

July 4 still

Dear Ones,

It looks as though the Burton Ball Hatch labor bill is going to reopen once again the entire question of the role of the unions, the closed shop, collective bargaining, strikes and lockouts, labor-management relations. Perhaps there will emerge a revamped Wagner Act from the discussion which will answer most of the major doubts of today.

There are certain factors which are all but universally recognized as necessary now. The foremost is the idea of financial accountability. A labor union is a public organization; it must maintain a strict accounting system, it must have accountable and responsible officers; its records must be public and available to the members and the government. The second feature is that the organization must be such that an individual member can take action when he feels that it is out of line or wrong in policy or method; there must be the guarantee that the individual member retains his individuality in relation to his work and his group.

These two elements must not be confused with other basic considerations. One of these is that a labor union is not like an ordinary corporation or organization; ~~time~~ it cannot be too well defined in terms of production and it has assumed more than a protective nature at this stage of the development of the union movement. The ideal union would be the ideal group within a democracy - it has no interest greater than the sum total of the interest of the people who are vitally and actually concerned with their membership in it; it has as broad a base as is possible for a public corporation. In that very important sense it is very different from General Motors or Proctor and Gamble.

Getting down to specific questions, there are several that have been solved within the past twelve years. The first is that the right of the closed shop and collective bargaining by the selected union is recognized. That means that in any plant or factory or establishment or clearly defined section of a plant, if the workers so desire, one union may be chosen to represent the interests of all the workers. As such the elected union gains a degree of control in the element of hiring and firing employees by the management. The closed shop is based on the theory that the majority interest rules; to protect the interest of the greatest number of the workers, the individual desires in specific cases must be secondary to the general decision. It means that all workers must be members of the Union; the place for them to air their grievances is within the framework of the union organization, not by going directly to the employer. If the union decision is reached and is contrary to the wishes of the individual he has two choices - either abide by the decision or find himself without a job. The individual by his own action is not justified in endangering the position of the rest of the union which has arrived at its decision fairly and with full consideration. In a sense, it is a broad extension of the principle that the general welfare decides that everyone will drive on the right hand side of the road; the rugged individualist who drives on the left will get no quarter from his society. In the overall consideration, the theory of the closed shop is basic in the unionization of labor; the crimp which it puts on the freedom of the individual to work in a completely free and untrammelled labor market is more than compensated for by the economic requirements of the general situation.

Under our current national conditions, it must be recognized that labor is assuming a new and important role because of the unionization of the labor market. It raises the factor of labor to the level of the factors of capital and technological facilities in the picture of production. In other words, the people who cry that the rise of labor and the consequences of the closed shop, collective bargaining, and the control of the labor market, are threatening the capitalist structure since the investor-manager is no longer in complete control of the situation are not justified in their complaint. Because in fact labor has as big a stake in production and production policy as does capital; and we are coming to the realization that wage rates, insurance, safety guarantees, sanitation

recreational facilities, are all as important features of the gains of production as is return on capital investment; they are the return on labor investment. From a national point of view the two should be complementary and in the ideal economy they would be.

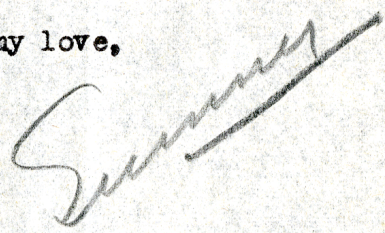
To my mind, you cannot discuss the labor question out of context from your picture of your society. Therefor I am sure that you will see how the ideas I have expressed in these few paragraphs fit in with my conception of the shape which our national economy will take in its future growth. I have been very brief, and each idea could have been the starting point for a much longer discussion. So this is just my opening attempt to work out this phase of our national economic problem. I know that you will have a great deal to say on this alone.

Yesterday's mail (it is now July 5) brought a letter from Judy and Hank - written during their Montreal stay - I almost fell over when I received it! I also heard from Howie Baumgarten; we can now say that he is on Emirau which is a sub-base of Bouganville. Things are as quiet for him up there as they are for me down here. Last night we played bridge again and I won a couple of bucks - I had some very pretty hands - a couple of more sessions and I will be back in the groove, I hope.

I see that the TIMES survey lists White as definitely in line for the Charter and Brewster as non-committal. I think that the forces are strong enough to assure us that the Senate will act with dispatch on the measure. I was a little surprised at your little sheet of questions, Mother - ts, ts! Amusing, nonetheless. The Lowns must have cabbage to burn; the camp idea sounds like a wonderful one. In that line I hope that the cities and counties throughout the country will pass up war memorials and cemeteries in favor of civic buildings, parks, community centers and the like - memorials to our men and reminders of what we are fighting for.

OK that just about clears the old deck for this noontime - I am in the office; we had to come up to check some figures and I stayed up here. I decided to skip lunch. Just being out at the depot and walking around it gives me more exercise than ever before and I guess I am better off for it but I feel rather drowsy and sluggish in the evenings.

All my love,



Regards to Doris