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BY
HOWARD W. L'HOMMEDIEU

BOX 71
ARLINGTON HEIGHTS, ILLINOIS

LAND MONOPOLY
MUST BE DESTROYED!
CRUSH THE INFAMOUS THING!

May 25, 1964

AND OTHER WORKS

An Open Letter To President Lyndon B. Johnson

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Mr. President:

Before proceeding to certain matters which are not receiving the attention which they deserve, I congratulate you on your determination to pass a good Civil Rights Bill, a matter in which the country feels sure you will succeed. While I realize that you did not write your Annual Economic Report, my comments on which are enclosed, I am amazed that any government official could either write it, or read it in public. Mr. Luther H. Hodges has several times urged the public to study economics, but there is no evidence that the schools are willing to teach it, so that economic absurdity permeates all levels of American thought, including your cabinet.

You must be aware that the long rail dispute was not recently "settled," as claimed, as problems in political economy cannot be settled without full employment. Aside from employment, there is also no evidence that any other agreements reached are scientifically correct. To counteract unethical land, banking and patent monopolies, trade unions employ unconstitutional and unethical violence, in the effort to obtain reasonable wage and working conditions; then continue from there, to obtain wages above the prevailing level for each grade of skill, to obtain wages for not working, to regulate the operations of, or tie up businesses belonging to others, to delay the use of improved materials or equipment, to deny the right to work to innumerable persons, non-whites or non-relatives; their membership naturally being restricted, more or less, to the number of jobs available. The work available, conversely, tends to be spread out as thinly as necessary, to provide employment for all the members. Strikes to obtain their demands may be voluntary, but the ultimate enforcement, when needed, is assault and battery, vandalism and murder. The only solution to employer-employee disputes is a free choice, made possible by the elimination of monopoly, so that everyone can work either for himself, with others, or for others, on terms mutually agreeable. With equal costs of the factors of production, the many opportunities opened up would assure everyone of receiving the equivalent of his output - no more, no less.

Now that you have informed us that some Indian tribes are from 50% to 85% unemployed, and that their average life span is only 42 years, as compared to the national average of 68 years, what, if anything, is being done to give them equal access to the American earth, so that they can support themselves? Is the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as some claim, much more than an obstruction to Indian progress, an expensive, malicious yoke around their necks?

When Senator Thurmond told Senator Humphrey, in a television debate, that one part of the Civil Rights Bill would merely transfer some jobs from Whites to Negroes, the point was not disputed, and neither attempted to explain how or when full employment would ever be attained. The proposed extension of unemployment insurance, state income taxes and state sales taxes all indicate a general hopelessness about ever getting out of our economic quagmire. A fair employment practice act is a combination of good and bad intentions. It is desirable to foster understanding, and while compulsion in personal matters is not always strictly ethical, people sometimes learn to appreciate having been compelled to change. Such an act is a tacit admission, however, that full employment is as remote as ever, in fact and in intentions, and that it seems desirable to distribute the unemployment more or less equally among different groups, to lessen the extent of blighted areas and the frustrations of minorities. It is not so unethical to compel someone to hire someone he doesn't wish to hire as it is to deny anyone his

"DELENDIA EST CARTHAGO!" — MARCUS PORCIUS CATO, "THE ELDER"
"ERASEZ L'INFAME!" (PERSECUTING AND PRIVILEGED AUTHORITY) — VOLTAIRE

natural right to work. Racial morale is thus improved immensely, without greatly reducing total unemployment. With so much monopolization of industry, even if we had full employment, some compulsion in employment would be necessary, so as not to restrict the job opportunities of minorities to a limited range of small business and professions. Chinese tongs, or brotherhoods, for example, may set up their members in their own businesses or enable them to work for other Chinese Americans, but their opportunities must not be limited to the businesses which they can establish.

Why doesn't the government see that people given outrageous fines and prison sentences for exercising their civil rights - including the three who merely walked to a church door, and walked away, after being denied admission - are immediately released? Why doesn't the government prevent the use of clubs, dogs and electric cattle prods and other forms of police brutality; also the brutality of prisons and insane asylums, toward men, women and children - today and everyday? When a state refuses to distribute the surplus food the federal government has allocated to it, hoping to compel Negroes to move out of that state, where they have as much right as any to stay and earn their living, why doesn't the federal government distribute the food, or apply enough pressure to make the state government carry out its function?

We are one of the most intellectually and culturally dead countries in the world. While most of Europe has abolished capital punishment, and Sweden has a maximum so-called life sentence of 12 years, with 6 years the average actually served, we continue to commit legal murder on nobodies, and even have a legal whipping post in Delaware, with innumerable unofficial whipping posts or their equivalent, or worse, all over the country. Where Denmark can give a prisoner train or bus fare to a less crowded prison, and trust him to arrive, by himself, within the 24 hours allowed for travel, our prisoners sometimes mutilate themselves to escape the barbarity of their prisons or camps, by entering a hospital. Why do we have "revolving door" prisons, "revolving door" hospitals for drug addicts and the mentally ill, if not mainly because of inadequate employment opportunities? It has long been known that financial worry is the greatest cause of marital trouble. In Mexico, where one-half the people have no shoes, one-half the families have no father living with them. In Chicago, where one-fourth of the Negroes are unemployed, one-third of the families have no father living with them. There is also far greater abuse of children by their parents, among the frustrated poor, and this is on the increase. It may seem, when one creates a monopoly, that he is stealing so little from each member of the public that it will not be felt by them, while he is able to enjoy immensely the accumulated dollars extracted from everyone else. The train of evils from this original injustice is, however, almost without end - not only because of money actually squeezed from others, but, of far greater importance, because of economic opportunities denied, through the monopolization and dog-in-the-manger treatment of the earth.

Your so-called "war on poverty," through the creation of new industries, new roads, and the retraining of the unemployed, can hardly succeed. As a matter of simple arithmetic, outlined in other letters enclosed, it is apparent that the uncertain use of the vast sums of monopoly income will inevitably lead to periodic depressions, and leave the same number of desperately poor people always with us. Training the unemployed, while desirable in itself, providing some flexibility, and leaving more people "between engagements," as actors put it, will probably have little effect upon the percentage of unemployed - merely leaving a larger percentage of trained people unemployed.

As for roads in the Appalachians, people were employed, without them, and they will be unemployed, with them, and they could more economically be moved elsewhere if there were jobs elsewhere - which there aren't. Your annual economic report, in its predictions of boundless and endless prosperity, failed to make an exception of the Appalachian area or any other area which seems far removed from economic heaven. Roads will no more bring prosperity than the forty million dollar road for water buffalo in Cambodia (which now is to have twenty million dollars in repairs), the road from Lisbon to an exclusive gambling joint, or a clover leaf in the Great American desert, leading to nowhere; not to mention the many dams built in the west, to irrigate more land, to raise more crops, to build more grain elevators, to pay more people for storing grain, to pay more subsidies to maintain price levels, to pay more people for not raising crops, further to increase the national debt, to pay more interest on the national debt, further to increase inflation, constituting legalized robbery of people's savings, pensions, insurance, and creditors' long-term contracts.

What surpluses are we going to create with the new industries, and are we going to store them, and at what cost? Or shall we sell them to other countries, at bargain prices, then further subsidize our

producers, so they can compete with reimports selling below cost? It all goes back to monopolists' receiving more than their production, so that non-monopolists get less than their production. The non-monopolists can't purchase the equivalent of their production, and the monopolists periodically won't find investment opportunities for all their unearned income, so that, until we eliminate most monopoly, we can solve nothing. We have perpetual injustice, perpetual instability, perpetual unemployment, frequent recessions, a low base wage, and a long train of consequent evils. Any form of government favoritism contributes to monopoly, although the failure to assess the full rental value of land is the basic favoritism, and results in the basic evil, of withholding land, and sites on which one might work and build a home. Justice Frankfurter believed that each business would attain its natural and efficient size under free competition. We could stop worrying about the size of a business or the percentage of the market it controlled if we simply ended all forms of government favoritism.

It would no doubt be a great satisfaction to you to be able to walk about as freely as a Scandinavian ruler, in a country without the extremes of limitless wealth and direst poverty, with negligible unemployment, and with private, business and government insurance providing for contingencies. Woodrow Wilson said that we needed idealistic leadership, such as that of Henry George, although he made no move to implement George's proposal of land value assessment, as a number of other countries did, to their great benefit. It is hard to believe that we are capable of doing anything fundamental when we do so little to alleviate even the effects of injustice, such as our unbelievably stupid and barbaric prison system. You no doubt noticed the serious riot - justified, according to reports - in Texas a few weeks ago. One is predicted for the Chicago Bridewell this year, because of gross overcrowding and lack of facilities for providing work. The entire system is inexcusable - certainly the ill-disguised press gang procedure often used to obtain unpaid prison labor on the roads.

When, if ever, do you expect to equalize the costs of production, providing full employment, with wages equal to one's production, minimizing the incentive to crime, and the seriousness of crime - violence is almost unknown in Scandinavia - and set up self-checking supervisory groups all over the country, to eliminate the inhumanity and uselessness of our prison system, and convert it into a productive, intelligent and civilized procedure? Half of Swedish prisoners are unsupervised, and with good behavior, have several furloughs home each year. When can more of our prisoners be released on parole, with good jobs always available? We have some successful practices along these lines, but need to expand the principle throughout the country. When shall we have overall checks on our judges and juries, so that one person will not serve a fifteen year sentence for something which results in parole for another? The last great code of laws was the Code Napoleon, based largely upon the principles of the French Revolution. All minorities, including Jews and Muslims, had full civil rights. It's almost time that we caught up to this Code, and went on to abolish sump-tuary laws, where no injury other than to the predilections of others is involved, in accordance with the principle espoused by Herbert Spencer - "Complete liberty, limited only by the equal liberty of others."

Why can a college basketball player be sent to jail for a year, for throwing a game? Is the cheating of crooked gamblers more important than a year of his life? Our attitude, of trying to terrorize with fantastic punishment, anyone who violates our pre-conceived ethical standards must be changed. The legislative and judicial idiots who believe such punishment equitable have no more sense of proportion than a cow, and this is only one of thousands of sentences and laws that should be subjected to scientific - not political - review. In England, jails prominently post the rights of persons picked up by the police, so that they and the police will both know these rights. In Germany, relatives of those picked up are immediately notified. It is unnecessary to draw a comparison with our own practices.

When there is so much to be done that no one is even mentioning - much less doing - how can you waste time on your proposed "House of Prayer" in Washington? What evidence is there that daily prayer has improved the ethics of Congress? We have been ridiculing Russia's numerous five-year plans to make Russians more prosperous, while we have had a 188-year plan for the pursuit of happiness which leaves millions feeling like the mountain woman in a TV program, who expressed herself to a reporter more or less along this line: "Every four years they discover that we're poor, but I can see myself now, in a nice big new home, with a beautiful lawn, a new car in front, and a refrigerator full of food - and then I take another drink of 'corn.'" Sargent Shriver, on May 17, 1964, predicted the end of poverty in the United States, in ten years, if Congress supported your anti-poverty program. Dr. Wilbur J. Cohen, professor at the University of Michigan, on April 28, 1957,

predicted the end of poverty in the United States within ten years, and President Eisenhower, at about the same time, made a similar prediction. As we have only three years to go on these predictions, Mr. Shriver appears to be sentencing us to an additional seven years of poverty - perhaps for attempted escape? Or is it only that, with all three, "In spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to . . . ?"

It has been said that the oil interests should erect a monument to the man who thought up the oil depletion allowance. This favoritism, however, affects only landholders as a class, and not the public, who, if they received a general reduction in costs, because of all the industries affected by the price of oil, would simply have to offer more ground rent, competing for the artificial scarcity of land which is not held off the market for speculation. The real monument, dwarfing Mt. Rushmore, and taking in the Rocky Mountain Range, should be carved to show all those persons, who control colleges, government, and public media, who have ignored, minimized or lied about the ethics and importance of having the full rental value of all land, exclusive of improvements, assessed, as the only source of local and state revenue, and, so far as it will go, of federal revenue. Another economics advisor from the ranks of college instructors would do you no good. They are in the position of inventors, ostensibly hired to design mouse traps, who are actually expected to spend their time explaining why the traps never work, and who would be discharged if a mouse were ever caught in one.

As for your joke about the preacher who lost his notes, and was reduced to speaking as God inspired him, it is unnecessary to try to do better next time. We have long been told that the reason for so many revolutions in South and Central America was the volatile temperament of Latin Americans. Real Latin Americans own almost everything, and revolutions are started mainly by Indians who get tired of being hungry. They have half the life span of North Americans, and may even die from lack of drinking water. Landholders feel that it is enough if they give their peasants free dope and pay for their funerals. Wholesale waste is not the worst evil of our foreign policy; it is our failure to insist upon something more nearly resembling justice in the countries we try to help, as it is the only means of doing them much good economically, and thus the only means of getting people to support their government, as something preferable to a change. It used to be said that the British Government was very clever, in periodically granting dissatisfied colonists only enough concessions to prevent serious revolt. **THE CLEVEREST THING WE COULD ALL DO IS TO STOP TRYING TO FIGURE OUT HOW MUCH PEOPLE WILL STAND FOR, WITHOUT REVOLTING, BUT SIMPLY TO GIVE THEM JUSTICE.**

This is a violent country, becoming more violent all the time. The Chicago Police Dept. reported the following major crime statistics for the first four months of 1964: murder, 101; rape, 392; serious assault, 3,178; robbery, 5,640; burglary, 10,721; thefts over \$50, 7,761; auto theft, 9,156. This was an average increase of 7.6% over 1963. A railroad, operated profitably, while its unions were on strike, was subjected to over 200 instances of vandalism in a year. Prison outbreaks, police violence, gangster and trade union violence, violence in and around schools, assault and battery on the streets and in the public parks are all indications of an unjust society. We obviously do not have "peace in our time," as the hundreds of millions of dollars spent on sleeping pills, tranquilizers and doctors (half the cases being psychopathic - admittedly or not) would indicate.

The exact number of unemployed and partially employed, the legal standard of a minimum money wage, the exact income for each size family, at which the poverty level is arbitrarily set, the amount of relief arbitrarily determined as being adequate are all of relative unimportance. **IT IS NOT FOR ANYONE TO SAY WHETHER OR NOT WE CAN EXIST OR SHOULD BE SATISFIED WITH LESS THAN ECONOMIC JUSTICE. THE GOVERNMENT HAS ONE PRIMARY OBLIGATION - TO ESTABLISH JUSTICE, AND NOT MERELY TRY TO DECIDE HOW MUCH INJUSTICE WE SHOULD HAVE, AND WHETHER OR NOT WE CAN OR SHOULD TRY TO LIVE WITH IT.** The program of the Democratic Party may be summed up as "more free blankets for Indians," while that of the Republican Party may be described as "fewer free blankets for Indians." The programs differ in humanity, but are equally worthless as constructive solutions. We need another Age of Reason, not governed autocratically, but by a concensus of opinion, after free and adequate discussion - another Renaissance on matters of import other than literature and painting. The essence of economic, legal and social justice has long been known. Whether or not we attain it is all a matter of desire, and something should be done to stimulate that desire.

Sincerely,

Howard W. L'Hommedieu