

September 1st

Dear Ones,

At the poker table, September continued like August so I quit early last night and finished Steinbeck's Cannery Row - it is something like Tortilla Flat, not quite as good. I am up in the office today working on the reports and they are coming along fairly well. No mail yesterday except for the Atomic Bomb issue of TIME; in one of our SateVePosts I noticed and read the article on the Bangor reporter, O'Connell, whose stock line is: "Anybody here from Maine?" It was pretty good - one thing I noted: the writer's comment that O'Connell could be governor if it were not for the fact that he is a Democrat. What is the strength of the Democratic Party in Maine? how close did FDR come last year? As I recall, Brann was the last Democrat to hold a major state position. How did the PAC fare in the elections outside of Portland? When I get back I think that I will take the time to make a sort of survey of the State, to get the economic, production and employment, and political picture. Are the Young Republicans gradually turning into old Republicans - or does that group have a separate identity from the old standard bearers and powers behind the throne? (This is part of my post-war orientation program!!) I still have a tremendous pile of your letters to answer - I doubt if I will get to them all before another batch arrives. You know, getting back to politics, I just happened to think - I am now eligible to vote; will you please check for me on what I have to do to register as a voter?

Thanks for your letter of the 13-16th, Helen Babsy - I can well imagine that the surrender excitement was first and foremost in everyone's mind during that hectic week. You certainly were loyal to go right on with your victory gardening despite the national holiday - incidentally we are still hoping to get an official holiday when the surrender is signed, although we haven't even had a hint that we are in line for one as yet. I know that you enjoyed the visits of Ruth Joan and Lila - and I'll bet that you found quite a contrast between the two. Without knowing either of them very well I imagine that they represent the Thurman and Bernstein characteristics which are more or less combines in us two. As for your comment on outgrowing the Hollywood stage - I think you will find, Boots, that you will never wholly outgrow it. I am constantly surprised and pleased to find that the men in their late twenties who are my closest friends now can be as zany as we were back in high school - it is the old story of "men will be boys." The average person needs and enjoys the release that comes from interest in things like the movies and in releases from the ordinary serious run of affairs.

I was a little surprised at the SATEVEPOST editorial on war criminals, because my interpretation of the Jackson report coincided with theirs and I was not aware of the attitude which the PM reporter Victor Bernstein had taken that we are wrong in not jailing Germans just for being Nazis. By that standard every German who could not prove that he was a member of an active opposition group would become a passive Nazi and the jails would be impossibly full; there can be mass trials, but each of the accused must be charged with a specific wrong. The PM attitude is not even consistent with its own pleas for allowing the democratic reshaping of Germany. Members of the Nazi Party must be punished but not merely on the basis of being Nazis, but for what they did as members of the party. I am inclined to agree with some of your comments on the Maine Political scene, Mother. I will have to read over the many clippings I have from the Advocate before I comment on them; do you subscribe regularly to it?

I was not surprised by your reaction to my comments on your first statements on the British election, Daddy. First of all, I must say that if you don't believe collectivism in its current British form, you should oppose it as vigorously as you would oppose it here in America; for obviously you regard it as a major threat to functioning democracy just as fascism is and surely we have learned that we are not immune from the infections that hurt other nations. But my real criticism, of course, is that if the British socialist experiment fails, the result will not be totalitarian stifling of the democratic principle but merely the defeat of the Labor Party and its replacement by the Conservatives. There is not justification for your assumption that failure means dictatorship by the Labor Party. We have already considered this question of democratic bureaucracy and centralization and there is no real reason to go over it all again. However, I do want to make it clear that I cannot agree with your basic tenets. The fact that the state may regulate and/or control production to maintain full employment levels and a balanced high level of economy does deny the profit motive to the individual investor or worker, as long as his exploitation of his plan does not work to the detriment of the society as a whole. The fact that the government may supervise production schedules need not sap initiative at any stage of the game - I wish that someone would point out certain valid instances where initiative and the good of society need suffer for this regulation. I wish that someone would point out to me how the profit motive and the impetus of material gain is consistently threatened by a program of planning. And I wish that you would answer my specific questions, Daddy - would you maintain the inviolable production for profit idea in the face of economic depression? Do you think that that inviolable principle is distinct and apart from the general social-economic structure and its requirements? Do you think that the community should suffer when an individual refuses to exercise his initiative for lack of high profit return when his investment means bread and butter to the community? Do you believe that there can be a successful transition-experiment period of government coordination with private investment to maintain employment-production levels during low private profit periods of the business cycles? I wish that you would answer these questions in terms of a fairly complete picture of our national scene and national economic requirements - I wish that you would not echo the school of thought that says that political-economic progress has stopped with Western Democracy. Isn't the British election proof that something is wrong with it, if 60-70% of the people vote for a period of change; can you ignore our own vote in 1932 and the subsequent popularity of the New Deal? And I wish that you would not close your mind to the idea that political and social liberty and freedom can be effectively enhanced by economic equality within the framework of a functioning democracy. And lastly I wish that you would re-analyze your own fear of centralization - the British Government is not more centralized, it proposes to be more powerful - by labeling this increasing role of government as centralization you draw a red-herring across the track of our argument; it is a danger which exists in any government, big or small. The greater the role of the government in the life of a country, the greater the dangers of the consequences of centralization, not of centralization itself. We are not concerned with parliamentary or constitutional change. Daddy, I feel that you don't see the forest for the trees - you balk at cutting down or whittling off the trees and branches which cut out the sunlight and stifle the growth of the rest of the forest; the rights of those specific trees and limbs to grow is only valid in the context of the best interest of the entire group. I also feel that you do not admit that there can be initiative in government as well as in private enterprise, that there can be as great an impetus for the advancement of humanity from men who are sincerely working for the commonwealth as from those who would work for purely personal and selfish motives. There is no logical reason why initiative and progress cannot be so directed that the best interests of individual and the best interests of the community become identical - and that is the ideal state; the history of the past 100 years is proof that private venturing alone will reach that desideratum. And please remember that we are discussing a functioning democracy, a people with political and economic training and experience, a social community that is capable of examining and selecting the proper long range viewpoint; we are dealing with a people who know what they want, who can follow and who can lead, who can choose right from wrong, and who will not sit idly by and let their rights be taken away - we are not dealing with sheep. Finally let me ask you bluntly - do you believe political liberty or economic liberty to be the more basic?

The Advocate articles on the dangers inherent in the many "Nationalist" groups are well taken; it is about time for another "Under Cover" to be released so that this time these groups which depend on bigotry and prejudice can be debunked before they get started. It is striking that the same names appear again and again - Reynolds, Mote, Smith, McWilliams Goff, Winrod, and the rest; this time we must be certain that their leagues and bunds do not get a foothold. It is encouraging to read in contrast the work of the New England cities to include in their school programs those elements which were stressed in the Harvard report - the teaching of practical democracy in the normal class work. Certainly education is the most obvious and important base on which the future acuteness of our democracy will be built.

OK for now - the mail brought the Lampoon which I had received direct and some Chicago Round Tables.

All my love,

Regards to Doris,

Sumner