

All In a Day

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Summary: Commentary on a parade for labor organizing, labor leaders, strikes around the country, and advertising to increase consumption. Recommends voluntary sacrifices and gifts to the poor. Suggests study clubs use the Gospels, a newspaper, and Papal encyclicals for their material. (DDLW #272).

There is column after column in the news about the NRA parade, which lasted from one-thirty in the afternoon until almost midnight. We should have been in it, but there was too little time to organize our forces. With two people doing everything in the office of *The Catholic Worker*, days are crowded enough. Our hours are from nine in the morning to eleven at night often, and we regret we are unable to sign a code as to hours or wages.

I took the time, however, to go up to Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street at four o'clock in the afternoon to see the crowds. Forty-second Street from Times Square over to the avenue was jammed with spectators, many of them walking in the middle of the street. Bryant Park, which is beginning to be built up again after having been taken away from the people (there is a story of city graft here) looks like a large vacant lot. Slabs of stone along the sidelines look like fallen tombstones. Women and children were sitting picknicking in the park though it was closed off, and the police were so busy on the Avenue that they let them be. The grass was high in some places and ragged boys played as if they were out on the quiet prairies.

Poor Mayor O'Brien got a lot of booing from the stock exchange on account of his tax program, and due to confusion in the parade-traffic the booers were able to keep it up for eighteen minutes. Why should one man be made the goat?

Every now and then some woman fainted in the melee and a motorcycle policeman put her in his little basket on the side and sped away with her dropping over the side and looking to be in imminent danger of a broken neck.

It may be indelicate to mention it, but we are afraid the people who were unwinding rolls of toilet paper from office windows at Fifth Avenue and Forty-second Street were showing just as hostile a spirit as the booers of Mayor O'Brien. In fact, we are inclined to believe that they might have been motivated by a bolshevik spirit. Page the D.A.R. and Hamilton Fish.

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At the same time my daily paper tells me that R. P. Lamont is resigning from the Steel and Iron Institute and Charlie Schwab, that notorious enemy of labor, is going to take his place. Ham Fish might get after Schwab as being one of the causes of Communism in this country. Schwab has been fighting labor unions for many, many years now, and making generous gifts to the church at the same time. Wouldn't it be swell if these gifts were rejected with thanks? I'd rather worship in such a store as Father Cornelius Ahern officiates in when he says Mass for his Negro congregations over in Newark than in the finest church in the world, built with the money sweated from miners and miners' children and wives. I admit that many such gifts of ill-gotten money are accepted by priests and sisters who know nothing of the labor situation in this country and who have never been told. And I admit that the institutions built with such money, for instance the splendid property and building down on Staten Island which Schwab donated as an orphanage, are productive of much good in that they have taken care of countless thousands of poor children. But how sad and how terrible a thing it is that some children are sweated and starved and that it is from their ragged pockets that the money is filched to house the others. Not to feed them. The good sisters always see to that themselves.

[As we go to press the papers state that Schwab will not succeed Lamont, but the above comment may still be pertinent.—Ed,]

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“Germans to pare one meal a month to feed jobless,” is another headline. Yesterday, while I wandered around town to view the parade, I was disheartened at the sight of so many women in the tea shops and luncheon places, spending so much money on so little, and eating so many unnecessary things when so many are going hungry. It wouldn't hurt any of them to practice *agere contrawhen* they are tempted to indulge in an orgy of sweets. The Germans are going to pare one meal a month off their diet. Why can't we go them one better, or four better, and pare off one meal a week and give that money to charity? Or not even one meal, but one afternoon tea, which usually comes to fifty or sixty cents.

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General Johnson says (I am still reading the day's news), “As for the American Federation of Labor. . . we realize that they represent only a small proportion of all the workers whose rights it is our duty to conserve. They represent workers only to the extent that workers choose them for that function.”

Much as I deplore the dual-union idea which the A.F. of L. has been fighting for years, I hope that this remark of Johnson's indicates that the Progressive Miners of Illinois, who have been fighting the United Miners for years on the grounds of corrupt leadership, will be recognized by the Administration.

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I am still on the front page of the *Times*, and it is giving me great opportunity for editorial comment. Also by this column I am indicating what I consider to be the best way to work in a study club. Just take the Gospels, a newspaper, the Papal encyclicals, and get to work.

On the next column there is discussion of retail codes, a section of which bars “inaccurate advertising.” This leads to another training of thought, as to how advertising is responsible for much misery today. Our Holy Father advocates thrift, but is it thrifty to be taken in by advertisements? Isn’t there an element of greed in the desire to have, for instance, new linoleums, electric refrigerators, new radios, new cars? The poorest of the poor are taught to spend their money on these things when their actual subsistence is so insecure that they never know when they buy a thing on the instalment plan whether they are going to have a job six months hence so that they can continue paying for it. Why not a little more of the Franciscan ideal of holy poverty? Who not a little more disdain of the unnecessaries of life? Food, clothing and shelter – these are necessaries. And if we have these we can see our way clear to studying for a better social order by which we may obtain those other, we admit, delightful unnecessaries.

When we talk of speculation, it isn’t only the bankers on Wall Street who fall into that category. It is also every man who speculates in the future of his children by an avid desire to have what the other fellow has.

Of course, in this we are going against the N R A, which calls for faith and more buying. Why not faith and more charity – that is, giving to the poor to enable them to buy?

There is a great advertising campaign on now. Buy now because prices are going up. Owen D. Young, on page four of the *Times* says: “Capital which over-reaches for profits, labor which over-reaches for wages, or a public which over-reaches for bargains will all destroy each other. . . There should be earnings enough to pay not only a living wage but a cultural wage. . . Often behind an apparent bargain lurks a threat to somebody’s savings, or somebody’s labor, or to the buyer himself in a skimped product.”

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Johnson says Ford is observing the code and as long as he does no steps will be taken. So the precedent has been set of one person holding out for rugged individualism. Not so good. But then I heard the other day of a bank president who told a friend of ours that he flew the blue eagle for business purposes and that anyone can get around the agreements who wanted to. That bank president is not only a rugged individualist but a hypocrite.

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Thirty-five thousand miners are striking again in Pennsylvania. They call it a holiday now (sixteen were shot later in the day). The strike of the miners in Utah and New Mexico has

been put in the news at last. It has been going on for weeks, with thousands out, wholesale arrests of hundreds, but the capitalist press has ignored it.

A white goods strike of 35,000 going on in and around New York. There is a silk strike of 60,000 workers in Paterson and Passaic, where the radical union, the National Textile Workers, is in command of the situation. Anne Burlak, the leader of the National Textile Workers' Union, refuses to sit down to arbitrate with Thomas McMahon, of the United Textile Workers, accusing him of selling out the workers. It is true that McMahon has sat with bankers and Chamber of Commerce officials more than he has sat with workers in recent years. It is true he is a member of the National Civic Federation, which the United Mine Workers (A.F. of L.) Holds is an enemy of labor. The U.M.W. in its constitution forbids any member of its organization to be a member of the Federation. So how does McMahon, also A.F. of L., get that way?

Anne Burlak is apt to have the workers with her, because she is a fine, strapping young girl, blond-haired, rosy cheeked, looking like a Valkyrie as she marches at the head of her strikers. She led the Hunger Marchers down to Washington last year and wherever there is a strike she rushes to the fore. What she's really out for is a good time, otherwise she'd work with the established union and do some of the much-needed organizing work among the southern textile mills, for instance. But she prefers the obstructionist tactics of the Communist Party.