The Washington Herald Magazine of Features and Fiction

OPEN COURT LETTERS FROM HERALD READERS SHOW TRENDS OF OPINION

The Tax Question.

To the Editor, The Washington Herald:

In an editorial of August 25 you stated that the excess profits tax and the income surtaxes are passed on to the consumer. One hears this theory from many sources, including the business and financial interests. This, in face of the fact that such interests have been accused of lack of regard for the welfare of the ultimate consumer. There is danger that this statement may be acceped blindly and unthinkingly merely because of its constant reiteration. Economists are not agreed upon the subject. Considerable doubt can be brought to bear upon the well-nigh universal dictum that these taxes are passed on.

How can a merchant or manufacturer, for example, shift this tax? By raising the price of his product and thereby increasing his total returns by the amount of the tax, or more. It will do him no good to raise his prices unless his volume of sales remains such that his total returns are greater than before. He, collectively speaking, can raise his prices by curtailing his output.

But will raising his prices enable him to receive a greater total aggregate return, and thus provide the wherewithal to pay this tax? It will not. His prices are already set at a figure which will, volume of sales considered, give him a higher total return than will higher prices (or lower prices), volume of sales considered. This is true so far as trial and experience indicate to him the most "profitable" prices; there is no other means of determining them except by trial, and this method is, of course, subject to error. Ford undoubtedly thinks that the present prices of Fords will net him a greater total return than either higher or lower prices. Increase his income surtax and he will not raise his prices, for his present prices give him more money.

But even though the manufacturer cannot raise his total net return any higher—everybody knows he raises it as high as he can, tax or no tax—may not these high taxes on income or profits discourage production and take money out of industry, thus causing our manufacturer to earn less income or profits in order to avoid paying them?

If they did have this effect it would be no longer a question of shifting; for in this case the taxes are not paid. But did you ever hear of anyone's refusing to accept a higher salary or income because of the greater income tax required? Half—or a quarter, even—of an extra dollar or an extra million is somewhat better than none of it, even to a merchant or manufacturer.

It is, of course, true that these taxes drive much money from other industries into tax-free securities. While this may and probably does retard "business," here again it is not a question of shifting but avoidance.

The excess profits tax should be repealed because of difficulties of administration, inequalities in application and possibilities of evasion by the hiding of profits but not because it is passed on. "It can't be did."

The proposed sales tax, unlike the taxes on total profits or income, would be passed on to the consumer in higher prices. It is an expense of production and narrows the margin of profit by that much. It thereby forces the marginal men out of the business, thus restricting the supply. The restricted supply causes higher prices.

F. H SHELLEDY.

Hyattsville, Md.

Religious Arguments Foolish.

To the Editor, The Washington Herald:

I suppose nearly all of us read "Open Court" letters that appear in your daily paper each morning, and note with interest the variety of minds and opinions that find expression in this way, and the scale of subjects touched upon, lead all the way from religion to politics and around again to the Irish question, the negro question and whether or not the push cart men shall sell their wares on one corner or keep moving. It is all very well, but it doesn't get us anywhere. What good does it do, and what does it amount to? I know that the open forum of a newspaper is a great temptation to air our ideas, and some of the names signed to some of these letters are as familiar to our eyes as an electric signboard downtown, and their sentiments so thoroughly impressed upon our minds that I am positive I should recognize them if I met them on the street. It does seem such a waste of time, and so foolish for people to even try to argue on religious subjects. You know, Mr. Editor, that all the discussions and arguments from now until doom's-day wouldn't in the least affect or change you or me, or any one else, for that matter, in their religious ideas. The pros and cons of all these discussions are immaterial. The wheres and wherefores are unimportant.

There is enough that is simple and clear that is manifested to us every day if we care to see these truths, for each of us to live by, if we only would. No great visions or miracles are to come to us as a demonstration of God's power, and if we are waiting to be shown before we can believe, why those of us who are just plain, common-place, every-day sort of folks, who don't claim to be infallible, or to possess any divine rights, would, I am afraid, never got very far toward understanding God's great plan for His children. It doesn't matter in the least what Mr. Pierce or Mr. Smith or Mr. Brown thinks about these things, or what you or I think, Mr. Editor. Who will know 100 years from now whether we accepted God's teachings or not? Nobody will know, and nobody will care, but whether we did or not will have been of vital importance to us when we will have played our little parts on this earthly stage, and had our chance.

That is a most comforting thought to me whenever the thousand and one little petty annoyances that sometimes fill our day, and seem just a little more than human nature can stand, to say, "Well, who will know 100 years from now?" It certainly seems to quiet all the qualms and settle all the questions by minimizing to the nth degree the questioning and the petty doubts that seem to overshadow our visions. Who are we that Our Father should take us into His confidence and explain to us all of His plans? He has told and made perfectly clear to us enough to save us, but that doesn't satisfy all of us, and we want Him to tell us why He did so-and-so, and go into detail about it. Why, we can't have that done even on this earth.

Was our peace conference in Paris open to the public and made clear and plain to us? Were we taken into the confidence of our representatives and explained all the details of its functioning? We were not! Are we allowed to sit in executive session when our lawmakers want to decide any vital question concerning the affairs of our country and our people? We are not! Of course we are not, but we think and hope that they are doing what is best even if we are not taken into their confidence and advised of their decisions. Will the coming disarmament conference held here this fall be "open covenants, openly arrived at?" It will not. And so you see there are mysteries in this world that we are not expected to even question; why shouldn't there be many things unexplainable and mysterious in the functioning of God's plans? There are of course many things we cannot understand now, but there are enough that we do understand to save each of us if we want to be saved, and the excuse that we couldn't take in these mysteries, and we couldn't see why this, that, and the other wasn't made clearer, will never excuse any of us either in this world or the next.

MRS. ADELAIDE HARRIS CASSIDY.

Washington, D. C.

Finds Justice in Hell.

To the Editor, The Washington Herald:

An article appeared in the Open Court column of The Herald recently, from a gentleman, on the subject of hell.

Now, just a brief, common-sense and reasonable conception of the future. First, we take the soul in its future state. Our soul is the seat of our memory, intellect and will; it is the principle or subject of these faculties, as the soul is a spiritual being, the source of these faculties. Through them it is made happy or sorrowful. By our intelligence we are able to know God; by our memory we are able to desire; by our will we are able to act.

God usually derives the love of us creatures in the natural way. He gives us many means with which to develop these faculties, namely: All things created for intelligence, the redemption for memory and for our will, the Ten Commandments against which human nature is most inclined, thus to elevate our senses to spiritual things. Should we succeed a reward is promised, and if the reward is not gained reason demands punishment, namely, the loss. The desire and love for God that we create here depends to a great extent on what degree of happiness we experience in Heaven.

Our body and soul works corporeally. It will also at the last day take its place with the soul, as Christ's resurrection proved this.

Justice demands a hell for the man that has used his faculties only for worldly pleasures, buried his soul in the mire of immorality, and created a disgust and hatred for all things spiritual. He would not hope and would not want to be mingled with the souls that had sacrificed all earthly pleasures. So it must turn away from God into hell.

E. A. QUALKINBUSH.

Denver, Colo.

Opposes Home "Stills."

To the Editor, The Washington Herald:

It afforded me much satisfaction to read your editorial replying to your critics in the Fourth amendment controversy. Mr. Flourney lays much stress on the unreasonableness of search without a warrant. Now I have all due regard for the sanctity of the home, but can see no particular reason why any citizen, who if permitted to keep a private still to make a "wee bit" of liquor, or medicine as he prefers to style it, for his own purpose, can have any reason to object to official investigation, one would think he would be proud to show his medical laboratory.

The officers of the law would have a sweet time catching a murderer, burglar, or horse-thief if he had to be armed with a warrant before he could make an arrest. Now then, why should we make laws to protect bootleggers who peddle their poisonous concoction out to the feeble-minded. I say feeble-minded because none other would drink his swill.

The whole thing in a nutshell is the old disgruntled whisky element is sore, and instead of using influence to stamp out this worst of evils, is saying to h— with law and humanity, so either directly robbing the weak, or else by saying the law can never be enforced, aiding those who are. It's foolish to say we cannot enforce the law until we try. We never will by small fines which can be made overnight—but, long terms in the pen at hard labor would work wonders, for a large per cent of the bootleg clan are I. W. W.'s. If liquor is a necessity for medicine why not let the government make and control the sale for this purpose with a reasonable amount above cost for revenue?

The government certainly has not the public welfare at heart if it permits the husband to spend all of his earnings in exorbitant bootleg dope, which, of course, he doesn't need, when his family may need food or be sick and possibly a little pure liquor as medicine might benefit them. In the last campaign we were led to believe liquor was a settled issue and already there are politicians in this neck-o'-woods right now preaching the same evasive logic.

Let's not be mislead; we have only broken the snake's tail.

P. F. SKINNER.

Washington, D. C.

Commends Herald Editorials.

To the Editor, The Washington Herald:

I wish to commend and express my appreciation for your editorial policy, especially as regards problems relating to farmers and the industry of agriculture. It marks the beginning of an era of better understanding and better feeling in the metropolitan press, and consequently among the city population, relative to the life and problems of farming people. In the past there has been a notable absence of such interest or understanding, except for a general desire for cheap food. The farmers' economic or social condition was of no concern so long as he continued to produce plentifully. Mutual misunderstandings, unreasonable charges and general antagonism between city and rural people have resulted. Due largely to the enlightened attitude of The Washington Herald and other newspapers this unwholesome condition is beginning to be remedied. It is a cause for gratification.

F. H. SHELLEDY.

Hyattsville, Md.

Man Against Maternity Bill.

To the Editor, The Washington Herald:

Please publish the following open letter to Miss Alice Robertson, M. C.:

I appeal to you to prevent the passage of the maternnity bill—though the heavens fall.

This bill, backed by the League of Women Voters, is nothing more or less than politics in disguise. For did not Mrs. Park state, under questioning, that the League of Women Voters has a membership of two million, "all eligible to vote next year in the bi-election?"

A few more stalwart women like Mrs. Leatherbee, of Boston, assisting you, will, I trust, prevent the passage of this bill and thereby prove a blessing to humanity.

As Mrs. Leatherbee truthfully says: "This country was made, this nation was built by red-blooded, independent, hard-working and self-respecting men and women. It will die when its citizens become devitalized parasites living on bureaucratic sustenance." The Democrats claim that Congress has "done nothing." Is it any wonder that Congress does nothing, when most all of its time is taken up fooling with such useless and silly things? I think I voice the sentiments of all right-thinking persons, of both sexes, when I say the time has arrived for every new fad and 'ism to be thrown into the discard, in order that Congress may have legislation passed that will be a benefit to all the people.

A. SIDNEY JOHNETON,

Winchester, Va.

Regulating the Regulators.

To the Editor, The Washington Herald:

With your kind permission, I would like to submit a brilliant idea to those who have been regulated, but perhaps not reformed, by the activities of the reformers. Also to those who are liable to be regulated by these people, and their number is legion. I believe there should be a bill introduced in Congress and lobbied for by those who have been regulated, regulating the regulators.

All over this country meetings, presided over by reformers are being held and the halls and meeting houses are packed by their followers. At these meetings tons of cake, hogsheads of dill pickles and an ocean of tea is being consumed. In many cities the fountains have been shut off, people are unable to sprinkle their lawns and are deprived of other nominal uses of water because of the supply used in the brewing of tea. And yet there has been many a man sold tea when he thought he was buying booze and became a raving maniac in consequence.

Therefore, I submit there should be a law standardizing the size of the tea pot, the size of the cup, the number of lumps of sugar to be used and the number of cups to be drunk on any one occasion. Here in Washington, where many of these gatherings are held in the rest period between the daily forenoon and afternoon spasms of regulating and reforming, it should also limit the size of the gas plate or electric heater used. Socially it might be well to prohibit the brewing of tea entirely on government property, on government time and with government fuel.

REGULATED, BUT NOT REFORMED.

Washington, D. C.

Wants Cross on Monument.

To the Editor, The Washington Herald:

Will you, too, give your aid to a child's project? Is it a good idea to have a "guide light" put on the Washington Monument?

And what about Pennsylvania avenue being made a great white way?

The pen is mightier than the sword. Let us write it in light—electricity. The pen tells of a Saviour, and we know St. John, of whom it can truly be said: "I come with fire and a sword." Put "Pershing" in light. "He makes wrongs right"—for God.

Would a great electrical cross put in a suitable spot in this city remind us of those who died that we might live?

Wiser heads than mine may have better ideas. I am merely suggesting the thought of a mother.

Mrs. P. M. SMITH.

Washington, D. C.

WHEN A FELLER NEEDS A FRIEND —By BRIGGS

The TEARS OF DOROTHEA : : : : : : *By ELIZABETH JORDAN*

[Continued from preceding page.]

ing out West all those years I had what book chaps call a dream. The very week I ran away I made up my mind that some time I was coming back—home. For, though I ran away from it, it always seemed home to me."

The girl was touched and showed it.

"I'm glad you felt that way. I'm glad you wanted to come back to us."

"To you—yes. You were all I had, you and Uncle Will—and Aunt Caroline," he added dutifully. "So from the first I worked toward getting back. I was a rolling stone, but I was rolling one way all the time, toward home. So far as I could, I got myself ready for that home," he went on. "I read a lot. I went to night schools, when I was anywhere near one. When I ran up against men who could help me, gentlemen, I watched their ways and their talk. I said to myself—'You've been a homeless rat since you were fourteen, but, after all, you were born of well-bred people, and you're going back to well-bred people some day. It's up to you to go in for preparedness.'"

Dorothea put out her hand and touched the gray-gloved fist that rested on his knee.

"That was splendid," she said. "And you're wonderful, Dick!"

He leaned toward her eagerly. Again the odd light flashed in his eyes. "You mean that?" he stammered. "You wouldn't be ashamed of me, among your old friends?"

"I should be proud of you, anywhere."

She spoke simply but sincerely. He drew a quick breath.

"I have the most extraordinary sense of nearness to you," she added. Under the look in his eyes a wave of color flooded her face. Something new had entered their relations, something that made her heart pound. He leaned closer and took her hand.

"Then—then perhaps you won't turn down the suggestion I'm going to make. But before you say anything I want you to think it over. It—well, it means a lot to me. I won't deny that. It's—the dream. On the other hand—perhaps you won't think it's practicable. I don't know."

He stopped a moment, then went on with the effect of a runner taking a hurdle at full speed. "I'm going to be in New York a good deal from now on—about half the time, the way it looks. And—I'm wondering if you'll take me in—if we can live together. Now don't speak," he hastened to add. "Think it over a while."

She was glad of his suggestion to think it over. Certainly it needed thinking about, though her heart seemed to turn over when it was made. She must pull herself together—if she could. This strange man who had been Dick and was suddenly some one else must not be permitted to unsettle her judgment. With extraordinary rapidity her mind circled first around the proposition, then around the obvious objections that presented themselves.

First, of course, there was the almost insuperable one of lack of space. Where, in the little apartment, could she tuck a young giant like Dick? On the other hand, there was Nora's room—a most unusual room for a servant, charmingly papered and fitted up with some of the good old Hutton furniture. The room was, indeed, the supreme attraction which had kept the girl contented and happy for two years. She would never have such a room elsewhere. But Nora was going, and possibly a room outside the building could be engaged for the new maid. All that would mean expense, but—here was a vital point—Dick would no doubt expect to pay the usual New York rates for room and board. Thus, his coming might even help to meet and banish that nightmare, the increased cost of living.

Her dark eyebrows knit under the intensity of her mental processes. If Dick paid even fifty dollars a month the year around, and certainly he would not expect to pay less, she could manage. And there would be the wonder of his presence—for which she felt her whole being longing. To have him there always, to talk to, to turn to—O, yes, Dick must come. In some way it could be, it must be, arranged. She knew that now, absolutely.

Her silence had lasted longer than she realized. Glancing at him, she saw that he had grown a little pale. She remembered the dream which had filled his mind for twenty years. She spoke with quick reassurance.

"Dear Dick," she said, in her warm, colorful voice. "I wasn't hesitating over your coming. Of course you're to be with us. I was just thinking of ways and means."

He did not speak, and she subconsciously realized that he could not.

"You see, we've got such a box of a place," she went on lightly, to give him time. "And you're such a big person that it's going to take some planning to make you comfortable."

"But—you will fit me in?"

"Of course we will——" she began with decision, then stopped abruptly. "Unless Mother should object," she ended on a flat note. "I don't know how I could do it, but the truth is that for a moment I forgot all about her——"

The discovery amazed her. How could she have forgotten Mother—she who had never forgotten Mother before!

"How much do you think it would be fair for me to pay—annually——"

She flushed deeply. How dreadful—how terribly tactless of Dick to bring up this question now! But it was Dick—and she must try to remember that she had known and dreamed of him since she was a child. He was not this stranger whose presence so oddly disturbed and thrilled her.

"Suppose Aunt Caroline consents," he went on, "and you crowd me into the little flat. What, at a rough estimate, do you think I ought to pay? I have a curiosity to know, right now. I'll explain later."

"Well—why, how can one tell! We don't keep boarders, you know." Dorothea's overtaxed nerves went back on her to this extent, but remorse seized her when she saw his expression. "Forgive me," she said quickly. "To make up for being so nasty, I'll answer your question, though it's premature. I—I suppose we could arrange if—you—if you—" Heavens, how hard it was to bring out the words!—"if you paid, say, six or eight hundred a year."

"Six or eight hundred a year," he repeated softly, as if considering the amount.

"Do you think that is too much? Is it more than what you had in mind?" Dorothea's face was still flaming.

"No. I don't think it's too much," He smiled at her. "It is less than the sum I had in mind. I just thought it would be interesting to have your idea. Mine," he added, coolly, "is that we must move."

"Move! But, Dick——"

"I've been looking around," he explained, ignoring her interruption. "You see, I've been in New York several days. I didn't want to call on you till I got my new outfit," he added frankly, "but I could go around and look at flats in my old clothes, so I did. I made a list of three or four I thought you'd like—and we're at the first one now," he calmly ended.

Dorothea opened her lips to speak, and closed them again. The limousine had stopped at the entrance of a superb apartment building on Park avenue, and Dick was already on the sidewalk, holding the door open and helping her out. In the inner hall an unctuous agent awaited them, obviously by appointment.

Two minutes later she found herself in a large living room, with a big open fireplace, whose three double front windows overlooked the avenue, while two more opened on an exclusive cross street. Back of this was a library lined with built-in shelves, and a music room, both giving on a square central hall. Open doors at the right and left showed vistas of charming rooms.

"Lots of air and sunlight," commented Dick, ignoring her stunned silence. "Here's the suite I thought might suit your mother."

He led her into a charming bedroom, sitting room and private bath, the two rooms also facing the avenue. "Her trained nurse can sleep here," he added, indicating the sitting room. "I fancy she'll need a nurse most of the time from now on to be really comfortable. And here's the pair of rooms I picked for you."

The big bedroom he had selected was almost as large as the living room in her present flat. Like most of the other rooms, it had a fireplace and broad windows, with cushioned seats. Off it was a beautifully equipped private bathroom, fitted with glass shelves and cupboards.

"I didn't plan a sitting room for you," he laughed. "I was afraid you'd spend too much time in it. Now come and see the dining room and kitchen and the servants' quarters."

They were as perfect and as admirably arranged as the rest of the fourteen room apartment. The servants had their own sitting room, their own bath. On the way to these rooms he casually showed her the bedroom, dressing room, and bath he had reserved for himself at the rear. "Had to have two rooms," he explained. "I've got a Jap servant who has been with me for several years. When he's here he'll help with the work if you like him. If you don't, he'll keep out of your way."

It was at this point that Dorothea found her voice. The agent had removed from them the dignity of his presence. She seized Dick's arm and asked a question.

"What's the rent of this?"

"Twelve thousand a year."

"Twelve thou——! Dick, are you crazy?"

"There's a very good dining room on the ground floor," said Dick placidly, "with an excellent chef and a house staff. I lunched here yesterday to try it. But we won't bother with that very often. We want a real home, with home cooking and servant troubles and all that sort of thing, don't we?" His face fell. "Don't you like it? There are three or four more on the list, but this was the one I thought you'd choose."

"It's simply perfect. But, Dick—" Miss Hutton took a firm grasp on nerves and common sense—"My income is three thousand a year!"

"I don't see what that's got to do with it."

"You don't? Well, I do." Her voice was rather cold. "Besides the rent, it would cost twelve or fifteen thousand a year to run such an apartment."

He nodded.

"That's what the agent said. Well," he looked around, "we could be very comfortable here. But if you'd rather look further——"

Dorothea swallowed something that rose in her throat.

"I suppose," she began, "the whole thing is a joke"—and then her voice broke. It was such a stupid joke—such a cruel joke—and so unlike the Dick she had known.

He grasped her hands and spoke breathlessly.

"Here's the home I've dreamed of—with you to share it and run it. Don't you see? I can pay for it, but you're the only person in the world who can make it a home—who can make my odd dream come true."

"But—Dick—I can't take it in! It's all so sudden and confusing."

"I know. I bungled it—abominably. But it was part of my dreams to surprise you. I'm more practical than I seem. Here's our future home, if you approve of it and me! For, O Dolly, I want you to marry me. It isn't just because I've made a fortune and want to take care of you. You don't need me—in that way. Your stepfather's 'stake' in my oil fields will make you and your mother comfortable the rest of your lives. It's because I love you, because there's never been any girl in my life but you——"

Dorothea drew her hands away.

"Don't say any more," she begged. "Dick, Dick, let me think!"

"I don't dare to let you think. I know I'll get you now or never. It's my hour, if I'm ever to have one. Dolly, Dolly, you were glad to see me when I came! I can never forget those tears! Think of what our lives can be together, and of what my life will be if you send me away! Can you do it? O, Dolly, can you?"

"No." Her voice was unsteady. "I don't know whether I love you or not. I only know that—that I can't send you from me. I can't even bear the thought of it. But everything is so sudden and upsetting."

She stopped. Two tears crept from her eyes and rolled down her cheeks. She dashed them away with the back of her hand.

"That's the second time I've cried," she gulped, "and I haven't cried before for years. For heaven's sake, Dick, don't think I'm a crying woman!"

He bent and kissed her wet cheeks.

"I know it is all too sudden, my darling," he said tenderly, "but I'll give you time. Now that I've got you, I'll teach you to love me. As for those tears—my wedding present to you is going to be a pendant with four of the most precious pearls I can find—a pearl for each of the four blessed tears that showed me I was wanted. As soon as I saw those tears," he added—and now his own voice was unsteady, "I knew that I had come home to stay."