

THE CHURCH IS A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

to defend itself against overturn from within or without. They oppose the slightest vestige of military training in schools and colleges. They would pledge the youth of the land never under any circumstances to enlist in its armies.

There was no layman present at that conference in Chicago who could by any stretch of the imagination have been called a militarist. No one favored war — at least he dared not say so. It is safe to say, however, that every man present believed that this nation has a civilization which was and is worthy of defense, in the event it should be attacked.

CHRIST AND ECONOMICS

LAYMEN ARE NOT attempting to change the views of the preacher or of any other laymen. They have no objective which includes the abridgment of the freedom of thought or of speech. But they want to know why some ministers are preaching a new economic system instead of the spiritual system, as Christ taught it. They want to know why it is necessary to preach any economic system at all. And, finally, they want to know, if the necessity of preaching economics is established, what text from the utterances of Jesus sustains the new doctrines.

So far as our observation goes, the self-styled Christian Socialist relies upon the "social implications of the gospel" for his right to style his economic system "Christian." The difficulty with "implications," whether social or other-

wise, is that their meaning depends more upon the mental bias of the person who draws the implications than upon the source from which they are drawn. Laymen agree that there are many words in Christ's teaching which point to duties and obligations for us as individuals. But we wonder whether Christ's teachings to the individual in the spiritual realm can be applied to the mass in the economic realm.

Being Divine, what He said was said against the background of all foregoing time. Being Divine, what He said was declared in full view and with full vision of all the future. Being Divine, what He said was good for all time, present and future, for all eternity. There was, there could be, no "horse-and-buggy" age in His teaching.

Laymen wonder whether, when He said, "Man, who made me a divider over you?" and when he declared, "My kingdom is not of this world," he did not forever dispose of all the socialistic, economic implications of His teaching as they affected the mass.

At a time when economic systems have put religion on the rack in Germany, Mexico, and Russia; when humankind is writhing in the agony of an economic distress which has its roots in materialism, has the Church nothing better to offer than the destruction of institutions which have brought to this America the highest tide of human happiness known to history and the substitution of an economic system of collectivism?

II—The Church Is a Social Institution

by FRANCIS J. McCONNELL

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MR. HYDE'S ARTICLE opens with an expression of fear, on the part of a small group of Methodist laymen who recently met in Chicago, over the way various organizations have captured the Methodist name in attempts to fasten Marxian dogmas on Methodism. I think it is safe to assume that one such organization, in Mr. Hyde's opinion, is the Methodist Federation for Social Service, of which I am President. I say this because that is the only

organization with social aims that I know which uses the word Methodist. If Mr. Hyde has this group in mind, may I remind him that it has been since 1908 an agency regularly authorized by the supreme body of the Methodist Church — the General Conference — to raise social questions for discussion, on the understanding that it does not commit the Church to its expressions. At the last session of the General Conference the Federation for Social Service

THE FORUM

was warmly endorsed in two separate votes.

The small group of Methodist laymen must have been small indeed. There are many members of trade unions in Methodism. Were any trade unionists at the meeting? There are thousands of nonunion day laborers in Methodism. Were any of them at Chicago? Were any of the thousands of Methodist unemployed there? Were any Methodist laymen who are on relief? If none of these groups was there, just what significance does the group have as a body of laymen? Just the significance of a few score of Mr. Hyde's type who came together to exercise their unquestioned right to state what kind of teaching and preaching in Methodism they will support by "lay backing and lay encouragement." These words were intended, we read, to put heart in the thousands of Methodist ministers who, with their backs to the wall, are sturdily opposing the economic dogmas of Marx and Lenin.

Mr. Hyde's position in brief is that the Church should give herself to the building of character in individuals and leave social and economic questions alone. He reminds us that Jesus discovered the individual — and that individual liberty is the outcome of a Christian philosophy. Very well. Then it is the duty of the Church to take account of all the forces which help or hinder the building of individual character. It appears at once that the social forces take on profound significance for shaping the individual lives — and because of such power are inevitably objects of concern to the Church. This is the more important because the Church is herself a social institution with power to help make that social climate whose meaning for individual development we are more and more coming to realize. The real aim of present-day Christian social effort is to create social conditions which will give individuals a better chance at any liberty worth having.

Mr. Hyde denounces efforts to create "an absolute state." I am afraid his social reading has become a little confused at this point. It is not Marx and Lenin who preach an absolute state. They do not want any state at all but profess to be aiming eventually at anarchism, in which each individual could do about as he pleased. Fascism, Mr. Hyde, aims at the absolute state. Are you willing to encourage those thousands of Methodist preachers whose posi-

tion stirs you so — those standing sturdily with their backs to the wall — to include Fascism along with communism as the foe against which they will fight?

Mr. Hyde refers to the Christian Decalogue as a fixed standard of morality. Just why he should speak of the Ten Commandments as so exclusively Christian is a puzzle, but we let that pass. Every one of the Commandments was the outcome of growing social insight, and all except possibly two enjoin duties essentially social.

And why Mr. Hyde should protest so against mass or co-operative action is a mystery. He gives us to understand that when all the individuals join in a race each for himself, for profit, all comes out well. He seems confused again when he talks thus, because, after having praised the present social system, including the economic, as the best ever, he lets us know that there is an agonizing depression on. There certainly is. Under the present competitive economic system we have reached a stage which lends warrant to the remark which dates back to Thomas Jefferson — namely that on the social side there is reason to maintain that this earth is the lunatic asylum of the solar system. The social organization — or lack of it — which Mr. Hyde praises allows men to starve because there is too much food, to go without roofs over their heads because there are too many houses, and to do without clothes because there are too many clothes. If this is not social lunacy the word lunacy has no meaning.

WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

OUR WRITER no sooner finishes informing us that the best system is that where each individual acts for himself than he lets us believe that the same individuals would all turn fools if they ceased to act competitively and began to act co-operatively. He throws the words, "Marxian dogma" and "socialism" around rather carelessly, without telling us what dogmas he has in mind or what he means by socialism. He has himself to blame if he leaves the impression that he supposes that any form of social co-operation — especially where no individual profit is gained — is socialism. Our road system, school system, the New York City water system are — on the Hyde basis — all outcomes of socialistic process.

A word about turning economic processes

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over to "society." What is society? Nothing but the people living in groups. The instant these people cease to act separately as individuals and begin to act together, they fall under the control of bosses — it seems. Indeed. Are there no bosses under the present conditions? The problem for society is not to create a new state out of nothing, but to improve on what it now has. If Mr. Hyde's group meets again, will it seriously consider this question: Can any set of Big Business leaders possibly do worse than those in control — say, in the last week of February, 1933? The people thinking either individually or collectively must be an incompetent lot indeed if they forget that in those days the leaders of the type of Mr. Hyde's precious "rugged individualism" fell to screaming, imploring the state to make itself nearly absolute enough to save them and their institutions from the consequences of their folly. Absolute state indeed! One trouble with American business today is its fear that the people may decree that the state cease to act as the agent and tool of business.

What is there so sacred about the profit system that the Church must not call it to account? What is profit? It is what remains in business after wages and salaries, interest and insurance, and all forms of service are paid for. In prosperous times this remainder may be just like "findings," representing no service on the part of the finder, or may be returns made possible by the fact that people live together in groups, again without any effort of the gainer. Sometimes these prizes reach large figures. They may represent earnings — but not the earnings of those who get them. Up to the present, society has chosen to let these prizes go to individuals as incentives. What now is the heresy, from the standpoint of a Christian, in raising the question as to whether society should not take to itself as much of these profits as it thinks best? If this is Marxism, let us reflect that a United States income tax in its distinction between earned and unearned income is a very Marxian document.

THE TEACHING OF JESUS

MR. HYDE QUOTES reverently enough the question of Jesus: "Who made me a judge or a divider over you?" It is too bad that he did not notice that the question leads to a parable in which Jesus calls the rich man, who

is the chief character in the parable, a fool. Mr. Hyde calls on the preachers again and again to give themselves to character building in individuals. When he loses sight of the glory of the present system of things, he refers to economics as materialism. Since when has it been a heresy for the Church to speak out on materialism? Just how much sense is there in trying to fashion men into the regard for the neighbor which Jesus enjoins when sending them forth into a six-day week of labor for profit rather than for use — that, too, in a competitive struggle which makes a jungle look like a children's playground?

Will these laymen please remember that in teaching the building of character Jesus put the dangers of the search for wealth in a chief place? He said indeed that a rich man could get into the Kingdom of God — but that it required a moral miracle to get him in. Jesus, we hear, would have us discover individuals. Well, — we can find a good many millions of them out of work through no fault of their own; a good many of them who have come to manhood after training themselves for work with no chance of a job whatever; a good many of them who would starve to death if it were not for governmental relief. Individualism as a system has little place today. To use the common illustration, modern life is like a roadway. As long as vehicles traveled only ten miles an hour, social control was not especially imperative. The situation is different with cars traveling even fifty miles an hour.

A final word about Mr. Hyde on war. He is shocked that some Methodist preachers are not willing to go to war in defense of the present social system. Here he sounds true to form — using the same hollow terms that are so familiar from laymen of his type, the cant about defense. No, I do not believe it is cant. These men are perfectly sincere when they preach defense by force of the system for which they stand — materialistic economics, production for profit, and all the rest of it.

I have a high personal regard for Mr. Hyde. I suppose he may think, however, that I ought to have kept in mind more definitely those thousands of Methodist preachers, standing so sturdily with their backs against the wall. I am not worried over those thousands of preachers he describes. For a good reason. They do not exist.

Pierre Laval

France's One-Man Government

by JANET FLANNER



Drawn by Sidney Carroll

AS PRIME MINISTER of France, Pierre Laval has been Europe's prime traveling salesman. With samples of the dove of peace (exclusive Parisian model) and an old business card, reading *Minister of Foreign Affairs*, for several years he has been covering the territory from Moscow to Mussolini, has interviewed such possible customers as Stalin, the Pope in Vatican City, the Third Reich in Berlin, the Polish Corridor at Warsaw, Eden at Downing Street, Roosevelt at Washington and, lately, any white man at Geneva, Switzerland, who would listen to him. Few in any place have turned him a deaf ear; Laval is a good talker, and continued peace (or even continued war debts) is a good topic. Laval can also talk equal common sense on a hundred other vital Continental items, since, as he himself says, in politics he is

not a theorist but a realist — a definition that proves his verbal abilities. Men endowed with less might call him an opportunist.

Laval has long been a unique and is now the most important figure in contemporary French politics. In twenty-one years he has made a career without making an enemy. Certain politicians owe him something — but not everything, which would be awkward; he owes nothing to anybody but himself — the perfect state of parliamentary grace. He and Herriot and Doumergue are considered by the French financial public as the three most honest men in French politics, though, where the other two have remained poor enough to prove it, Laval has grown rich without explanation. Along with Herriot and the late murdered Barthou, Laval is ranked as the ablest Minister of Foreign Affairs since Briand, though Herriot, a janitor's son, is a cultivated scholar and author on Beethoven, Lamartine, etc. and Barthou, a village hardware storekeeper's boy, was an erudite and nineteenth-century bibliophile of the first water.

Though a French Minister of Foreign Affairs is traditionally supposed to be at least a literary wit, Laval, an innkeeper's son, is no bookworm, and his humor remains bucolic. The unusual useful gifts he has brought to his high post are spectacular common sense, a kind of brunette obstinacy, another kind of dark flexibility, a short man's terrific energy, a poor country boy's ambition, and the remarkable ability to talk convincingly always and change his mind sometimes, when necessary. These qualities have made his career. It started by his being elected in 1914 as the penniless, violently Socialist Deputy of Aubervilliers, a riotously Red Parisian suburb. Today Laval is a wealthy independent senator who stands for both capitalism and democracy. He has also just stood