

Causerie

BY THOMAS N. ASHTON

THE RIGHT WORD

WITH the austere solemnity known only to the law profession—in measured tones emphasized by “dead pans”—we are, in effect, informed that the science of political economy is governed entirely by the proper selection of words. The laws of Nature are so much excess baggage.

It's this way—

If one wishes to correct economic conditions which breed poverty in the midst of progress—want in the midst of wealth—one needs but write a legislative bill and submit it to the State legislature. One should be careful, however, in one's selection of words which are purposed to prevent low wages, otherwise one's legislative bill, upon enactment, *may* be tossed out as being unconstitutional.

The idea is to write a constitutional minimum-wage law, then—being constitutional—the law will compel stingy employers to pay an existence-wage and the economic problem will be solved; everybody will live happily, ever after, in a more abundant life.

It's all so simple—except in selecting the right word for the legislative bill.

Take the N'York minimum-wage law, f'rinstance. Its diff'runt from the Ohio law.

Despite the galaxy of lawyers in the N'York legislature, they got all messed up and wrote an unconstitutional law aiming to cure hunger in the midst of food. Yeah, they unconstitutionally prescribed minimum wages *based on the necessity for a decent and healthful living*.

Right here they fell down. The necessity for a decent and healthful living is simply unconstitutional.

Obviously—patently—plainly—naturally. How careless!

Ohio, on the other hand, is smart. Ohio's legislative lawyers used their heads. No unconstitutional verbiage for them. No siree! They cutely prescribed *their* minimum-wage law on the *basis of the value of reasonable service*.

Right here they out-smarted the Constitution. The value of reasonable service is okay.

Obviously—patently—plainly—naturally. Simple, eh wot?

Ohio is all set, now, to corral prosperity—to whip the depression—to warm shivering bodies in the midst of abundant heat—to show Nature that her laws are unnecessary except to toy with in high school physics classes—to chatter about among Sunday school kids when illustrating the Ten Commandments.

Be sure to choose the right word.

LIFE ENDS AT 45

The hand that rocks the cradle of culture is stilled. The heart that cherished the hope for stronger, sturdier, erudite offspring is heavy. The eye which beamed in pride and joy is wet with tears as it looks down upon a bonny boy and a lithesome lass of forty-five years, now come to the economic ends of promising lives.

Full and fair—mature and sober—keen and capable, these eager children perplexedly look up into the sad, sweet face of their maternal State. They have come to the economic end of life. They had read that “Life Begins at 40,” but the Massachusetts department of Labor and Industries reluctantly now tells them that Life ends at 45.

So *this* is life! Five, full, fateful years—youthful years spent 'midst the greatest intellects of the world—maturing years spent in the cradle of liberty from whence came life, patriotism and freedom from taxation-without-representation.

Dully do this boy and girl of 45 listen to the wavering voice of the Director of Statistics:—

“We have completed a two-year survey of 3,781 industrial establishments. Of these, 310 employ no man over 45 years of age—1,283 employ no women over 45. During a 22-months' period 968 establishments—or 40 per cent of all that reported hiring additional men—put on not one man over 45; 1,277 establishments—or 60 per cent of all that reported hiring additional women—took on none over 45.

“Thirty-five per cent of all employable men are 45 or over.

“Fifty-three per cent of all men on welfare relief are 45 or over.

“The survey covered 600,000 workers. Once out of a job, few men over 45 can get back because business men do not want to take on other employers' elderly people. Age discrimination against women starts earlier and is more pronounced than among men.”

As the voice of the Massachusetts Director of Statistics retarded to its whispered conclusion, the bonny boy of 45 turned to the lithesome lass and—drawing her hand under his arm—bravely he led her down the ornate stairway of polished marble—through the Hall of Flags where tattered stripes and aged stars hung limp from scarred staffs—out from 'neath the gilded dome which glittered grandly in the red rays of a setting sun.

The voice of the lithesome lass came sifting back into the austere halls of legislative wisdom:—

“Cheerio, my dear, in twenty years more you and I will be eligible for the old-age pension.”

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Somewhere in this favored land the star of hope hangs high—somewhere happy dreams are born as children scan the sky; somewhere in this verdant vale ambitions e'er are fed—but not at Freedom's cradle . . . Intelligence lies dead.