

Next Time You March, Legionnaires!

*A tin cup and one war is the measure of the difference
between the parading ex-Yanks and certain others of us*

By Hyde Partnow

THIS year they gathered from the Rockies and the lakes and the keys in the village green on Times Square and kicked up their heels like goats in a pasture. They yelled *Whoo-ee-ee* and showed off to us—who had never gone over there, never gone over the top, never gone into action—that they, middle-aged American bucks, had—*Whoo-ee-ee*—and damned glad they were, too, for not being dead and gone but were still standing on the ground. Still talking with their own tongues to those topnotch New York girls. Still touching with their own fingers the city things. Still seeing with their own eyes the first city of the world. Belonging, still, *Whoo-ee-ee*, to the body of life, not six feet under long before their time. They were crazy with wonder how the guns had not gone through them but missed them somehow and left them standing and permitted them to be left alive and become middle-aged and marry their women and make and lift up children. No wonder they did not sleep or let New York sleep.

They drove clanging boxcars, forty men and eight horses, over my toes. They fired their toy cannon through my hat and yelled at the hole in my hat and the echoes on the walls. They shot me with squirt guns and yelled like hell when I got wet. They dropped water bombs from their hotel windows, and yelled like hell when they exploded on my shoulder. They grabbed coconuts and oranges from the open street stands and threw them like hand grenades and yelled like hell when one got me. They used hot boxes and jump sticks on me when my back was turned and yelled like hell when I jumped.

I WAS neither a sour-puss nor a wise guy, I didn't pull them in for assault or for house-breaking. They were making sport, as I saw it, of those objects of war that had insulted and injured them once. They were remembering how glad they were to be alive.

But never forget the dead, Legionnaires. Never forget, you unknown living soldiers who made a big noise to make yourselves *KNOWN*, the legions of unknown dead in Arlington and Flanders and Argonne—in olive groves and wheat fields and forests—in roadway ditches—in Soldiers' Homes, in the Florida Keys (their bellies floating grotesquely in the Gulf, then burnt in a bonfire.) Remember them, Legionnaires.

I was a kid when you were young men. You came back up Fifth Avenue and I stared at you. I followed your parade then and my ears were confused with the marching and my eyes dazed and I remember I got lost follow-

ing you. There was noise and lights. I got fascinated by the round glint on a shining tuba and I followed it and got lost and I felt tired and I walked into Central Park, I remember, and lay down in a meadow and slept. It was dark when I got up. You were gone and I began to cry.

Now I'm a young man. I was on Fifth again and I followed you again. It was dark when you went off and left me, alone on Fifth, in the shambles of smashed boxes and torn-up litter under the weird yellow lamps. I stayed there in the wreckage until dawn, walking about. It's a fine dawn you get in New York; I think you know it. As fine as in any of your cities or on any of your farms. I have seen them all. But this dawn I saw was more than just day coming. I wasn't tight, Legionnaires. I saw more than fifty million ghosts on Fifth Avenue. They had been hiding under eaves and behind doors and in all the side alleys while you marched in the Indian-summer sun. They waited a long time, for the two or three hundred thousands of you to pass. But after you left they got out on the Avenue and walked. Their feet whispered on the littered avenue, throngs of ghosts. One of those ghosts was *myself*, Legionnaires.

Pull in those Sam Browne belts all you want to, you still can't hide those waistlines. Don't hide them. Do something about it. Don't lean on those official American Legion canes. Throw them away. Do something. Do something for me, the generation that springs from your seed.

I listened to your leaders say you are stabilizing America, you Legionnaires. I listened to them say this at the same moment when outside you were tying up law and order in a blizzard of noise and color in a hundred different ways. While you were frolicking in the streets they were passing resolutions lumping communism and fascism in a bogey of "isms." They were forbidding marches on Washington. They were okaying neutrality. They were resolving to "work for world peace, to combat propaganda of international hate and thus aid in averting the tragedy of war and making permanent the blessings of peace," but the headlines still stalked the news—JAPAN THREATENS TO WIPE NANKING OFF MAP—THREE THOUSAND KILLED IN CANTON AIR RAID—CHOLERA RAGES IN SHANGHAI.

While you outside were pulling up fire hydrants and ripping the stuffings from pillows, the others inside were ripping up your right to live and your right to make sure that those who come from your loins do not die. You were letting them divert your violence against war into tearing pillows to pieces.

I talked to you, Legionnaires. Hundreds of you. In spite of the bugles and clanging and hog-calling and banging, I managed to talk to you. I was the quiet young man whom you squirted guns at and used a jump stick on and you made a hole in my hat. In return, I made you talk to me. Your talk was fine. And your talk from the floor of your convention was fine, too. It is the mood behind talk like that which killed resolutions in your Americanism Committee this year against the C.I.O. and the Court Plan and the Soviet Union. So much is good. Good enough, that is, for today. But not for tomorrow. You still have not seen to it that your men may not don tin hats and badges to break strikes.

NEXT TIME you march, enjoy the confetti and the streamers, the crowds, the music. But steal a lesson from the others who call each other comrade. When you march, hold up banners in your hands. Hold up your slogans. Don't let your convictions languish in monopolized newspapers. Bring them to the sidewalks. Don't camouflage your hatred of war behind a circus. Or, rather, don't let them make you camouflage it. Wisconsin, still carry your milk pails and three-legged stools; Iowa, your stalks of corn; Florida, your palm leaves; Minnesota, your Indian head-dresses; Pennsylvania, your mining caps. But, all of you, come holding not canes in your hands but slogans. Let's see what you are for and against. Take sides. Let's judge you. You must take sides. Your middle-aged mission is to save the young from the guns. Remember the beggars in New York, the crippled and the blind who play on saxophones and violins and accordions, shuffling through the crowds, playing "Margie" and "Over There" and "Keep the Home Fires Burning" and "Mademoiselle from Armentières." The only difference between you and them is a tin cup. The only difference between you and us who spring from your loins is one war.

Don't dodge your duty to us.

You have the power. We saw you take over a city like New York and get off scot-free. No one but you could have done it. Anyone else would have been arrested wholesale and jammed into jail. Charges of obstructing traffic, disturbing the peace, resisting an officer, assault with intent to rob, vandalism, arson would have been placed against them. But not you.

Use this power. Don't masquerade in ladies' satins even in travesty. Don't hold aloft reams of toilet paper even in mockery.

Next time, when you march in Los Angeles, hold up slogans.

Spotlight on Vigilanteism

The N.L.R.B. hearings on Bethlehem Steel's anti-union activities show how employers cultivate native fascism

By Alexander Kendrick

THE steel mills pour forth black smoke in Johnstown, and the newspapers speak of "the rich blessings of returning prosperity." And Johnstown is truly blessed, say its wealthy burghers. Out of the disastrous Johnstown flood of 1889, for instance, emerged a new and greater city. And out of the dastardly steel strike of 1937, they say, rose this new and glorious movement on behalf of the "inalienable, constitutional right to work."

Not always has there been this laudable concern for the dignity and the right of labor in Johnstown. During the depression, for instance, when the steel mills stood desolate, no one seemed to care much about the right to work. Around the barred gates desperate, hungry men clamored for jobs, and the steel bosses did not hear them as they sat in their mansions high atop the hills which encircle the city.

But the strike in little steel opened the eyes, as well as the pockets, of Johnstown's industrialists. There was steel to be made in the eight-mile-long plant of Bethlehem, and scabs, strikebreakers, and company guards could not make it. Obviously what was needed was a rebirth of treasured American principles, and the midwifery of the gifted propagandist and fun-raiser, John Price Jones. Luckily, Jones is a Johnstown boy. Gladly he gave up a Harvard reunion to speed to his stricken city and set the wheels of triumphant patriotism turning.

A Johnstown "Citizens' Committee" was formed, headed by the Rev. John H. Stanton, pastor of the Westmont Presbyterian Church. This leader of the people operates in the loftiest and most exclusive suburb of Johnstown, where the steel superintendents dwell, and where the green grass has not been laid waste by the soot from the blast furnaces below. Two pastors of working-class congregations, a priest and a rabbi, were invited to join the committee, but it did not take them long to learn what was going on, and they resigned.

Under John Price Jones's guiding hand, the Johnstown committee ran a series of full-page newspaper advertisements appealing for national support. The ads were reputedly paid for by Weir of Weirton. The keynote of a fervent meeting on July 14, when a national organization was formed, was "Thank God for Tom Girdler!" This early did the Weirs and Girdlers put their stamp upon the Citizens' National Committee, formed to preserve the right to work, even if it meant breaking strikes, and to combat "alien, destructive forces."

The committee, outgrowth of the steel



John Heliker

strike of June 11-July 8, is now under investigation by the National Labor Relations Board in Johnstown. So, too, is the strike-breaking activity of Johnstown police and deputies, the connections between the city of Johnstown and the Bethlehem Steel Co., and the conduct of Mayor Daniel ("No. 1707") Shields.

These are important matters that the Labor Board is sifting. Johnstown's bosses are not alone in their militant patriotism. The Citizens' Committee has spread to fifteen states and seventy-five cities. Chambers of commerce, "law and order" leagues, anti-union forces, all have joined. It has set up national headquarters in New York. It has become the country's clearing house for the new vigilanteism.

It is easy to see what is happening in America. As organized labor grows in strength, and gains more and more support and sympathy, labor struggles have become deeper and more intensified. The old, brutal, anti-labor methods will no longer do; the old paternalism is outdated. Company towns have revolted and company unions have gone on strike. New anti-labor devices are needed and so, under the cloak of patriotism, the "back-to-work" movement has been launched. The new vigilantes, backed by big business, do not use the rope and whip. Their weapons are the press, public emotions, and cold cash.

For instance, when the Labor Board summoned Stanton, organizer of the Citizens' Committee, it was told he was occupied out of town and could not attend. What was the business which was important enough to keep him from appearing as a witness? He was in

McKeesport trying to form another vigilance committee. To speak before that steel principality's Junto Club he had to force his way through a double picket line which bore banners reading: "We Don't Want Vigilantes."

Johnstown, citadel of Bethlehem Steel, is the perfect breeding ground for vigilanteism of the kid-glove type. It is a company town pure and simple. If you don't work in the steel mills, there is no job for you except clerking and the like. Stores, banks, schools, churches are all dependent upon the steel mills for existence. When there is a strike, these institutions suffer. They have not the solidarity, strength, and backing of the workers. Therefore they turn to vigilanteism, believing they will thus preserve themselves.

Johnstown has been unfortunate in its public officials. The present mayor, Shields, did open strikebreaking for the steel company, as will be shown. The previous mayor, Eddie McCloskey, was a cheap politician elevated to high office. The mayor before that, Joseph Cauffiel, was convicted for corruption in office and ran the city administration from the county jail.

Things like this happen because Johnstown's mayors are chosen by the steel company. When a strike comes, Johnstown police are supervised by the steel company.

The Labor Board hearings in the little schoolhouse in Franklin borough (owned 96 percent by Bethlehem), just outside Johnstown, have revealed all these things. Sufficient light has been thrown upon the Citizens' National Committee to stamp it for what it is—a vigilante band with top hats and frock coats.

Central figure in the Johnstown mess is pudgy Mayor Danny Shields, sometimes called the "blood-sweating behemoth." He is addressed as "Your Honor" by Bethlehem officials with their tongues in cheeks, but by steel workers and the man on the street he is generally referred to as "No. 1707." That was his number in the federal penitentiary at Lorton, Va., during prohibition days, when he served a one-year term for the rugged individualism of bootlegging and for his boyish faith in the axiom that all revenue agents would accept bribes.

Aside from his natural love for law and order, displayed when he swore in hundreds of company police as deputies and gleefully patted them on the back as they smashed picket lines, Mayor 1707's conduct may perhaps be explained by the theory of conditioned reflexes.

He is in debt, for instance, to four banks and several business houses, including the