the thoughts of a certain percentage of the people. The question of legality of such a statute obviously remains to be determined but it is to be noted that this proposition is simply another step in the movement to cast a stigma upon business, a move to make business appear immoral or criminal or generally infamous.

Business has found it advantageous to incorporate. It removes certain responsibilities from the individuals joining in a corporation and adds certain commitments at the same time. Here again are the rights and counter obligations arising with those rights and I think no one can dispute the fact that our nation has moved forward more rapidly because of the use of the corporation as a business entity.

But I have been unable to find an answer to the question why the federal government should take control by law of business corporations without at the same time taking control of labor organizations. Now, it is to be noted that labor unions have steadfastly avoided taking the step of incorporation. It is not true abroad where many labor organizations hold corporate charters just as would a business enterprise.

The fact that labor unions have not incorporated leads one to the presumption that the unions have felt such a step would hamper their activities. And, indeed, it might. For example, there have been scores of instances where labor unions, through their authorized officials or bargaining committees, have signed wage contracts with their employers—only to ditch that contract subsequently without regard for its binding force.

As labor unions are now organized, they are very loosely knit associations and there is nothing by which the individual members are bound except their own will to perform. In the case of a business corporation, for example, the stockholders have invested money and obviously when the corporation is sued in court or accumulates any kind of liability the stockholders' money in the corporation is available to pay whatever obligations develop. Hence, the lack of a corporate organization on the part of a union removes all responsibility insofar as law is concerned from the unit into which the workers have organized themselves.

The point is, after all, that the General Motors strike has demonstrated beyond the peradventure of a doubt that the national labor policies are utterly ineffectual and contain no consideration for the consuming public. Labor, as represented by the John L. Lewis faction, has shown its willingness to back its demands with force in disregard of law and it has failed to answer the responsibilities which it seems to me accomplish the rights and privileges the nation accords it.

STAR DUST Movie • Radio

By VIRGINIA VALE

RESULTS of the annual election of radio favorites, with two hundred and fifty-two radio-column editors casting the votes, brought joy to the hearts of Hollywood studios, for film favorites proved to be the outstanding radio favorites too.

Paramount is leading the cheering for their Jack Benny, for the fourth consecutive year, won the vote for best comedian and best program on the air. Bing Crosby was elected best singer of popular songs. Bob Burns ran third among comedians, and that was no small achievement. Benny and Fred Allen had the first two places, and there were no less than ten or twelve famous stage comedians competing for third. M-G-M's Nelson Eddy was ranked first among classical singers, and Universal's Deanna Durbin best of all the newcomers to radio. Twentieth Century's Tony Martin made a good showing, getting third place among singers of popular songs. And RKO's Lily Pons took second place among singers of classical music.

Interview etiquette is next in importance to romance manners in Hollywood. When ever asked their opinion on the greatest actor on the screen, players are supposed to mention someone under contract to their own studio. Pat O'Brien just won't play according to that rule. He thinks Spencer Tracy is by all odds the best actor on the screen and insists on saying so. That delights M-G-M, but it is not so pleasant for Warner Brothers to whom Pat is under contract.



Pat O'Brien

When M-G-M cast Robert Taylor in "Camille," it was with the hope that the incomparable Garbo would make him forget all others, but when the last scene was shot, young Taylor was still calling her "Miss Garbo." Next he was cast opposite Jean Harlow, and studio folks slyly intimated that the huge boxes of flowers she received on the set every morning probably came from him. M-G-M even sent Taylor to Washington, D. C., to attend the President's birthday ball with Jean. And all to no avail. He still thinks Barbara Stanwyck is the grandest girl in the world.

Hal Roach isn't content with keeping audiences giggling at his two-reel comedies. He has sent for Constance Bennett, dragging her back from her long vacation in New York, and started production on a big feature picture. It is to be a drawing-room comedy, very smart, swift, and swanky. It must be that he heard Constance in that broadcast of "Private Lives" that convinced everyone she had a real flair for high comedy.

When you see Eddie Robinson and Bette Davis in "Kid Galahad" take a good look at the handsome giant who plays the heavyweight champion. That is Bill Haade, one of the most extraordinary characters the studios have ever found. Not so long ago he was a steel worker in New York, and very proud of his job. A theatrical producer came along and got him to play on the stage in a short-lived play called "Iron Men." When that closed Warner Brothers sent for him.

Margot Grahame is proudly displaying a new ring to her friends these days. It is made up of linked hearts of sapphires and diamonds and was once the property of Sarah Bernhardt. Bernhardt gave it to Ellen Terry as a tribute to that great lady's artistry on the stage. Ellen Terry left it to her daughter - in - law, Julia Neilson, who gave it to an English actress, Mary Glynn. Mary Glynn passed it on to her protegee—who is Margot Grahame.

ODDS AND ENDS . . . Charles Boyer is the most envied man in Hollywood, for in rapid succession in his next four pictures he will play opposite Garbo, then Sylvia Sydney, Ginger Rogers, and Claudette Colbert. . . . Between "Show Boat" broadcasts, Lanny Ross is giving concerts of classical songs. Eddie Robinson is asking for more pleasant roles on the screen, because his three-year-old son is already a moviegoer and he doesn't want to antagonize him. . . . Helen Jepson did not sign that contract with Grand National after all; she signed to make pictures with Sam Goldwyn instead. . . . Latest word from London is that the British people like Zasu Pitts best of all the American stars who have gone there to make pictures.

what Irwin S. Cobb thinks about: Reducing Auto Fatalities. SANTA MONICA, CALIF.— Being revolted by our hideous record of mortality resulting from mad automobilism—as what decent citizen is not?—a gentleman writes in some pertinent recommendations. He suggests laws providing, in addition to such other penalties as may follow a conviction for drunk driving or criminally reckless driving, or hit-and-run driving, that the convicted party shall lose his license for five years and that his automobile be sold and the proceeds used for the victim's heirs, as the case may be. Whilst we're on the subject of the disgrace which costs America more lives every month than are being destroyed in the Spanish civil war in any month, here's another little notion: That a flagrant offender or a chronic offender shall be given a jail sentence, without the option of paying a fine, the only alternative from jail being his or her willingness to be handcuffed and chained before the public gaze through a period of hours or days at the scene of the accident for which he or she was responsible. That ought to make some converts to the crusade for prudent driving, don't you think?

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Irwin S. Cobb

Windsor's Musical Proclivities. LATEST word is that the duke of Windsor has taken up accordion playing in a serious way after first toying with the deadly saxophone and then doing some intensive bagpipe tootling. Obviously the duke is in a fair way to estrange those who, until now, have faithfully supported him through his recent harrowing experiences. Even loyalty can be pushed just so far. Or maybe he has a lot of close friends who are deaf. Or maybe Mrs. Simpson is practicing wearing earmuffs. Or maybe she can wean him on a mouth organ—a comparatively inoffensive instrument. Or he may just up and reform of his own accord. Or something. Let's not be too hasty in our judgments.

Jefferson and Ickes. SECRETARY ICKES is sort of opposed to naming the projected great national auditorium in Washington after Thomas Jefferson, because it is proposed to hold sporting events there when the building is not being used for public gatherings. He invites us to imagine the feelings of Jefferson upon looking down on boxing matches or such-like goings-on under that roof. Well, let's carry the thing further: Can anybody imagine Jefferson imagining a Secretary Ickes?

Madame Perkins' Ambitions. MAYBE it's not wise to add those new departments to the Presidential cabinet right now. True, Madame Perkins shows a patriotic willingness—or shall we say determination?—not only to look after her own portfolio, but to snatch up such responsibilities as her fellow-secretaries are so careless as to leave out of nights. Still, it's expecting an awful lot of one weak woman that she should relieve two more members of their responsibilities, duties and authority when the task of trying to take over the other nine present jobs besides her own already has taxed her strength severely. And besides, there's annoying talk that congress may actually oppose the madame's latest little suggestion that she be made practically the supreme power in all labor disputes. But she needn't worry about that. Whoever heard of a guinea pigs defying a lady lion-tamer?

The Flood's Aftermath. WITH the slackening of the torments, the peak of drama out of the scene, but the tragedy, less spectacular but nevertheless desperate, lingers on—the tragedy of destitution and ruin and sickness. For the rebuilding of wrecked homes, the rehabilitation of morale, it is necessary that through the Red Cross we give and keep on giving—and I reckon we will. We always have.

But there are certain things we need not give the victims, for these be things they never lose and never will—their courage and their sense of humor. We can still laugh at our personal misfortunes even while the world at large weeps for them. I guess, for our race, that's the main saving grace.

IRVIN S. COBB.
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A Chain of Ants
A species of ants joins distant leaves to make its nest, first establishing between them a chain of ants several inches long, gradually shortening the chain by removing individuals without disturbing the connection, and finally cementing the leaves where they touch with glutinous matter exuded by young larvae.

Division of Time—

Quiet Pleasures to Punctuate the Rush of Life Are Sought

THE rush of life that leaves persons no time for deliberation, nor the pursuit of happiness in their own special ways, has seemed to reach its apex. Already there is a trend toward leisurely living, the sort that claims the right to dispose of hours not occupied in business or housekeeping, in ways of personal choice rather than of group determining.

Today, in the modern ways of living, time is divided into two units, one of which is work, the other diversion rather than play. As soon as work is over, or can be interrupted, the time is given over to diversion. Some persons work most of the time and some persons spend most of their time in diversions. The division of hours between these two things is uneven, but however divided, no waking time is left.

Spare Time.
While each of us should work part of our time, it is the matter of how we spend the rest of our time that is now coming under

special consideration. There is a growing discontent that seems to bode good. Why should any of us be bound to do in time which is our own, what this or that group is doing because at the moment it is the popular thing? Can we have no evenings to ourselves?

Home Diversions.
Shall the rare pleasures of home be invaded? Or shall we decide to spend some quiet evenings in reading favorite books or delving into those new ones we realize would be liked? Shall we have time to devote to needlecraft, to music, to studying some language, to pursuing some hobby—or doing anything to enrich ourselves or to make something beautiful?

Enriching Diversions.
All these things are diversions from necessary work, but they are the sort that repay us by making life more worth living, and not the kinds that merely absorb attention for the time being, and leave us depleted rather than replenished.

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