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BIBLE THOUGHT THIS WEEK

Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me.—John 14:1

WILL FREEDOM SURVIVE VICTORY?

Another year of war has drawn to a close. Volumes of rhetoric will be written about the awful destruction of the past twelve months. Puny efforts will be made to describe the suffering of the men of the armed forces, who face death day after day, year after year, far from home and loved ones. Actually, there are no words that can adequately sum up 1944, the most critical year in American history.

The astounding thing about the home front is the fact that except for the families of service men, it lives normally and has no conception of the horrors of war. Communiques from Washington on the price of toilet paper or some other trivial item fill countless columns in the press. Social security planning, "full" employment and dizzy talk of a contented postwar world, with all the worries assumed by a benevolent government, arise from the American scene like a haze from a swamp. Clear, unqualified thought on the subject of personal freedom, is almost totally lacking.

As the war moves on, country after country sees the spectre of oppression and government by small cliques loom larger and darker over the world. The United States is no exception to this trend. Much of our postwar planning is a crazy mixture of individual initiative and bureaucratic paternalism. The conflict between those who believe in state socialism and would have the government take over basic industries, and those who believe in the superiority of privately owned enterprise, has led to rash promises. Many on both sides apparently believe that the crux of the issue is a full stomach, with no result that a material value has been put on freedom. Each side has striven to outbribe the other until it has become rank heresy to suggest that there may at times be lean years in the future.

Millions expect government to furnish them jobs, to guarantee peacetime prices, to protect them from the insecurity of competition. They should remember that the more they ask of government the less freedom they will have. If government ends by owning most of industry and employing most of the people as well as regulating the lives of the remainder, freedom will become a mockery. As Robert S. Henry, eminent writer and historian, observes:

"The right of nonconformity is ultimately the most important of human rights, but I doubt if it can long exist independently of the right of private property. After all, the man who owns nothing, and has no hope of owning anything for himself, is under a terrible handicap in expressing untrammeled individuality. He is without a place for his foot to stand upon, in opposition to the conforming forces of the collectivist state."

Our people could lose everything of material value as the price of victory in this war and still have a bright future. However, let too much government destroy the freedom and hope of the individual to build again and there is no future. The right of ownership is more important than ownership itself.

NO PARALLEL

After reading of strikes in various lines of industry over the most trivial causes, while millions of our boys are engaged in production at home are battling for their lives, one lacks words to express condemnation of such practices. And then when one hears the leaders of men who strike, describe them as "soldiers in the army of production," one becomes almost nauseated. With all due respect to the workers on the home front, there is not the slightest basis for comparing them with the soldiers.

To begin with, the worker on the home front enjoys short hours, high pay and is his own boss. If he works a minute overtime, he gets time and a half or double pay. If he wants to quit and go fishing, he stays away from work. If any little thing bothers him, he quits. If one of his labor bosses does not get what he wants soon enough from duly constituted authorities for settling grievances, a hundred workers, a thousand workers, ten thousand workers or fifty thousand workers walk off the job, regardless of the needs of the armed forces. During all this time, the worker lives at home with his family.

Compare this to the life of a soldier. His base pay is $50 a month, his hours are anything that occasion demands. His work week is as many days as it takes to do the job. He doesn't lay off to go fishing. He doesn't quit his company if the officers happen to rub file him. He doesn't strike. He doesn't live at home with his family. But most of the time, day and year after year, he lives in surroundings which no home front worker would voluntarily accept for a moment. On top of this, his life is constantly at stake.

If a soldier disobeys orders, he is subject to court martial, with imprisonment or execution — the verdict depending upon the offense. The home front worker, who likewise disobeys orders, suffers no penalty, and when he strikes, is in most cases actually rewarded by higher wages or some other device to induce him to return to work.

The least one can say is that the term "soldiers in the army of production" is a misnomer that any honest workman should shy away from, because his activity bears not the slightest resemblance to the activity of a soldier.

THE COST OF PRICE CONTROL

A Western fruitgrowers executive has put over a real boner one of the greatest citrus crop in history. The comment of one of the executive's officials upon the practical sacrifice of price ceiling in the movement of this record crop is illuminating. While not questioning the need of price ceilings in wartime, the official observed that the tendency under such ceilings is to level out the entire picture of grade, size and condition of the fruit. The result is demoralizing to sound handling and merchandising practices, because it removes much of the incentive for good, careful packing.

As the Portland Oregonian points out: "This example of the effect of artificial restrictions on the growing or manufacturing, distribution and sale of produce and goods to consumers is presented from the seller's standpoint, but it holds equally true from the consumer's standpoint. When the factor of grade, or quality, is lost in the price shuffle, the consumer is the loser. Interference with the normal operations of supply and demand seldom may be justified, except by national emergency."

It has taken a long time for natural competitive forces to devise a distribution system based on the principle of maximum service at minimum price. Wartime price controls have weakened that system unavoidably. Similar controls in peacetime will destroy it.

WOULD YOU LIKE THIS?

Suppose you picked up your morning newspaper and read that the Federal government, by authority of an act of Congress, was going to exempt the residents of the following towns from payment of taxes on cigarettes: Los Angeles, Cleveland, Seattle, all cities in Tennessee, Jacksonville, and dozen of other hand-picked communities, while the cities of New York, Chicago, Philadelphia, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Boston, Baltimore, Washington, and approximately nine out of every other ten cities in the United States would have to go on paying the Federal tax on their smokes.

We can readily imagine what a storm of protest would go up from the smokers. Indignant editorials would snap and crackle. Radio commentators would volley and thunder.

That is exactly what is happening today with respect to the Federal tax on the sale of electricity for residential use. Publicly-owned plants and cooperatives such as Los Angeles, Cleveland, Seattle, etc., are specifically exempt from the payment of the 3 per cent Federal tax, while customers of privately-owned electric utilities, serving most of our American cities and nearly all of the larger ones, have to pay this tax. — Francis X. Welch, Editor, Public Utilities Fortnightly.

"ON WITH THE JOB"

The following statement by William R. Boyd, Jr., Chairman, Petroleum Industry War Council, is typical of the spirit of American industry:

"The 1944 elections are over. The mudslinging of vote and grime is — and also grime! That is the traditional American way.

"During the late political campaign, all of the exercises of the rights of citizenship and suffrage. Whether the candidate was running for office on the state, governor or president ,oil men were shouting and voting for the man of their choice, whether he was the winners, some for the losers. But all were good Americans, all are good Americans.

"When our country entered the war ,the petroleum industry, with its unanimity before known to it, resolved to do everything in its power to assist the government in prosecuting the war to a victorious conclusion. I believe our oil industry has given unexampled cooperation to its government and led the way in putting everything secondary to providing our fighting forces with means to defeat our enemies. Every oil man in the country is proud to be a part of the industry which leads and lubricates our war machine.

We have been and are proud that our boys are flying to victory on the sea of gasoline.

"This is our America, the land of the free and the home of the brave. We have built the whole world a demonstration of it by having a hot political campaign in the midst of war that demonstrated the liberty of the individual and the power of a free, forthright way in which we indulged in criticism of men and measures. We demonstrated our freedom with the march of over forty-five million voters to polling places where each voted without hindrance for the candidate of his choice.

"Nothing during the election period interfered with the oil industry's support of the war effort, and, during the campaign, the petroleum industry will continue to give the utmost in all-out support of the government and all its war activities and to bear the torch of freedom for which it has always battled.

America is still fighting a war and eleven million Americans are in uniform. Oil is ammunition, so let's forget 'elections' and be on with our job!"

FUTURE OF NATION AT STAKE

News presents tell of the struggle to pour supplies into nations suffering from the ravages of inflation—Belgium, Greece, France and others. It is said that an increase in supplies will relieve a glut of money. Here in our country the people are told that war production has set out into civilian production that consumer competition for the remained good would soon send prices out of sight but for stringent Federal control.

As a matter of fact, our Federal government could no more control prices than the countries of Europe if money and supplies ever were to get as far out of balance in the United States as they have in other nations. We have been able to control inflation of