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Politics and Neutrality

AS Boake Carter pointed out several nights ago in his radio news broadcast, one of the most important problems likely to come before the next President of the United States will be the preservation of our neutrality in the face of the most unsettled conditions in Europe since the Armistice was signed.

With the clarity that has won for him the reputation of being the country's No. 1 radio news commentator, Mr. Carter analyzed Mr. Landon's attitude regarding the foreign situation, exposing a professed policy as dangerous as a cocked gun. Clearing away the generalities of a Landon statement, which of course did lip service to the cause of neutrality and peace, Mr. Carter interpreted it as meaning that the Republican nominee still adhered to the outmoded belief that freedom of the seas for American ships should be maintained at any cost.

Unless the war clouds over Europe and the Orient are suddenly cleared away, such a policy exercised by this country might easily precipitate us into another international conflagration.

Peace-loving Americans have long since abandoned the idea that it is the duty of their government to protect American ships trading with belligerent nations or to defend foolhardy citizens who persist in subjecting themselves to the dangers of foreign wars.

The Roosevelt policy, as manifested by neutrality legislation enacted by the last Congress, falls far short of insuring our peace; but, again as Mr. Carter points out, it is a step in the right direction. Furthermore, under Mr. Roosevelt we may expect the next congress to strengthen the present neutrality legislation.

Should Mr. Landon be elected, we could look forward—if we judge him by his words—to a policy that would wipe out what progress we have already made toward surrounding our shores with a wall of neutrality offering far more protection than the biggest navy we could build.

The Proposed Amendments

WE recommend to our readers a careful study of the proposed amendments to the state constitution as outlined in an impartial summary prepared by the Institute of Government and reprinted on Page Two of this newspaper.

The questions raised by these amendments are of vital importance to the people of the state; but, due to the lack of interest of the general public in such abstract matters as constitutional problems, it is somewhat doubtful that any of them will be adopted. There seems to be a tendency on the part of many voters to disregard ballots calling for decision on constitutional amendments. Many others make a policy of voting against any and all changes in the constitution without giving them due consideration.

It is to be hoped, however, that this apathy in constitutional matters will be overcome in next Tuesday's election. There are urgent reasons why the first four amendments should be adopted and why the fifth should be killed. Let us take a look at these reasons:

1. Enlarging the Supreme Court. The present court is overburdened, and with an ever-increasing stream of litigation coming before it, the court faces the necessity of giving hasty decisions or impeding the dispatch of justice.

2. Permitting an ad valorem tax exemption up to \$1,000 on the value of homes occupied by the owners. The man who holds stocks and bonds and notes



—intangibles—is allowed an exemption equal to the amount of his debts; but the home owner gets no exemption, although the mortgage against his property may amount to as much as its value. This state needs above all to encourage home ownership, and this amendment will accomplish that end.

3. Classification of property for taxation. Much intangible property now escapes taxation, simply because the owners refuse to list it. It is argued that by segregation of intangibles, with a lower tax rate, the state would actually derive more revenue from this source than it does at present. It seems to be a rear-door approach to the problem, but it is worth trying. Furthermore, this amendment would make it possible to levy different rates, within limitations, upon revenue-producing and non-revenue-producing land. Such a policy might be used to great advantage in encouraging soil conservation and reforestation.

4. Raising the maximum income tax rate from 6 per cent to 10 per cent. This would greatly increase the state's revenue-raising ability in a quarter most able to pay more taxes. There are many individuals and corporations in North Carolina with incomes running into thousands and even hundreds of thousands of dollars who, in all justice, should pay greater taxes. Our principle of taxation is based on "ability to pay," and those drawing big incomes are most able to pay. This amendment, by all means, should be adopted.

5. Placing new restrictions on public debt. That sounds good at the present moment when many counties and towns are struggling to pay off heavy bonded indebtedness; but a close study of this proposal reveals that it might work great hardships on many communities or upon the state as a whole. It might put a stumbling block in the path of progress. Had we had such an amendment in the past, it is safe to say that we would not now have our splendid system of hard-surfaced highways and we would have a far greater problem in housing our school children. This amendment would handicap the communities with small debts because it would limit their borrowing capacity in the future. We already have sufficient safeguards in the requirement that bond issues must be submitted to a vote of the people. This proposal most certainly should be voted down!

It should be remembered in the cases of the first four amendment proposals that none of the provisions is mandatory; legislative action will be necessary to put these provisions into effect as and when they are needed.

BRUCE BARTON

Says:

LET'S TEACH CURIOSITY

Buried in the middle of the second volume of Lincoln Steffens' autobiography are some paragraphs on education for which I extend my thanks.

"Thinking back over my school and college courses," he says, "I could see that one trouble with our

education was that it did not teach us what was not known, not enough of the unsolved problems of the sciences, of the arts, and of life. It gave us positive knowledge where there was no certain knowledge, and worst of all, when we did not particularly want it. We were not curious as students. It seemed to me . . . that curiosity was the be-

ginning and end of education. If a copy of this paper happened to fall into the hands of a college president, I should like to suggest to him the establishment of a lecture course on The Unknown. The first lecturer might be a professor of physics. He would doubtless start by dropping a weight on the desk, saying, "This is something which no human being understands. We call it 'gravitation,' but no man in the world knows what 'gravitation' is." The second lecturer might be a professor of economics. He would have to say something like this: "We do not know why gold comes or why they leave. We speak of 'gold supply' and 'commodity prices' and 'speculation,' and so forth. We make many charts to show that history has a way of repeating itself. But why it repeats itself, we really do not know." The third lecturer, of course, should be a philosopher or a theologian. He would say: "No one knows how the universe started, what is its object. Some men call themselves philosophical pessimists and pretend to know that it has no meaning. Some of us prefer to believe that it has a Maker and a meaning. We feel that this greater faith gives life more significance and more cheer."

Such a lecture course would be the colleges of afflicting the world with wise young men. They would understand why no man needs to be ashamed to say: "I do not know, but I believe."

THOSE PETTICOATS AND THINGS

In Mary Robert Rinehart's autobiography, "My Story," occurs a reference to petticoats: "They had to be made, two or three, very thick . . . and generally a short flannel one to the knees. . . ."

"Not long ago a young girl of my acquaintance was going through an old trunk of her mother's and came across a brief bit of embroidered flannel.

"What on earth is this?" she demanded.

"That? That was my flannel petticoat for my wedding."

"Whereupon the girl burst into shrieks of delighted laughter."

Julia Ward Howe, when a little girl, grew weary from a long ride in the family coach, and allowed her knees to drop apart childishly. Instantly her father reproved her.

"My daughter, if you cannot sit like a lady we will stop at the next tailors and have you measured for a pair of pantaloons."

The characteristics which distinguish a "lady" and comprise her moral code have differed widely in different generations.

I remember the first girl I ever saw who had cut off her hair. She worked in my office. The president of the company called me on the carpet and wanted me to fire the young lady, which I declined to do. To his way of thinking, bobbed hair was a sure sign of an abandoned woman.

Only recently I ran across an old copy of the "Book of Rules" issued by a coeducational college a quarter of a century ago. It consisted of thirty pages of "Thou shalt nots."

"In addition to the foregoing rules, students are expected to refrain from card playing, dancing and theatre-attendance."

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