

The COMMONWEAL

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The Hypnotized

FANTASTIC, TRAGIC, ALARMING are three adjectives that seem best to describe the news of the arrest of seventeen residents of

Brooklyn on charges of conspiring to overthrow the government of the United States. These men were members of the "Christian Front," a hazy organization claim-

ing to be devoted to Christianity and the American Way and inimical to communism and atheism. But the Christian Front idea of Christian society and the American Way is very strange. So are its ideas of proper political, economic and social action. Destruction of the Jews was one of these. "Direct action," street demonstrations, control of the gutters—bombs and rifles and setting up a dictator by force are some more.

It might seem fantastic, of course, that seventeen men should think they could overthrow our government (even Hitler failed in his beer hall); the tragic part of it is that they undoubtedly conceived of themselves as true patriots and Christians while they dreamed their sanguinary dream. The alarming thing is that for their state of mind Catholics are largely responsible, and we shall continue to be responsible for the creation of other groups of hypnotized men, who may carry out

their scheming with more tragic results, until we all recognize and nullify the powerful propaganda which directly creates them.

Father Coughlin, the *Brooklyn Tablet*, *Social Justice* and their many abettors and sympathizers must bear the direct responsibility for the plight of these seventeen young men. For months the *Tablet's* correspondence columns have been the free public forum for the national director of the group, John F. Cassidy. It will not do to say that divergent views have appeared in the same column—letters in that column are picked and chosen, and besides, that is eeling out of it.

In its issue dated only a few days before the arrest of Cassidy & Co., the *Tablet* printed an excoriating editorial ridiculing the Mayor of New York and his police for keeping tabs on street meetings at which "representatives of certain organizations spoke and at which our Jewish fellow-citizens were adversely criticized." That is, of course, eely writing. No names are mentioned. But only the Christian Front comes to the reader's mind.

Father Coughlin has talked of "Franco's way . . . Christian American forces unite to the last man. . . . Rest assured we will fight you and we will win. . . . The Christian Way is the peaceful way until, all argument having failed, all civil authority having failed, there is left no other way but the way of defending ourselves against the invaders of our spiritual and national rights. . . ." That, too, is eely writing, as are the qualifications, amounting to contradictions, which pepper every essay or speech emanating from the Radio Priest. But he, himself, supplies a clue to his real meaning: "Call this inflammatory, if you will. It is inflammatory."

Well, the flames reached the hearts of seventeen—perhaps many more of whom we know nothing; they acknowledge the leadership of the men who set them afire, and they are in jail awaiting trial, but Father Coughlin says he had nothing to do it with. "Buy Christian for Christmas." It wasn't inflammatory, after all. . . .

A Lone-Wolf Hemisphere

THE BOAST of a navy second to none is no longer enough for American big navy advocates.

At the hearings on the Vinson Superiority Bill, for instance, Admiral Stark said we must be prepared to take at any price on by ourselves the combined

forces of Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia at one and the same time. What a yardstick for determining legitimate national defense expenditures! On this basis defense expenditures for the next two or three years are estimated at astronomical figures. It is not surprising that the army chimes in for its share with Secretary Woodring's modest request for at least \$300,-

000,000 extra for ordnance and engineering items and Assistant Secretary Louis Johnson's objective of arms and munitions for an army of 1,000,000 men. The American people must pay dearly if Congress bows to those who maintain that single-handed against the fantastic coalition listed above we must be able to defend our shores, possessions, trade routes and the Monroe Doctrine. The people will have to pay drastically increased taxes, work relief and farm benefits will have to be cut well below the family subsistence level and all-important public health work will be badly curtailed. At the same time the other nations of the world will be spurred farther along the fatal Australian pursuit race toward the tantalizing mirage of armament superiority. How rally popular support against big army and navy extremists? If the United States is to be a force for peace in these critical days, the government must not give way to unreasoning fear. And it is folly to seek the peace we want singlehanded.

The Trade Agreements Act

THE TARIFF FIGHT threatens to become as big a political issue this year as it used to be in the classic ages of American politics. Even accepting some of the arguments for the terribly high duties customary in the past, it must be admitted now by even the most rabid protectionists that times have changed. Now the United States is a creditor rather than debtor nation. American industry has grown up until, indeed, it is more developed than anywhere else. Nations are more and more governing their trade relations by new and extra-tariff methods: bartering and quota regulations, for instance. Fewer undeveloped lands are willing to remain dependent on exports of raw materials and imports of manufactured goods. More nations are aiming at more or less complete self-sufficiency. Cartels have risen and declined, but can rise again to get around political duties. The balance in American industry has shifted toward the great automobile manufacturers and exporters.

But the principal question, after all, is still whether we should have a higher or lower tariff. That it should be lower seems almost too obvious to argue about. The effort to get agriculture behind a demand for a rise is particularly fantastic. Farmers have a terrific leverage in tariff matters precisely because it is recognized that industrial tariffs have been at their particular expense. It would be very slick if farmers, ignoring the fundamental position of their export industry and forgetting the traditional farm protests against protection, could be worked into fighting reciprocal agreements and demanding higher rates for themselves and thus helping to lift the whole schedule.

The reciprocal trade law, which runs out in June, provides a method of reducing to some extent the suicidal Smoot-Hawley duties which contrasts favorably with the paralyzing log-rolling methods of Congressional tariff activity. If you want a low tariff, the principal objections to the new method may be first, the centralization of power under the executive. The second objection is perhaps most important right now: the executive control over tariffs can be used as a new, "flexible" instrument of national policy in power diplomacy, and as a means of interference in foreign countries. Trade negotiations and trading can be more easily carried on as a trade war by this method than by the old. To the extent one likes or dislikes the executive's general foreign policy one must approve or object to enforcing it with the reciprocal trade powers. Still, considering all objections, the Smoot-Hawley tariff continues to be disastrously high. Until business becomes disillusioned with piratical duties or Congressmen learn how to resist business men's pressure, there is no unobjectionable way out.

Hutchins vs. Kieran on Football

COMPLAINTS about college football are common enough. Every so often the Carnegie Foundation gives statistics on those who are capitalizing on bulky frames, stout hearts and superior coordination to pay their academic way, or some coach is quitting because of lack of material when the administration decides to cut down on athletic scholarships, or some high school halfback can't make up his mind which of a score of institutions of higher learning will pay him the highest salary. No one takes the amateur status of "big-time" football players very seriously. Mr. Hutchins, who has consistently upheld a rather severe ideal of college life, made a lot of good points in explaining the dropping of football by the University of Chicago. Spring training and fall training and distant trips undoubtedly take up a lot of time; big games do distort the function of college in the public mind; football does develop into big business (\$115,000 guarantee to each team for one Rose Bowl game, for instance). John Kieran of the *New York Times* and "Information Please" counters with a familiar line of argument: it is not the game but its abuses. He would keep the game for all its benefits to spectators and players and eliminate the principal evils by abolishing gate receipts. This suggestion is stronger logically than in actuality. A sound educational program would include both intramural athletic contests and intercollegiate spectacles for the many. Root or branch, that is the question. From all accounts an evening at "The Male Animal" at the Cort Theatre would suggest a happy answer.

Ebb and
Flow

Root
or
Branch

Home Is the Place for Quins

FROM NOW ON until the New York World's Fair reopens, there will be an animated debate as to whether the guardians of the Dionne children ought to allow them to be shown there. This paragraph records a "No." It is said that the Provincial Secretary of Ontario and the legal member of the guardians' board, Judge Valin, agree with this paragraph at the present writing. It is also intimated, in more than one realistic subhead and footnote, that their reason for agreeing is an economico-political one: the quintuplets, by attracting visitors to their place of abode, have boomed the whole North Bay section of Ontario, and if they go out of the country, these pleasant tourist dollars will cease to pour in. But we hope that there are other motives as well.

Judge Valin is quoted as being solicitous regarding the children's health in the event of their being allowed to come to New York. This means, we trust, that he is solicitous also regarding things more imponderable but even more important. Their health could certainly be guaranteed; but the main consideration, surely, is the children's own rights, and if one pleases, their own dignity as human beings. They are not ordinary children, by a wide margin, and some concession has had to be made to that fact; but in the name of their own welfare, their own self-respect and balance while they are growing up, they should be kept as nearly normal as it is possible to keep them. When they are shown to tourists in Callander, at least that is because tourists take the initiative and make the journey. Altogether different would it be for these children to realize one day that they were brought into another country for money and shown off as among professional exhibits. There is no doubt that the quins would dress up the Fair like nothing else this side of heaven; but though the Fair may need them, they certainly do not need the Fair, and that should end the matter.

Wilderness Voice

IT IS REFRESHING to read anything so forthright and sensible as the recent appeal of Daniel J. Tobin, president of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, for peace in the ranks of labor. Of course one cannot certify the accuracy of his statement that

"Less than one dozen men on both sides are responsible for the division of 8,000,000 organized workers." That division almost certainly creates more than a dozen jobs, and there must be more than literally a dozen men responsible. But grant Mr. Tobin a little poetic license. The substance of what he says is almost certainly true:

the division is not a rank-and-file division. And his two points for union should be taken to heart by every labor leader: ". . . because of the weaknesses and jealousies of a few men there is a possibility that the [Wagner] law will perhaps be amended to such an extent that it will be partially destroyed. . . . No Senator or Congressman in Washington today needs to pay much attention to requests from labor because one side is arrayed against the other. . . ." The division between AFL and CIO clearly benefits only two classes of people: the labor leaders who would lose their jobs if division disappeared and such industrialists as would be happy to see organized labor lose in power and influence and public sympathy.

No More Bare Feet

IT IS ADMITTED that time most ineluctably passes, changing things as it goes. The head of the Children's Bureau, Miss Katharine Lenroot, was probably doing no more than recognizing that truth when she tore the cover from the report on Children in a Democracy, observing as she did so that it was "unfair to American school children to represent them as going to their classes barefoot." In days nearer to the pioneer stage of our national history when the vast majority of children performed most of their tasks and sought all of their pleasures out-of-doors, there was no stigma in being unshod, because almost every child was unshod for a good half of each year. Now, even in the country, the shoeless child is more and more of a rarity—except, of course, in those sections where shoelessness means, not freedom, but poverty and a low standard of living. The change in viewpoint in footgear is not unqualifiedly fortunate, as we think most people would agree; there was more fun, and more health (except, of course, in hookworm areas) in the old days, and the whole business assuredly invites one to reflect on the irrationalities, always freshly surprising, of that piece of work which is man. However, we live so largely by symbols that Miss Lenroot was being merely realistic, probably, in recognizing this one. We end by recording an unworthy, personal and highly irrelevant wonder: we never can understand how it is that someone doesn't think of these things beforehand—in this case, the idea of the sketch, or perhaps its roughing-in, got itself OK'd, when the finished drawing, multiplied by 1200, was destined for the scrap-heap.

Things
Have
Changed

In *Monsignor Ligutti's* article, "Catholics in Finland," published January 12, an error crept in somewhere along the line: ". . . it was not until November 14, 1939, that the Vicariate Apostolic was inscribed in the national registry. . . ." This should have been, of course, 1929.