

Wilson's Ghost, Morgan's Power

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WASHINGTON, D. C.

ALL through the Morgan inquiry, the bankers on the witness stand smiled comfortably. Occasionally, however, the giants growled. Fury lurked under their perfectly composed faces. Evidence linking the government to the House of Morgan was becoming irresistibly conclusive. You wondered when high finance would swing its mighty paws down upon the Senate Munitions Committee, battering the investigation into dust.

At last the bankers have acted. Under the rules of the capitalist game, I cannot prove this assertion. Those rules are tricky. They take no formal cognizance of reason or of generally recognized facts. Only documentary evidence is admissible. But bankers seldom hand out written instructions to their political agents. When they do, the instructions comply strictly with the rules. If Senator Carter Glass, screwing up his mouth for an outburst of planters' rhetoric, should bellow at me from the Senate floor: how do you *know* that Morgan is trying to crush the munitions inquiry? I would be compelled to reply: I don't actually know — under the rules of your game. Yet it is obvious that big business is doing precisely that.

The first thing which struck me at the Morgan hearing was that the Senate Munitions Committee has been burdened with every possible handicap in its investigation of the role which industry and finance play in making war. The du Ponts concealed important documents by having the War Department stamp them confidential. From the Morgan files the committee has been able to obtain only such documents as the *bankers* were willing to release. Similarly, the White House, State Department and Federal Reserve Board can always withhold vital information on the ground that it is an official secret likely to embarrass the government of this or another country. Moreover, the committee failed to get a fighting lawyer, one capable of putting the Morgan partners through a stiff and effective examination. And Franklin Delano Roosevelt, after assuring Nye that the munitions investigation was especially dear to him because of its bearing on the administration neutrality bill, has not lifted a finger to aid the committee.

But the greatest handicap of all was the committee's own limitations. Nye and his associates accept the premises of capitalism. Once these are granted the bankers have every logical advantage. If capitalism is right, then private business is right. If private business is right, then private profit is right. If private profit is right in time of peace, all the

more so in time of war. If profits are right, then credits are right. If credits are right, then loans are right. If loans are right, it is certainly right for the government of the propertied classes to protect those loans. If it is right for big business to exploit and rob workers, farmers and professional people in time of peace, why not in time of war? If men may be killed for profit in mine and mill, why not in the trenches?

The Morgan partners, cool and amused on the witness stand, never put it that bluntly. But this was the tacit foundation of their defense. To readers who doubt the values of capitalism, Morgan may have appeared stupid. In the Senate caucus room he was exceedingly clever because the inquiry was conducted on premises wholly favorable to him. The tragic guilt of the Nye Committee lay in its false assumption that once a war starts you can suddenly and by legislative fiat alter the normal operations of capitalism.

NEVERTHELESS, in spite of this handicap, the committee has made a number of disclosures which must convince every thinking man and woman that big business makes wars. Official documents have established that the Wilson administration, like the House of Morgan, was pro-Ally from the beginning of the European conflict. Neutrality was a deliberately propagated myth. Wilson consciously betrayed the American people. His unctuous phrases were intended to screen the banking and industrial operations which drew America into the worldwide slaughter for imperial profit.

Then Senator Nye uttered one truth too much. He showed that Wilson knew about the robber treaties of the European imperialists before the United States joined the conflict. Wilson and Lansing had denied this before a Senate committee in 1919. Nye accused them of "falsifying."

This was the *faux pas* for which the bankers had been waiting. The House of Morgan could now hide behind the sacrosanct ghost of Woodrow Wilson. The real causes of the last war and the swift preparations for the next one, could be concealed behind an outburst of organized hysteria about the "insult" to the memory of a great and idealistic president.

At once the political machine-gunners of the House of Morgan went into action. On the floor of the Senate, Connally of Texas, a pompous and florid Democrat, rose to defend the good name of his party's wartime chieftain. I have heard many debates in the various parliaments of the world, but seldom have I heard so cheap a bathos as when the

gentleman from Texas championed J. P. Morgan under the pretext of shielding the holy memory of Woodrow Wilson. The Nye Committee, Connally wailed, has "dragged the grave clothes off of Woodrow Wilson and dragged his poor body across the committee room and plastered it with the denunciation of having lied."

Nobody mentioned the fact that in 1919, when Wilson testified before the Senate committee which examined the Versailles Treaty, the liberals and radicals of this country had said the President was falsifying. He asserted that when he had gone to Paris he had not been aware of the secret European treaties. But those treaties had been divulged the fall of 1917 by the new-born Soviet regime. They had appeared in the American press. What the liberals and radicals wanted to know was whether the President of the United States ever read the newspapers and if not, why not.

Now the Nye Committee has produced evidence that Wilson knew about the secret treaties — certainly in the spring of 1917, probably earlier. Wilson burned a letter from Ambassador Page in 1915 referring to treaties. This revelation was only one item in the overwhelming array of evidence that from the summer of 1914 the House of Morgan and the White House were determined to use every possible means to assist the Allies to victory.

The Tories, hitherto silent, were ready to roar—and for a good reason. In protecting Wilson's character, the reactionary senators were more concerned about the profits of the living than the prestige of the dead. The counter-attack was oblique, but its meaning unmistakable. *If Wilson was innocent of serving the interests of Morgan, then of course Morgan was innocent of dominating the government.*

THE defense of Wilson's ghost was essentially a defense of Morgan's power. "A banker is an American citizen just like anybody else," Connally whined in his plea for 23 Wall Street. Ralph Easley, head of the National Civic Federation, went him one better in a pathetic epistle to Senator Barbour, pro-Morgan member of the munitions committee. "Thank God for President Wilson!" Easley exclaimed with more candor than discretion. "Thank God for Secretary Lansing! Thank God for J. P. Morgan!" It needed only the presence of the Deity to make the Holy Family complete.

On the floor of the Senate, Connally of Texas did not confine himself to inflated rhetoric. He appealed to the rules of the game, so completely loaded in favor of high



Russell T. Limbach

finance. He questioned the Nye Committee's authority to examine the causes of the World War. More important, knowing that the committee has only \$400 left with which to make its findings public, the so-called gentleman from Texas threatened that it would not get another penny for its work. The Nye Committee will be strangled with the purse strings of the Senate, manipulated by the House of Morgan.

But that is not all. The counter-attack of the mighty bankers was well planned. At the very moment when Connally was bawling on the Senate floor about Wilson's honor, Senator Pope, Democrat of Idaho, entered the Senate caucus room with a joint statement on behalf of himself and Senator George, Democrat of Georgia. The most remarkable thing about this statement was its unmitigated gall. It was signed by the two members of the munitions committee who most of the time have been *absent* from the Morgan hearing.

Senator Pope, who embarrassed the Roosevelt administration last summer by his political hitch-hike through the capitals of Europe, was so overcome by his own effort on behalf of the sacred dead, that his false teeth slipped out. The press table had some diffi-

culty catching his sublime phrases. But there they were:

"We must express our resentment at any effort to impugn the motives of Woodrow Wilson and to discredit his character."

Not a word disproving the evidence of the Nye Committee. Not a single proof that Wilson was telling the truth when he said he had known nothing about the secret treaties.

J. P. Morgan leaned his huge body across the witness table, eagerly sucked at his gold-ringed pipe, drank in every syllable which Pope mumbled. Nye later told the Senate that at this moment the Morgan partners were passing notes to one another saying that on the Senate floor there would be statements embarrassing to the Nye Committee. He described the "keen and complete satisfaction which encompassed the faces and broadened the breasts" of Morgan, Lamont and Whitney when they learned that the munitions committee was under attack in Nye's absence.

Subsequently, the House of Morgan denied this in the newspapers. Again the rules of the game. How do you *know* what was in the note which the bankers passed to each other? Yet the fact remains that the munitions committee was simultaneously attacked

in the caucus room by Pope and George and on the Senate floor by Connally, Pittman and Ham Lewis.

This coordinated assault accomplished its purpose. For the first time since the hearing started, the newspapers diverted attention from the crimes of the House of Morgan to Nye's disrespect for the dead. The question was no longer whether the bankers had dragged us into the war for their own greedy interests, but whether it was permissible under the rules of the game to say that Wilson and Lansing had falsified.

THE accuser had become the accused. Nye was now on the defensive. The red herring of bathos obscured the manipulations of the robber barons, as guilty of the last war as they are of the next. Nye had to adjourn the hearing for a week. On Friday he went to the Senate to defend the activities of his committee against the legalistic gunfire of the Tories. These were carrying out the Morgan policy by trying to prove:

First, that the Nye Committee has no right to accept any help in its labors from any of the federal government relief set-ups; second, that the Munitions Committee is wholly lacking in authority when its investigation

disclose something about the relations between high finance, government and war; third, that it is far too late and futile for anyone to inquire into the causes of the World War; and fourth, that it is an unpardonable sin for anyone to question the idealism and integrity of Woodrow Wilson and Robert Lansing.

Nye spoke on the Senate floor for almost an hour, a young clean-cut militant among the decrepit reactionaries who did not even have the courtesy to listen to him. Borah listened carefully as did young LaFollette; Shipstead and Frazier watched the speaker's face and once or twice came to his assistance. The galleries, jammed with veterans and their families who had come to hear the scheduled debate on the bonus, were distinctly favorable to Nye. Today, as twenty years ago, the people do not want war. A few moments before the tories had opened fire on the Munitions Committee, Senator Capper had given the Senate a report on a newspaper poll in the Middle West in which the overwhelming majority of the participants had voted against war.

But for the embattled champions of the sacred dead, Nye was a voice crying in the wilderness. Useless for him to plead with corrupt politicians that we must learn from the experience of the last war to avoid the next.

The moment Nye took his seat, Morgan's stentorian guards were on their feet. Again the ghost of Wilson was raised to shield the power of Morgan. It was no longer the people of the United States versus the bankers, but the sacred memory of the dead versus those who openly and truthfully proclaimed that high finance instigated wars for profit.

In reply to Nye's facts and documents, Carter Glass of Virginia brought the antiquated mortar of well-worn vituperation. The oldest and most despicable rhetorical tricks were trotted out, from adolescent alliteration to *ad hominem* abuse. Connally of Texas followed in the same miserable vein. The chairman of the Munitions Committee was nothing less than a coward! Why did he pick on the dead? He was a publicity hound. Later the papers reported that Glass was so overcome with emotion for his dead chief that he broke the skin of his hand pounding the desk and the blood spurted. Maybe the blood did spurt. Vituperation certainly spurted. But I did not hear from Carter Glass a single word to prove that Nye was wrong in his accusations either against the House of Morgan or its spokesman in the government. Such proof was superfluous. High finance needs no logic. It has power.

Connally of Texas shrieked that Nye had actually taken relief money for investigating the causes of the war. The gentleman from Texas conveniently forgot that at one crack \$238,000,000 was taken out of P.W.A. funds to build warships. Carter Glass threatened: not another dollar for the Nye Com-

mittee! No idle threat, either. Glass is more than a Virginia gentleman; he is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee.

THE capitalist press came in for its share of the killing. All the space hitherto devoted to exposures of Morgan and Company has been turned over to the tory senators, to Colonel House, to Secretary Hull, to the National Civic Federation, to the publicity department of 23 Wall Street. You no longer saw photos of Morgan, Whitney and Lamont. Instead, there was Carter Glass holding up his bandaged hand for the admiration of Tom Connally. The New York Times quoted the complete text of Glass' attack on Nye; it gave only a few obscure lines, toward the end of a crowded story, to Nye's peace plea on the Senate floor.

Yet that plea deserves to be printed in full. Alone in that pompous body of bankers' and landlords' representatives, Nye dared to stand up and defend the right of the American people to question war and the makers of war. Subsequently, Bennett Champ Clark of Missouri supported him half-heartedly. In their unprincipled attack, the tories had accused him of continuing his father's pre-war feud with Wilson. Young Clark, who had been the most aggressive examiner of Morgan, Whitney and Lamont, could not take the personal abuse. He, too, came to the defense of the sacred dead. He did not be-

lieve, he said, that Wilson and Lansing had falsified.

Nye, however, refused to back down. "I have no apologies to offer for any act of mine," he shouted at the tory senators, "or for the Munitions Committee in the investigation. I take away, I recall not one word of my expression to the effect that President Wilson and Secretary Lansing falsified when testifying in the presence of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 1919. The record in this respect offers no escape from the facts."

Nye went further and gave the Senate "the most emphatic notice" that in the fifteen remaining days of the hearings which the committee plans in the completion of its investigation, he would not alter his course in developing facts pertinent to the inquiry.

"There are companies still to appear before the committee," Nye said. "Some of them are powerful and influential. Some of them have friends—influential friends. Is there anything in the testimony of the large steel companies furnishing army and navy supplies to disturb anyone; or in the ramifications of the aviation companies; or in the facts about the company which has a monopoly of machine-gun manufacture for the army; or in the practice of some companies in selling the latest American war inventions to those nations upon this earth that we hear from day to day are most apt to be our foes when we come to another war? What is it that men fear from the completion of this investigation? What truths are there, what truth can there be that they would have us run away from? Where and what is the power that moves to block, to stop, to embarrass and to cripple the work that has been undertaken?"

Rhetorical questions. But they said as clearly as possible under the circumstances what is actually going on. The Munitions Committee has further disclosures about the companies which are producing steel, airplanes and machine-guns for the next war, and the bankers in control of those companies are determined that the disclosures shall not be made. Not Wilson's honor but Morgan's profits are at stake; not only the last war but the next is to be veiled in rhetoric and hysteria. I recalled General Johnson's statement early in the Roosevelt regime. That vociferous administrator had frankly said *the N.R.A. was the outcome of military plans prepared by the War Department.*

Washington revived in me all the feelings of 1916. Twenty years after the first World War, American high finance, the munitions makers, the big industrialists, the government, the army and navy, the reactionary propaganda organizations are preparing to lead us into another war. The preparations are now more quiet, more efficient, more intensive, vastly larger in scale. But they are there. That is the sinister fact to which the American people must awaken with the utmost speed.



Limbach

Correspondence

Help to "Turn Them Loose"

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The following editorial, "Turn Them Loose," appeared in the San Francisco News (Scripps-Howard) of January 17.

"We heartily indorse the plea of contributors to our Pulse columns that the eight young people now serving prison sentences under the criminal syndicalism act be released . . . as soon as their minimum sentences shall have been served. This will be within a few weeks.

"Convicted at Sacramento as a result of a concerted drive by reactionary organizations and professional patriots, these men and women were found guilty of nothing worse than belonging to the Communist Party. The jury specifically acquitted them of committing any act of violence or of inciting violence.

"In order to obtain the convictions, the duly elected district attorney of Sacramento county was pushed aside and the prosecution was conducted by a lawyer selected by Attorney General Webb. *The whole case was a scandalous abuse of judicial process to suppress agitation for better wages and conditions among agricultural workers, in which the defendants had been active and successful.* The News condemned it at the time, and urges that the Parole Board redress the injustice by fixing the sentences at the minimum, which is one year." (My italics. G. L.)

Excellent in its way as this editorial is, unfortunately it alone will not be sufficient to open the prison gates to Caroline Decker, Pat Chambers and the other prisoners. The Parole Board will probably impose as much of the maximum 14 years as it thinks it can get away with.

The Board consists of Frank C. Sykes, chairman, a contractor and an old-time conservative; Joseph H. Stephens, President of the Merchants' Nat. Bank of Sacramento who issued a public statement at the beginning of the C. S. trial against the defendants; and David F. Bush, a prominent lawyer-politician-landowner-legionnaire of Oakdale, who, as a state senator during the last session, was the mouthpiece of the Southern Pacific Railroad, the Power Trust, etc.

Obviously, only the most articulate, wide-spread and insistent kind of public opinion can induce such a Board to set the sentence at the minimum figure.

I write you this with the hope that you and your readers will communicate with the Board at once. It is too late to rectify the wrong already done. The least the Board can do is to free the C. S. victims as soon as the law permits.

I am certain you appreciate the importance and urgency of immediate action.

Sincerely yours,

San Francisco, Cal.

GEORGE LANSING.

A Visit with Caroline Decker

TO THE NEW MASSES:

When we went to Tehachapi, I visited Caroline Decker. I asked her how life was and she answered as follows:

"As far as material things go, they are quite all right in comparison to San Quentin or Alcatraz. The food is not bad, and our cells are clean. But there are thousand and one ways in which one can be made miserable. It is the small things of life which make things unbearable here. We are constantly reminded that our minds as well as our bodies are imprisoned. We are permitted to read only such literature which is an affront to our intelligence. When I was brought here first, I thought I would never be able to stay not even a month. But one can be accustomed to anything.

"It is much easier for us political prisoners. The

others become apathetic, lonely and resigned. They look wistfully through their cell windows and try to see what goes on on the other side of the hills. They lose hope and courage, and the prison board is satisfied. It's different for us. We know that although they have imprisoned us, there must be thousands who have sprung in our place. We feel certain that the cotton pickers of San Joaquin Valley stand in closer ranks and will include in their fight our liberation. We are certain that the whole American working class will avenge us and we never despair.

"We get up at 6 in the morning, eat breakfast, and go to work. I carried enough barrels of fertilizer to fertilize a tremendous American farm. Yes, it takes a lot of fertilizer to make things grow in Tehachapi. At seven, we are locked in our cells—pardon me,—they don't call them cells here—not very exciting, but a day has passed, and that's what counts. Oh, I forgot to mention there is a break—when mail comes. That's really our only link with the outside world."

A bell rang, announcing that our visit had finished. Caroline shuddered and remarked, "How quickly the hour passes." ROSE CHERNIN.

A Liberal Considers The New Masses

TO THE NEW MASSES:

The time has come when I must either renew my subscription to THE NEW MASSES or drop it. I have been of two minds on that question during the weeks when I have read fairly thoroughly the articles in THE NEW MASSES. I am a liberal (you may prefix that label with any adjective which you can infer from my handwriting) and I want to see in this country neither fascism nor the Russian type of socialism, but I am desirous of supporting a policy eventually resulting in an American Socialism. Your attitude toward Russia is that (as it seems to me) of the most devout adherent toward a divine right monarchy — the King can do no

wrong. I have never found one criticism of Russian policy. Your writers refer to Karl 1 with much the same unction as the Christian Scientists show in their references to Mary B Eddy. Are we to get rid of one infallible only to have another take its place?

However I like some of the articles and it is by reading magazines and papers of various viewpoints that one gets the benefits of a free press no one publication but is controlled by some group or other. So I have decided to renew my subscription to THE NEW MASSES along with the Herald Tribune and Today.

Brockport, N. Y.

ELIZABETH BRIGGS

From a Vermont Striker

TO THE NEW MASSES:

We are having quite a time up here. The Vermont Marble Company has got all its general managers and superintendents loading marble on the cars. They had quite a time up in West Rutland when they tried to load the car. They are going to try to have National Guards that will make everything all the harder for the strikers. They are having an awful time about the food up here; they give us enough to last about two or three days a week. Gov. Smith won't let the company have the National Guard—yet. They were going to start the Danby Quarries with scabs Monday—there were forty men picketing on the road behind stone walls. They were going to try this Monday, the thirteenth of January, to try to send the scabs by.

We are trying to keep up the spirit of the strikers so we can win, for we are not going to give up until the last minute. But the food problem bothers us. It is hard to go home and see the kids not eating the way they should. That's why we appreciate most anything that is sent to us, because we want to keep the strikers in good spirits. You know what this strike means to us—so many of us.

Danby, Vt.

JOHN M. PEARSON.

Letters in Brief

The Communist Party, New England district, will hold a Lenin Memorial Meeting, Sunday evening, January 26, at Symphony Hall, Boston. Earl Browder will speak on "Lenin and the Traditions of the American People." The Hearst papers have already aimed their guns at the municipal officials to have the meeting kept out of the "cradle of American liberty." Liberal groups have joined with the Communist Party to see that the meeting is held despite the fight of Boston's reactionary elements.

A group of Margaret Bourke-White's photographs of Soviet life are now on exhibition, writes the Workers' Bookshop, 50 East 13th Street, New York. The subjects are: ballet, theater, industry and collective farms.

The South Carolina Board of Health, closely aping Hitler's tactics, adopted a motion for the sterilization of "unfit" adults. The motion was based on the sterilization law passed by the state legislature. Ten cases are now under consideration for operation. As may be well imagined, the law hits only the "lower-class" people and the oppressed Negro people in particular. Negro and labor organizations are vigorously protesting the law as another step toward fascism in the South.

The Home Relief Bureau in Harlem has refused \$5.50 for the purchase of prescribed medicine to Mrs. Mary Cherry, a Negro worker whose condition is described by physicians as critical. The Bureau

objected that the amount is too much for medicine and urged the physicians to prescribe cheaper medicine, even if it did not meet the needs of the patient, according to the Crusader News Agency.

Three Negro sharecroppers, Ed Brown, Yank Ellington and Henry Shields, convicted in Kemper, Mississippi, for the murder of Raymond Stewart, a white tenant farmer, have appealed their case to the United States Supreme Court. There was no evidence to connect the three men with the crime except their "confessions," obtained after inhuman torture. Two justices of the Mississippi Supreme Court declared that the Scottsboro trials were models of judicial procedure compared to the Kemper county case.

Partisan Review & Anvil, the new magazine discussed in a recent article in THE NEW MASSES, writes us that its first issue will contain fiction, articles, poetry and reviews by a number of well-known writers, among them John Dos Passos, André Malraux, Waldo Frank, Carl Van Doren, Newton Arvin, James T. Farrell, Kenneth Fearing, etc.

An "all-star cultural evening" for the benefit of Commonwealth College, is announced for the evening of February 2, at the New School for Social Research, by the college's New York Committee. Readers interested in helping this project may write to the Committee c/o A. C. A. Gallery, 52 W. 8th St., New York.