

Don't Do This But Don't Do That

By Albert ^sLy in

"I'M HERE t' welcome yah all. But there ain't a goddam man in this mob whose looks I like." Warden Crane, standing on the stone block that had an inscription on its side, began calmly. Chewing tobacco, he turned his face and spat, then slowly raised his head again for a more studied bird's-eye view of us all. "I'm sorry but there ain't. 'Cause them high walls were built t' keep yah out, t' keep yah from breakin' in t' our home and now lookit! . . ."

A tall, lean commanding figure, his thin, cruel lips twitched at the corners. He wore a dark suit and his cold, grey eyes flashed periodically and had a disquieting effect upon us. A former mule skinner who had risen to wardenship from substitute guard, he contended that discipline could best be kept by driving men as he once drove mules. His "Gee-up—whoa—git," were verbal reins adopted by his subordinates when lending guidance to a marching convict line.

"We ain't burglar proof, I kin see, even with walls an' doors," he continued in a note of detachment which lent uncanny force to his ironic speech. "Over fifty strong yah showed up, yah got by those chicken-hearted jedges who should've hanged yah all. Maybe I'm wrong but I doubt it. They tell me a tower guard was cursed out yisterday, and yah threw away clothes 'cause he asked yah not t'. That was a foolhardy thing t' do, men. But it won't be held against yah. Nothing that happened outside will. Not even the fact yah hadda be born. *Providin' yah toe the mark from now on.*"

He paused to spit and let his words sink in.

"Now I'll admit I don't giss yah showed up here of your own accord. They brung yah shackled for not abidin' by the laws outside. That ain't my affair. That's somethin' we runnin' this here institution can't help. We didn't send for yah and we ain't allowed t' ask for references of guests bargain' into our front door. Fair enough. But, by God, we are allowed t' whack hell out of guests that break prison rules. That don't watch their P's and Q's. That don't maintain order.

"I kin see some recidivists back there smirkin' already. Yah've heard this before. What's a cracked skull and solitary confinement? A bunch of goddam hooley. I'll do as I please. He ain't scarin' nobody. . . . Waal—the other men in this chain kin smirk an' think such thoughts too. I hope not. I hope yah think more of those heads. 'Cause if yah break a rule, a club is just what's apt t' descend on them. Such treatment might make yah feel more at home. It might make yah feel freer and happier. But I won't brood over it. I promise yah it won't pain me.

"I could stand up here half the mornin'

tellin' what's kensidered t' t rules. But there ain't no need pointin' out the tiny ones—yah'll be put hep t' them soon enough. It's the other I'm aimin' t' talk about and I pity the man out there right now who ain't listenin' or can't hear.

"First. . . I'm tellin' yah t' show respect to the guards and the foreman. The guards

are called captain and the foreman's first name is Mister. Last week there was a slip of the tongue: some convict forgot he wasn't talkin' t' another convict and addressed the guard as 'screw.' He's still lay-

in' in the hospital wonderin' what happened. His name is Barney. No. 21811. So don't take my word for it. Ask the men that carried him t' the hospital from the broom factory.

"Now if the guards are crooked enough t' be called screws, I'll do the callin' and fire 'em t' boot. We have house cleanin' now and then. But that's my affair and none of yours. So long as they're on duty, men, pay attention, I'll back 'em up in everything! If yah forgit t' take that cap off and stand two feet away when yah want t' talk to a guard outside the shops, and if yah don't call him Captain, and if yah wake up with a lump the size of an ostrich egg stickin' on your head—don't look to me, don't look to anybody—but God above—for sympathy 'cause that's the only place yah'll find it!

"A word t' the men out there that got life—and those that only got a few years, too. It goes for all, I reckon: 'cause it ain't but natural for a convict t' git impatient and hope t' make an escape. In pretty weather like this day comin' up I feel homesick cooped in myself. The walls around ain't so high. All it takes is a rope or ladder t' scale 'em. But let me tell yah that each and every guard holdin' down a tower on that wall is a sharpshooter loaded with medals, and that we'll keep yah here if it takes gunpowder to do it!

"Uh-huh. . .

"So time'll have yuh squirmin' and your thoughts might turn to dope. That ought t' while time away pleasantly enough. Balls! There ain't no worse way out, men. If I had the habit, I'd tie a rock around my neck, jump off the gallery, and say here goes nothin'. . . . Be careful. I ain't goin' t' ask if there are any hopheads in this chain—fer hopheads never tell the truth. But give me your attention, you men that haven't taken a shot before—and it will pay those who have, perhaps, t' listen, too: next t' murder there ain't no crime more punishable in here than the crime



John Heliker

of having found in your possession cocaine, morphine, heroin, marijuana, or just a bare dropper. . . . The stuff gets in all right: over the walls, bribed guards, bribed foreman, visitors. But you stay shy. For you're bound t' find yourself strung up t' the bars in solitary confinement screamin' 'Oh, doctor!' for a shot or a sniff, wishin' yah had never took t' the habit. We'll make yah squeal on everybody involved, an' then you'll be afraid t' come out on the yard 'cause stool pigeons are sometimes killed in here. Help us stamp out the vice, men. It's the only favor I'll ask yah. Don't listen t' the dope peddlers. They'll sidle up in cellhouse, shop, and yard: 'Whatsa matter, buddy, ol' father, time gettin' yah?' they'll say. 'Is the sweetheart or wife outside remainin' true?' Or 'Findin' the shop too tough, can't yah get the task?' Once yah fall for their line, men, the price keeps gettin' higher, the cravin' grows stronger. Yah'll bleed the folks and the friends outside with beggin' letters t' help yah do time. Yah'll damn nigh kill t' get the stuff, and we'll damn nigh kill yah once we catch it on yah. So stay clear of the habit.

"Captain Prah!," he looked over our heads to where his deputy warden, the captain of guards, stood. "Do yah wan't t' speak to these men?"

"Not me, warden," Captain Prah! said in a chilled voice, coming up front to address us. He walked with his head turned our way. A squat, thick-set man in overalls and slouch hat. He had a dark, gnarled wolfish face, his left ear was missing.

"I'm the toughest man in here," he said. "You may not think so. You'll soon find out. That place Warden Crane calls solitary confinement, you'll call the hellhole if you won't stay clear. I drop around every night to see what boys made it and how they're feeling. I'm the prosecutor, judge, and jury. I may turn you out. I may not. But let me warn you all now what kind of a place it is. Then forget about it. Behave—and you won't have a roundavoo with Captain Prah! there.

"They got two 1 by 12 boards nailed on two 2 by 4's in the dark for your bed. And don't get it into your heads that those 2 by 4's were put in to keep you off the concrete so you won't catch the piles or rheumatism. Not at all. They're to keep you up so the cockroaches, lice, bedbugs, and spiders can crawl around on that floor in peace.

"And every night you'll try to catch sleep, I'll be snoring on a feather bed—and so will Warden Crane, those guards there, and every other honest and God-fearing citizen in this here, our state." Arm extended, he pointed his club over the wall toward the Capitol. "That's all."

Why Not Recovery?—II

By Lowell E. Willis

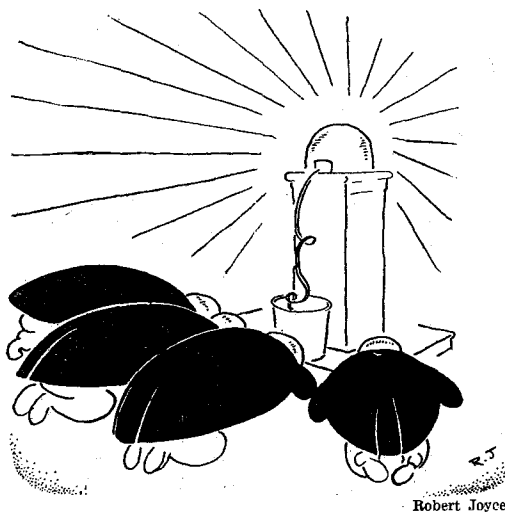
BUSINESSMEN, especially the more powerful ones, generally put forward a very simple formula for turning back an economic recession. Their advice is: cut wages, raise prices, abolish nearly all governmental regulation, ban nearly all government "competition" with private business, and cut taxes to the bone, especially those affecting the big incomes. Agree and perhaps they will consent to let us work for them. Otherwise, they will sabotage production, stage mass lay-offs, and in general soak the poor.

Intoxicated by the rising price level, businessmen early in 1937 started an orgy of speculation that was bound to result in a reaction. Shoe production, for example, reached an all-time high, although the 1936 output of shoes had broken all previous records. Big inventories of a speculative nature were also stored up in textiles in anticipation of further price rises. But prices of these goods stopped rising, and consumption, instead of keeping up, fell as lay-offs increased. The result has been a deep depression in the shoe and textile industries.

The stock market, too, had its little fling early in 1937. There are those who still argue that what happens on the stock market has no effect on business, that the market is but a surface indication—a prediction, more or less accurate, of what is to take place. But the movements of the stock market do have an effect on new capital issues, which in turn determine business expansion and replacement.

It is a matter of common observation that issues of stocks and bonds are extremely difficult to place when the stock market is rapidly heading downwards. Just what happens in a falling market was well illustrated by a recent issue of Bethlehem Steel convertible $3\frac{1}{2}$ percent debentures.

This issue of \$48,000,000 was of course first offered to the stockholders, but the latter absorbed only about \$2,000,000 worth. Meanwhile, Bethlehem stock took a sharp drop on the market. Consequently the underwriting syndicate which had agreed to purchase the remaining bonds from the corporation at a \$98 minimum had to take up \$46,000,000 of the issue. The company realized, after deducting the underwriting commissions, a total of about \$47,000,000. The underwriters then decided to offer the bonds at $95\frac{1}{2}$, a loss of $2\frac{1}{2}$ points per unit. But the public again balked and most of the bonds remained unsold. When the syndicate was finally allowed to lapse and support was withdrawn from the bonds, their value quickly sank to about 87. It is calculated that this represents a paper loss of nearly \$5,000,000 to the underwriters. Insofar as they have kept the bonds, their liquidity is by so much impaired.



On October 20, the *New York Times* carried an item putting the amount of new financing which had to be abandoned or postponed because of market conditions at a minimum of \$100,000,000, while only a few relatively unimportant issues have been successfully floated since the decline set in. In this way, the little boom on the stock market early in 1937 accentuated the recession late in 1937 by discouraging new capital issues.

The responsibility for the recession rests with business.

For a bird's-eye view of the situation, let us examine the present status in five major industries. No more than a very brief summary is here intended.

Electric-power utilities. This is one of the "healthier" industries; it is bound to expand for some time to come. The spokesmen of the private electrical utilities even talk of investing \$2,600,000,000 in the next few years in order to make up an alleged "deficit" in productive capacity, incurred during the great depression. As the political price for this investment they seek to make the government abandon the plan of establishing "little T.V.A.'s" throughout the country.

Now, whether consciously or not, the utilities are seeking to create two illusions. First, the figure of possible immediate investment is much too high. It was attained on the false assumption that potential demand had continued to increase during the years of depression. The figures show that the energy actually consumed fell off from 91 billion kilowatt hours in 1929 to 77.8 billion in 1932. Capital over the same years did not at once cease to pour into the industry; capital expenditure was \$866,000,000 in 1929, \$961,000,000 in 1930, and \$633,000,000 in 1931. A generous estimate of the capital expenditure needed to bring electrical capacity up to the demand reasonably to be expected, would be

\$1,250,000,000, or less than half the sum glowingly mentioned by the utilities. As a matter of fact, the capital budget for 1937 was only \$531,000,000, or less than that spent in 1931, indicating the lack of confidence felt by the capitalists themselves in the future electric-power consumption.

All this leaves the essential problem still in the realm of abstraction. For the utilities insist upon hamstringing the T.V.A. as the precondition of any such spending. They claim that they are not able to borrow enough money to expand, and attribute this fact to government competition. Actually, Commonwealth & Southern, the chief wailer, has made more money since the advent of the T.V.A. than before, as Mr. Wendell Willkie has had to admit. It is hard to tell how much watered stock, how many purely financial holding companies are still siphoning profit away from the allegedly impecunious operating companies. But of the fact there is no doubt.

The abolition of the T.V.A., apart from injuring the prestige of the Roosevelt administration, would do this industry no good. On the contrary, the greatest stimulus to the electrical utility industry is precisely the presence of public power projects like T.V.A., Bonneville, and Boulder Dam. Competition, James A. Emery once said, is the life of trade. As long as the government follows the policy of cutting costs to residential consumers (contrary to the traditional policy of the private utilities, which have favored industrial against residential consumers), the private utilities are forced to follow suit. The result is increased consumption of electric power, the development of new uses for electricity, and lower prices. All of which are highly desirable to the people at large. The private utilities are not contributing to recovery by blocking the way.

Railroads. When the present recession began, the railroads were still engaged in liquidating the great depression of 1929-35. Ninety-six railroad companies, operating 28.1 percent of the total railroad mileage of the United States, were in the hands of receivers. This is said to be the largest percentage of railroad enterprises, in terms of mileage, ever in the hands of the courts at any one time in the history of the American railroads.

The loss was, of course, chiefly thrown on the small investors whose interests the banks had undertaken to "protect"—through bank-dominated "bondholders' protective committees." The revenues of the railroads during the depression were used up in a futile effort to maintain interest payments; little was spent on repairs and less on additional equipment. Result: the run-down equipment was barely