

WPA: Toryism's Last Ditch

Corrington Gill, assistant WPA administrator, in a recent article admits what always has been obvious—that the New Deal make-work program cannot solve the problem of unemployment.

What fun Mr. Gill must have had in the writing of it! For it is replete with statistics dealing with national income, with indices of industrial production, with comparative tables on unemployment, with technologicalities and all the other high-sounding gibberish with which the "expert" loves to becloud his studied aloofness from fundamental forces and relations.

Let us consider some of Mr. Gill's statements and conclusions by themselves—unencumbered with meaningless phraseology—so that we may bring into relief the kind of economic solutions we are offered in lieu of sound remedies.

"Unemployment measures the disparity between the demand for labor and the supply of labor." This is only true where labor is a drug on the market, and then it is only part of the truth. In terms of production, is there any difference between the demand for and the supply of labor? Are not demand and supply but two aspects of the same thing—production? Does not the laborer work to produce what he wants, or to exchange his production for what other laborers produce? And is not unemployment the measure of the unnatural interference with this natural exchange? The "disparity" between "supply and demand" arises from a distortion of a natural trend. What causes it?

"There exists a body of unemployed—the irreducible minimum—some (of whom) will never get jobs." Nice prospect that. How can we ever expect a solution of our economic problem from those who preach that many of us are ordained to eternal idleness, unable to produce the things we want, or that others will take in exchange for their production? What kind of toryism are we being fed in the name of liberalism?

"Even with prosperity exceeding 1929 by a large margin (sic) a sub-

stantial unemployment problem is unavoidable." But why? Perhaps Comrade Gill believes there are too many workers—the fructifying brats—and some should be removed from our midst by wars or synthetic epidemics. He doesn't say. But he does imply.

"The problem of the worker over 45 becomes more and more acute." Well, let's chloroform them. If they cannot produce why clutter up our census with them? Or, maybe if these old fogies were given a chance they might be able to produce at least enough to support themselves. Bob Fitzsimmons won the world's heavyweight championship at about the age of 45, and other old timers have been known to support large families. Maybe, Comrade Gill, these old fellows would work wonders if they were given a chance. What is stopping them?

"No tested method has been discovered by which the business cycle of recurring depression and prosperity may be prevented." That's a confession of hopelessness which Comrade Gill shares with other dilettantes in economics. The quack doctors have diagnosed the case and declared the disease fatal. Let's play bridge. Or maybe we might try other doctors. We can't do worse.

"The payment of lower wages than the (NRA) codes provided has limited re-employment because of lowered mass purchasing power." Why not? Lower wages should be accompanied (if there is no robber in between) by lower prices. Lower prices widen the purchasing base. More buyers, more jobs. More jobs mean more demand for labor, and

that is the way to raise wages. But prices are higher. Who is the "robber in between"?

"The relief rolls have had to take care of people who are not acceptable to private industry." Now the truth is out. The make-work program is really charity. Why not call it a dole and have done with hypocrisy?

"As long as the volume of unemployment continues to be large, we face a serious relief problem." Which means that the WPA Ye Shall Have With Ye Always. Or at least until the problem of unemployment is solved by the method—used in all other sciences—of finding the root cause in the national economy and of applying the remedy which such investigation discloses.

And now the political wind-up. "In a land as rich as ours people should not be thrown on the scrapheap when they are involuntarily idle." Hoorah! Vote for Gill.

No nation that has embarked on a charity-make-work program has ever receded from this economic fallacy. Rather, this solution seems always to have aggravated the problem, and to have increased the number of dole-receivers. The constantly increasing strain of supporting people who are not allowed to go to work, has always sapped the moral fibre of the nation, to say nothing of the burden of taxation. The inevitable debacle has been the disappearance of these nations and the wiping out of their civilizations. See Athens. See Rome.

—F. C.

See: "Progress and Poverty," pp. 302; 540—543.

"Social Problems," pp. 73—77; 217.

"Protection or Free Trade," pp. 244—247.