

The Toronto World

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THURSDAY MORNING, SEPT. 27.

Middleman or Consumer, Mr. Hanna?

What is the most useful contribution to the food control discussion yet issued was the statement in yesterday's paper from Hon. W. J. Hanna. We say the most useful because it reduces the confusion hitherto prevailing to a straight issue, and shows that whatever Mr. Hanna may do he will not adopt a policy of price control. We were afraid when he began to talk nonsense about supply and demand that he would not face the real difficulty. Now we are sure of it.

If we ask who is it he seeks to protect by refusing to regulate prices, we are answered by a maze of cross-accounts that we must charitably suppose have led Mr. Hanna off the track. But we must respectfully submit that the majority of the public know red herrings when they see—or smell them. When Mr. Hanna states that the fixing of prices would bring ruin to our social system, he is like Mr. Norman Angell, who conclusively proved that there couldn't be any more war. If Mr. Hanna wanted to do so he could fix prices, and the result would not be ruinous like the war, but beneficial, as the fixing of the price of wheat and other commodities has been.

Mr. Hanna's references to "an effete economic condition" are timely, but he does not appreciate the fact that his refusal to fix prices is characteristic of the "effete economic condition." He is on stronger ground when he recognizes the social burden of the middlemen. "Unquestionably, as I said before," he remarks, "there are too many middlemen." But it is not his first duty "to cut prices, eliminate middlemen," and so forth. This is where the confusion arises.

He divides the middlemen into two classes, but he ignores entirely the worst middleman of all, the middleman The World has written several articles about lately, the middleman who is a shareholder, "who toils not, neither does he spin," but who draws middleman's wages in the shape of dividends to an extent that would have staggered Solomon in all his glory. Mr. Hanna's middlemen are in two classes, "the greedy middleman" and "the supernumerary, unnecessary and inefficient middleman." If he will include the shareholders in the second class and say honestly that he refuses to control prices because it might affect the dividends which go to the supernumerary, unnecessary shareholder middleman, we could respect him for his frankness, but we cannot acquiesce in his general condemnation of the busy, efficient and useful distributing middleman class merely to shield those who add the real burden to the food consumer.

With all of Mr. Hanna's five other factors we are not concerned at present, the food speculator and the food waster being the other two classes besides the middlemen with which the consumer is chiefly concerned. With both of these he hopes to deal. The other factors also are being provided against. So that it is with the shareholding middlemen that the food consumer has his main quarrel. He represents watered stock in any food corporation to which he belongs. He is the unnecessary and idle man on the pay-sheet who raises cost and makes no return. Every penny of unnecessary capital in a food corporation raises the price of food just as much as would be the case if all the farmers took to sinking their capital in marble barns, gold-mounted reapers, cut-stone fences, and asphalt roads and lanes. In fact these improvements might tend to cheapen food production in some respects, but watered stock and shareholding middlemen who do nothing but draw dividends are a load for the consumer to carry.

There is another fallacy in Mr. Hanna's contention about middlemen. He suggests that if food prices were controlled all the middlemen in business would be forced out of work, and he draws a picture of blue ruin worthy of the late Sir Richard Cartwright. The fallacy is that by far the great majority of these middlemen are not in the food business at all. There is no danger of all the dry goods stores or the hundred and one luxury stores going broke because the prices of foodstuffs were fixed. We may all be middlemen of a sort; but the closer we get to the farmer, and the more certain we are that he is getting a fair price, and that he is not losing most of what he makes to the food speculator, but is encouraged to increase his production by the fair prices fixed, the more satisfied we all shall be.

Mr. Hanna speaks of famine. We are not afraid to speak of famine. It is a worse possibility than the prolongation of the war. But when it is seen that the middleman is in control of food prices, and not Mr. Hanna, who is supposed to be, then the farmer, who gets nothing of the prices the middleman fixes for the consumer—the farmer gets discouraged. He says, "What's the use?" He plants less. Famine is nearer.

Mr. Hanna will have to make it plain whether he is acting for the middleman or for the farmer and the consumer, whose interests are joint and inseparable. If he is careful for the middleman, he is not the man to be food controller.

The American Bankers.

The 4,000 delegates to the bankers' convention at Atlantic City talk patriotism, and their words carry more weight in view of the high and disinterested service they performed in floating the liberty loan. Just at this time, too, we learn that Mr. Frank A. Vanderlip temporarily retires from the presidency of the National City Bank of New York to become an official of the United States treasury department. His first duty will be to help the government float the coming loan, but it is said he will remain in an advisory capacity in the treasury department until the war is over.

These things are as they should be, and Financial Street expresses the hope that the great service Wall street is rendering the government in this hour of trial will remove much of the popular prejudice

against the big moneyed men and interests in New York.

That prejudice will disappear when the magnates understand that the country expects them to be patriotic in peace as well as in war. The era of frozen finance, the looting of railway companies, the corruption of courts and legislatures, the bedeviling of public utilities by the Morgans and Harrimans, will not soon be forgotten, and Wall street has a pretty bad record to live down.

Fortunately the power of the money trust is somewhat broken by national control of currency, banking and credits. The next thing is to place the railways beyond the power of crooked manipulators. The United States is in no humor to stand any more crimes like those committed by financial magnates in connection with the New Haven and Rock Island railways. Government ownership and operation of all the means of communication will make service, not profits, the goal to be aimed at.

Wall street has important functions to perform, and it is acting much better now than it did during the civil war. For one thing the government and not the banks now has the whip hand in the banking business. From this war the people will emerge with a clearer conception of what civilization should mean. It is the welfare of the many, not the wealth of a few, that the modern state should conserve. There can be no real democracy where wealth accumulates in a few hands and the mass of the people lead hard and narrow lives of privation, no matter what form of government may prevail.

Laughing at Them.

L'Evenement, the daily Conservative newspaper of Quebec City, has stoutly supported conscription from the first. It was not with L'Evenement a matter of politics, but of conviction, and it stood firm when angry waves of popular dissent broke savagely against it. Now that the battle is fairly won the Quebec contemporary is poking fun at the anti-conscriptionists. L'Evenement recalls that in May and June last it was everywhere stated that only Liberals would be drafted for the war, that the exemption tribunals would be composed of servile tools sent down from Ottawa, and that the abomination of desolation would descend upon the Province of Quebec. Now, it says, the people see that the tribunals are composed of judges, notaries and the most respectable men of every parish, and that half of them have been practically named by Sir Wilfrid Laurier himself. The farmers realize that the law is to be administered in a moderate and sensible way, and there is no more excitement along the St. Lawrence over conscription than there is on the banks of the Saskatchewan.

"Revolutionary Ferment."

It is quite true that an influential authority like The Times should draw attention to the "revolutionary ferment" that is at work in England socially as well as in other countries. The world is always coming to an end for some people, and it is always beginning anew for others. Social worlds of various kinds came to an end in 1793, in 1832, in 1848, in 1868, and once more most notably in 1906. Then in 1914 came the catastrophe. The people who think that after the war we are going back to 1914, or anything like it, belong to another age. They might as well be troglodytes, antediluvians, as far as this age is concerned.

It should not have escaped the notice of intelligent people that the Radicals of one generation become the Conservatives of the next. "Milestones" is an artistic dramatic presentation of that fact. Joseph Chamberlain, who was regarded as a diabolical agency by the Conservatives of his early days, would be a very mild reformer by present standards. Sir Lloyd George is not unacceptable to the peasant just now. We move in cycles historically, and there is an entirely new brand of radical always coming along until the nations are surfeited.

The moral of it all is that we must learn to take impending changes seriously. The time has gone past when men can live soft, sponge on the active and industrious, and get away with it. The men who have lived hard on the field of battle are quite ready to listen to those who have lived hard on the field of battle. They will look in each other's eyes and recognize the manhood and the intelligence. It is these that are going to control our affairs after the war if the "revolutionary ferment" means anything worth while.

There is nothing more in this "revolutionary ferment" than the abolition of privilege. It is no terrible thing to those who have never enjoyed privileges. Those who possess them now and abuse them, or are unwilling to pay for them by service to the state and their fellows, will find little favor from those who have served. The "ferment of revolution" thrives on the sentiment that there are to be no more fillers, no more shirkers. Its motto is "Get busy."

People who perceive an end of all things in such sentiments know little or nothing of life. Work is not an evil thing in itself, but a good thing. It might be a joy and a blessing. William Morris wrote a book which few people read, perhaps because he left out of account the religious principle in human nature, but in "News From Nowhere" he drew a charming picture of a national life in which everybody did his bit. That is the idea at the bottom of the "revolutionary ferment."

Nature always provides remedies for her diseases. There is only one cure for our present economic diseases. It is co-operation. It has been tried successfully in many places. It is the basis of the present prosperity agriculturally in Ireland. It has done wonders for Denmark. The principle is sound and applicable of universal application. It will probably prove to be the remedy of all the "revolutionary ferment" that does not arise from a desire to do nothing.

KEEP STILL UNTIL EXCITEMENT IS OVER.

Keep still. When trouble is brewing, keep still. Even when slander is getting on his legs, keep still. When your feelings are hurt, keep still—till you recover from your excitement at any rate. Things look differently thru an unquiet eye.

Dr. Burton relates how once in a commotion he wrote a letter and sent it and wished he had not. "In my later years," he said, "I had another commotion and wrote a long letter, but life had rubbed a little sense into me, and I kept that letter in my pocket against the day when I could look it over without agitation and without tears. I was glad I did. Less and less it seemed necessary to send it. I was not sure it would do any hurt, but in my doubtfulness I leaned to reticence, and eventually it was destroyed." Time works wonders. Wait till you can speak calmly, and then you will not need to speak, maybe.

MANY DEAD WHO ARE ALIVE

BY TEDDIE WICK.

"If we say you're dead you're as good as dead—particularly you are dead."

—Lord High Executioner in The Mikado.

And then there was also Jeremiah Crumpler, of "recalled to life" fame in "A Tale of Two Cities," who was told: "You'd do it in a blissing bad way, Jerry, if 'recalled to life' was to come into fashion."

Which harks us back to the early days of the war and that British soldier who kept nagging the war office to hand over his back pay, altho the war office had its own proof in black and blue before his very eyes that he was dead.

When a man's dead, he's dead. And there's an end of it.

And on that point the lord high executioner and war office stand arm in arm, and stand pat.

Once upon a time there was the father of a young officer who was in that thing on the Somme, and who was notified by the powers that be that his son had been killed. He had been seen standing beside his machine gun in a wood and the ground had suddenly opened and he swallowed him. Later his comrades got word to the father that his son had been surrounded by Germans and killed fighting. Another had seen his son lying dead. So the family donned mourning and considered the book closed and the son's life fulfilled.

A month later the father came to a London hotel. "Two forty-three," called the page, carrying a telegram. Two hundred and forty-three was the father's room number, and the telegram was from those same powers that be informing him his son was alive.

It would be funny if it were not that it is so unspeakably not funny.

"The son of the war office said, was a prisoner of war in German hands. And the father now is one of those hundreds who will tell you:

"Never believe a 'missing' man is dead—never."

"I had him buried," wrote a major about a West Bromwich artilleryman, "with others of his comrades who were killed at the same time, and above them we placed a wooden cross. The artilleryman was writing at the same time less than a mile away.

And hence arises the Red Cross, and he owes his existence to Lord Robert Cecil, under-secretary for foreign affairs. In the early days of the war Lord Robert went to France to seek news of a missing friend from the friend's comrades. When he came back, soon after the battle of the Marne, the British Red Cross Society founded its wounded and missing department, and the searcher began to find him for soiling hearts.

Nowadays the department has its quarters in a great mansion in London where daily lists of the "missing" are sent by the war office. Here the reports are tabulated and the names sent out to groups of the missing by every British base along the Hindenburg line.

Chiefly the searcher roams the hospitals, carrying his big book of missing, and enquires from each wounded man what he knows of men in his company posted as "wounded and missing," or merely "missing."

Usually he hears:

"Yes, sir; I knew him quite well, but I don't know what happened to him. I never saw him after we went over the top."

Sometimes:

"That fellow's a prisoner, and six others with him. We were all at an outpost when it was surrounded. I got away correct. The shareholders of the bank are a small percentage—less than nine per cent.—of the total shares of the National Trust Company and never have been any greater.

W. E. Rundle, General Manager.
 Toronto, Sept. 6, 1917.

Further desire to inform you that your suggestion that the National Trust Company is a subsidiary organization of the Canadian Bank of Commerce is also in part correct. The shareholders of the bank are a small percentage—less than nine per cent.—of the total shares of the National Trust Company and never have been any greater.

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Editor World: In reading your editorial on more separation allowance in a recent issue (which we all appreciate), it struck me you might be interested in me following: British soldiers who came from the United States British recruiting offices cannot get a pass home except on proof of urgent business. If a relative comes to see you, the United States Government takes them on return to the States \$4 for a woman, and \$15 for a man, alien tax. If you cross on pass you only get soldiers' rates in Canada; full fare in the United States has to be paid on the Grand Trunk or C. P. R. I would like to inquire if a soldier who came from the United States army to Canadian aviation camps gets soldiers' rates in Canada. I would also like to inquire if a soldier who joined up in United States British recruiting office will have to pay a \$15 alien tax on his discharge when his home and family is in the United States and he has been a resident there for some years. A few thousand Britishers and Canadians who enlisted in the United

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"STANDING WITH RELUCTANT FEET"



Other People's Opinions

National Trust Co. and C.N.R.
 (Regina Leader, Sept. 18).
 Sir,—My attention has just been called to an editorial relative to the proposed purchase by the Dominion Government of Canadian Northern Railway shares, which appeared in your paper on August 25, in which the following assertion is made:

"Hence the Canadian Bank of Commerce and all its subsidiary interests, as for instance, the National Trust Company, of which Sir Thomas White was vice-president and general manager prior to being pitched forth by the Big interests into the finance portfolio in the Borden cabinet, are deeply interested in having a good round price paid by the Canadian people for this worthless stock now lying in their vaults as an asset."

I desire to inform you that the National Trust Company does not own, either directly or indirectly, nor has it ever owned directly or indirectly, a share of stock in the Canadian Northern Railway, nor has it ever advanced any money directly or indirectly upon the security of any such shares.

I further desire to inform you that your suggestion that the National Trust Company is a subsidiary organization of the Canadian Bank of Commerce is also in part correct. The shareholders of the bank are a small percentage—less than nine per cent.—of the total shares of the National Trust Company and never have been any greater.

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Poll Tax on Recruits
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Near Eastern Entrance to C. F. Bennett Building
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Service Men and Soldiers.

Editor World: The board of control and other employers are doing nobly in providing employment for returned soldiers, but many good-thinking citizens are of the opinion that it is about time that a line was drawn between returned soldiers who have done their bit and others who have been in khaki and discharged in Canada or England thru being medically unfit or by "slinging the lead." Amongst a number of appointments recently made by the board of control appear the names of eight who were discharged in Canada, and three discharged in England. It is a well-known fact that, in the early days of recruiting, officers endeavoring to get their battalions up to strength were not particular as to who were attested, and in this they were greatly helped by the medical examiners.

Such accepted men, instead of being a help to the cause, were a detriment, on account of the expense the country was put to in every way and the labor and time entailed in their training. Now the burning question is, why should those men, some of whom have been in Canada but a short time, take precedence over citizens who have been taxpayers for years, and who did not try to bluff their way into khaki, knowing that thru age or possible physical defects they were not qualified? There are hundreds of such citizens who, from point of intelligence, business ability and activity, are, to say the least, equal to the men who have been in khaki and discharged, yet the said citizens dare not apply for a position in the city that they were born in. This is a state of affairs that should be remedied, but, of course, nothing is likely to be done until after the municipal elections, as an alderman who would dare breach such a subject now would be in fear of his political head. There is a larger side to this subject that it would be well for the Great War Veterans' Association to stop and consider. In order to make themselves strong this association is enrolling every man possible who has been in uniform. This strength now may prove their weakness later on when the government finally takes up the matter of pensions for adjustment. There is a limit to the burden that this country can carry in way of pensions, and it is only fair that those who have suffered injury in any way, and the dependents of those who have given up their lives in this just cause, should proportionately receive the benefit of whatever the country can afford to give, which will be none too much when all is done.

There should be no thought or consideration for those who up to the present have gained more than they have given. Of course, it is possible that the training these men have received may have fitted them for service with the new draft, in which case any claims that they then may have will receive proper recognition. Observer.

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