

Letters to The Times

Giving Thought to Voting

We Are, It Is Contended, Too Heedless of the Sanctity of the Ballot

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The letter entitled "The Unwritten Constitution" seems to me to reflect all too well the false motivations for voting that are continually held up before the American public. This is not a partisan letter, but is it not ridiculous for "the major portion of honest Americans" to crystallize their opinion around an issue debating whether or not a man should break a "sanctified" American tradition about not serving a third term? I can picture a sturdy group of honest Americans rallying around the noble slogan, "Our sacred tradition shall not be broken!" and then equally rejoicing about the sanctity of the ballot that makes it possible for them to uphold this ideal!

What does motivate our voting, anyway? Is it sentiment, party loyalty, indifference, hope of personal gain? Or is it, by any chance, some principle such as liberty or equality?

It seems to me that the "sanctity of the ballot" becomes ridiculous when so few people really vote for any truly democratic principle. Is it enough to be free from pressure or restraint at the polls? Or is a little genuine thought needed too?

In Jefferson's day liberty and equality were live ideas and motivated America's voting. I venture to suggest that Jefferson's distrust of city civilization was well founded and that to most people today the words are merely symbols. There is a certain delicious American righteousness in flaunting them in the faces of our less idealistic European neighbors.

I would also like to refer to the leading article, "Will Our Basic Tenets Prevail?" in THE NEW YORK TIMES Magazine. I think the title was excellent. The tone of the article, however, seemed a little too secure, too optimistic that "the battle has been won."

I have noted the fundamental opposition to the packing of the Supreme Court and to the centralization of more power in the President as the best thing that has happened in America for some time. I do not think, however, that this is any reason to assume enough has been done. I know that more emphasis on our principles of democracy is needed—more thought about them.

Is there "an actual equality in the basic comforts of life, in freedom to enjoy life, in access to the cultural riches of life"? Obviously not. But at least this equality should still be the "final achievement of democracy's ideal." Do we actually have free speech, free press and free assembly, or merely modifications of them presented to the public as simon pure? R. S. CLIFTON, Bread Loaf, Vt., Aug. 1, 1938.

Sunset in New Jersey

Spectacle Seen From the Shore Is Described With Enthusiasm

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Yesterday I saw such an extraordinary sunset in Ocean Grove that I thought it worth while to try to convey some idea of its beauty. I was fortunate enough to be down on a visit from New York to the Jersey shore at the time of this remarkable display of celestial exuberance. The whole sky, as viewed from the unobstructed Boardwalk and more particularly from the end of the pier, was a vast panorama of changing fantasies in form and color that kept thousands of heads turning in all directions.

When I came upon the scene, shortly before sunset, there was the surprising phenomenon, in view of the absence of rain here yesterday, of a rainbow in the form of an almost vertical shaft in the eastern sky, seemingly resting upon a long, narrow whitish-gray cloud against a backdrop of varied blue. Above were faint patches of crimson.

Huge fissured masses of blue cloud enveloped the major part of the sky. In the east and northeast a mysterious curtain of deep blue dropped to the horizon, setting off the deeper blue of the ruffled sea. Large breakers enfolded the shore. In the luminous west the sun shone through small fleecy clouds, fringing with gold some large masses. Soon the rainbow was flanked by faint crimson sheets. The sinking sun brightened the gay tones of the western sky.

Probably the most exquisite phase of the auroral display was reached when, after the sun had set and with most of the heavens in myriad blues, translucent golden cloudlets floated against the indefinitely delicate pale blue-green of the western sky. Above them was a large cloud of burnished gold with numerous ridges and craters, and, higher still, the sun's rays spread out well toward the zenith.

When the dark gray of dusk descended, the miracle that is color had left a memorable impression. HARRY SACK, Asbury Park, N. J., July 27, 1938.

Harbor Whistles Liked

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

This letter refers to the article "Ship Men Vote Against Excess Tooting in Harbor."

May I ask these complaining persons how they can judge whether or not skippers are resorting to excess tooting? Do they stand on the docks and count the number of times craft whistle? I love the sound of these whistles and other noises on the river, and wouldn't mind blowing or listening to them all day long.

As for some one's suggestion that much harbor noise was nothing more than "conversation between skippers," my opinion is this: every one, including our skippers, has right of free speech. It is much healthier listening to whistles, horns, etc., here than bombs, guns and snuffing peoples "on the other side."

What about the noise of motorists' horns in greeting fellow-motorists or friends on the street? What about the noise of trains which make it embarrassing for people who have to shout to be understood? What about the noises of airplanes, vacuum cleaners, barking dogs, machinery, police whistles, fire en-

gines and cafeterias? Can we or are we ever going to put silencers on those things as well as other things?

BERNICE RESSLER,

Yonkers, N. Y., July 30, 1938.

Tenure System Discussed

As Applied to School Teachers It Is Held to Have Merits and Defects

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Most of us will grant that a tenure system for teachers very definitely has both positive and negative values. Many will agree with me that the New York State and New York City systems of life tenure are effective means of keeping teachers in service after they are past their period of useful service.

I am thinking of the situation that is illustrated by a number of cases of which I have direct knowledge. The handicap of the teacher is not necessarily one of old age, although it is usually accompanied or increased by the age factor.

We acknowledge that in some instances, for political reasons or otherwise, there is a real need for a tenure system. The New York City schools are operating under such a system, and the Board of Education has chosen to retire a teacher whom it declared incompetent.

I am not acquainted with the circumstances of this individual case, but I am pleased to see that action is being started to retire teachers who, through old age or other causes, are not able to perform the duties of their positions in a capable manner.

Too long have such circumstances been overlooked, circumstances wherein actual handicaps or peculiarities existed which seriously interfered with proper activities of the classroom. Mediocrity itself should not be tolerated. It is much more important that cases of submediocrity be eliminated, as far as possible, from New York City school systems, and other school systems as well.

I do not condemn or approve the action in this individual instance, but rather the movement that it characterizes. W. M. D.

New York, July 26, 1938.

Preserving Our Democracy

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The letter from Mary Livingston Johnston published recently on your editorial page makes a wise and timely proposal. Among the many confusing issues of today, our national purpose should be to establish a simple, basic view of the complex international situation. This alone will unite public opinion and so set up a spontaneous reaction to un-American propaganda.

All sane Americans agree that we are a democracy and that our ideals and standards are democratic. Our response to Nazi or Communist propaganda and spying within our borders must be stern and final, as recommended by Miss Johnston.

The wisdom of this course is being demonstrated by the stand now being taken by England, France and Czechoslovakia. The sooner the democracies of the world take this resolute attitude together, the sooner will we be rid of the threat of overambitious dictatorial egos. WOLSTAN C. BROWN, Jackson Heights, N. Y., July 30, 1938.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Mary Livingston Johnston's letter demonstrates the difference between England's and Germany's friendship for us. It is the "same old Germany," she points out, whose recent spy activities have warned our government where Germany stands.

Miss Johnston recalls the historical incident in the Spanish-American War of 1898 when, while Dewey was in occupation of Manila, the Kaiser showed his hand by sending over Admiral von Diederichs, and the British Admiral Chester intercepted the sinister designs.

Wickham Stead, in his review "Through Thirty Years" of events preceding the World War, gives some very interesting facts about this not generally known. England has shown in many ways her friendship for us, and the English people know we will do the right thing at the right time.

WILLIAM C. PHELPS,

New York, July 25, 1938.

Editorial Appreciated

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Thank you for your editorial "Is Life Worth Living?"

Many people find themselves in a state of mental turmoil and depression from which they mistakenly imagine they can never emerge. Death seems the only way out.

Time is indeed a miraculous healer; combined with faith and courage it can raise many an individual from the depths into the sunlight again where he may have an appreciation of life and a deeper understanding of God and his fellow-men than he has ever known before. ONE WHO KNOWS, Englewood, N. J., July 29, 1938.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

It was with real delight and appreciation that I read your editorial "Is Life Worth Living?"

The last two paragraphs, beginning "Of course, life is worth living," in these dismal times especially, will encourage all who read it and refresh the spirit.

NATHANIEL F. GLIDDEN,

New York, July 28, 1938.

Prometheus Unbounding

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Speaking of ugly statues, who has looked upon Prometheus in the Rockefeller Center Promenade and not pitied the poor creature? Any one with half a heart can feel for him. Where did the artist expect him to leap? Into the soup plates of the promenade's patrons? And how can a half-fledged figure leap anywhere without endangering his dignity?

Why should the zodiac Prometheus is leaping through look like the wedding ring of Gargantua's wife? Should Prometheus glisten every time you cast a glance his way? Who plastered an unalive look on his face? Pity poor Prometheus! I. L. DWORAN,

New York, Aug. 1, 1938.

Figuring Production Costs

Writer to The Times Is Declared to Have Omitted Some Items

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

The cost figures which Lyle H. Olson uses in his letter to THE TIMES do not give a complete picture of where the consumer's dollar goes. If we take radios, washing machines, electrical appliances as representative commodities, the distribution schedule might read as follows:

Retailers' discount	.40
Jobbers' discount	.10
Advertising	.05
Other sales expenses	.10
Overhead	.10
Material, labor, fixed charges	.20
Profit	.05

Total\$1.00

The individual percentages may vary from case to case, but for most consumer goods, and also for many durable goods items, the cost of distribution exceeds by far the cost of manufacture. It has been said that only 20 per cent of the people are engaged in production, while the other 80 per cent take care of distribution. Any substantial reduction of prices therefore must entail a reduction in distribution expenses.

There is, however, another side to the problem. Because there is now a scarcity of new bank credit and because no new capital for expansion is available, the yearly turnover of the nation is limited by the amount of credit and money in circulation and by the speed of money turnover.

To increase the purchasing power of the nation we must either make new capital available to business or prices and wages must be lowered.

It is obvious that less money and credit was required for business when most large and many small companies were paying their bills in ten days than at present, when the average time of payment probably exceeds thirty days.

The pump-priming money which the government spends can stimulate business, but it cannot build up capital, because it has to be repaid in taxes immediately.

To expand business, accounts receivable, machinery and also inventories must be expanded. Therefore we must have some source of new capital and new credit in addition to pump-priming if the effect should be permanent.

The new RFC policy should do some good, but the volume of this type of loans is insufficient and does not reach far enough down where there is the greatest need for new capital.

PAUL G. WELLES,

Glen Ridge, N. J., Aug. 1, 1938.

Some Other Items

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

In his letter to THE TIMES on production costs, Lyle H. Olson omits some very important items of cost—for instance, taxes, insurance, repairs and depreciation. The latter alone, either by wear or by obsolescence, may run from 5 to 20 per cent. Idle time may also increase costs. ROBERT GRIMSHAW, Leonia, N. J., Aug. 1, 1938.

General McCoy

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NEW YORK TIMES:

Your editorial tribute to General Frank R. McCoy rouses pleasant memories. As a youth just out of college and also just out of Officers' Training School at Camp Upton, I was a member of the Sixty-third Infantry Brigade staff when General McCoy came to assume command in front of Juvigny on the Chemin des Dames.

We were an exceedingly young staff, and youth's first impressions are apt to be interesting. At any rate, we knew at once that the arrival of this slim, quiet, self-possessed general with a wound stripe was an event. One by one he interviewed us in a niche of the big cave we were occupying, and we felt that, in spite of war and excitement, he had all the time in the world for pleasant conversation—even with second lieutenants. It was rather amazing. When the interviews were ended, we knew that the new brigade commander was a man who would hold the upper hand in almost any situation—an inspiring personality of great force and charm and graciousness who gave one additional confidence in himself and roused a loyalty and affection that would never die.

For those of us who were fortunate enough to serve under the general at Juvigny and in the Argonne and later on the march to the Rhine his subsequent outstanding career as a soldier-diplomat is not in the least surprising. RUSSELL GORDON CARTER, West Rindge, N. H., Aug. 1, 1938.

CHANGELING

Mark was older than all the others; He had a dozen sisters and brothers, Changeable all, as an April day, Fair and blue-eyed and usually gay— All but Mark, And he was dark With long black hair that grew awry; Nobody ever saw him cry, Even as a child; He never laughed at all; Days when the others played at ball Mark was lying in meadow-grass Staring at the sky: he saw the clouds pass; But what else he saw, or where he stayed Nights in the Spring while the others played, No one knew, for he wouldn't say; He seldom answered if we spoke; He wore his silence like a cloak, After a while he ran away. . . .

Some of us saw him long years after: His face was filled with fierce, dark laughter, & He was watching people and hearing them talk. . . .

He still had the same smooth, silent walk, But he seemed less remote and not so strange—

I can't exactly explain the change— Not quite as if his cloak were gone, But as if it were torn and trampled upon.

ELISABETH G. PALMER.