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[Joseph Caillaux]

Monsieur Joseph Caillaux, a Frenchman who in the last twenty years or so has made both his own and other countries take note of him, has recently voiced in these columns deep depression over civilization.

When one talks about civilization these days it is essential to tell what you mean by the word. There are those that are satisfied that it means the multiplication of telephones and radios, motor cars and airplanes, bath tubs and electrical contrivances. But M. Caillaux is not pleased with this definition. Nor is he satisfied to have the word limited to agreements which "make men's relations with their fellows more easy, eliminating motives of distrust, envy and fear." That is, he is not convinced that if men do sign - and keep - pacts, agreeing never again to go to war they will therefore automatically become civilized.

In his mind civilization is an "organization both of morality and material well-being" and by "morality" he does not mean simply conduct - following accepted conventional rules of ethics - but rather "that gospel of gentleness and charity practiced on the Mount". What he finds lacking in contemporary definitions of civilization is the spiritual mind. He apparently

finds no trace at all of spiritual mindedness in this country. Indeed, his distress is largely founded on what he believes to be our complete absorption in material things. Our wealth has become so great, our frank revelling in wealth so joyous, that he fears we are to become the envy of nations - that the outside world will abandon its virtue, its life of the spirit and follow our materialistic conception of civilization as single-mindedly as we do.

M. Caillaux declares us a race of realists, occupied only with scientific problems. Most particularly are we centred on the organization of our industries, our labor. Everything else is sunk by us in working out a complete and perfect machine for production - a machine in which each individual shall have his fixed place. Only thus, he conceives, are we going to get that last word in production which he believes to be our sole aim.

He sees this as doing terrible things to us. He sees in it the death of inventive talent among workers, he sees them deprived of all intellectual food, reduced to the position of mechanical men. He does not believe that they will be content forever to go on with this perfect mechanical life when we finally achieve it. Some day they will feel the monotony of a "civilization pulled with a string." Up they will come and destroy the perfect production machine - the goal of our ideas of civilization.

To any one who has kept a curious and disinterested even half-eye on what has been going on in American industry for the last

fifty years of gradually intensive organization, M. Caillaux's picture borders on the ludicrous. He overlooks entirely in it certain essential factors - factors necessary to its growth, even its existence. American industry could not go on if it did not give at least partial play to the inventive faculty of workers. There is not a well established organized industry in this country - I am not talking about the cheap and ignorant exploitive ones of which we have, to be sure, only too many, just as we have only too many ignorant, unambitious, untrained workers - in which this is true. In all of our well-organized, well-managed industries, particularly those which have adopted the principles of Taylorism, of which M. Caillaux speaks with such suspicion, A continual concern of managements is how best to encourage suggestion and invention. Out of the ranks of the workers there comes in every great plant, talent for the laboratory, talent for the machine shop. If there was no chance, why, in a great town like Akron (Ohio), centre of the rubber industry, should you have an old established college practically forced to expand and re-expand its chemical laboratories, that the boys of fathers at the machine may get the training which will fit them for the opportunities which a highly developed industry, depending upon still further scientific development, makes possible? Variations of what one finds in Akron one finds in every great industrial centre: night schools for workers at the bench, technical schools for boys who are candidates for industry; classes within the factory - a nation-wide effort to bring out creative ability, if it exists.

Skill and more skill and still more skill is what industry is crying for in this country. It seeks the trained as only the army, the navy, the law have sought them in past generations - and seeks them in far greater numbers than the army, the navy or the law have ever been able to use them. Creative genius! Why, that is what organized American industry is living on.

M. Caillaux declares that the workman is deprived of all intellectual food in our industrial life. Men who can put up the fight that organized workers have in the United States for higher wages, shorter hours, better conditions - and still are; men who, even while fighting, can arrive at the conclusion of much of our organized labor in this country, that the strike is as expensive a method of settling industrial disputes as war is of settling international disputes, and that they must develop a machinery of co-operation with employers - such men are not deprived of all intellectual food. Their heads are working.

Moreover, in all this organized, Taylorized industry which M. Caillaux so fears, where you have a real application - not a fake one, as unfortunately happens in all human activities, even M. Caillaux' favorite one of French politics - the whole effort is to keep the man thinking at his job. There is an educational side to the highly specialized automatic operation which the outsider does not always grasp. A man must be trained for scientific operation. He must throw aside his old rule-of-thumb

method and discipline himself to do a thing with what has been demonstrated to be the least expenditure of effort and of time. In no one of our highly organized industries is the man confined to one machine forever, unless he so wishes. There are grades in these automatic operations, and in many of our factories there is an opportunity, through instructors, through trade schools, to fit yourself for a newer and higher operation. There is opportunity, if a man develops the ability, of supervising, of instructing, of managing, to go ahead. You are in a shop where a man is begged not only to consider the job he is on but to keep an eye on the one just ahead, that he may lift himself to that. His mind is not torpid, not starving because of scientific shop organization and management, though it may be for one of a hundred and more physical, social, psychological reasons. If M. Caillaux would read the bulletins of the admirable American Taylor Society he would see that one of the problems to which many a Taylorite gives himself with most devotion and enthusiasm is how to arouse the torpid mind of the worker - arouse his creative energy - if he has it.

No, M. Caillaux has in mind not what responsible, thoughtful organized industry is aiming at in its relations with men - he has in mind the cheap and ignorant exploiter of a system not too well as yet understood by managers, workmen, the public; but which in one form or another is being actively and progressively applied in every one of our huge successful enterprises.

Our organized machine of production which so scares M. Caillaux, in its best estate, aims at arousing the creative energy of men, knowing that on that depends its own future. That it misses its mark again and again, that greed complicates its operations, that it is often careless in its treatment of the human being that has not kept up with its advance, that it has an inhuman practice of throwing out men because they have not seen what was coming and made themselves ready for change - all of this is true; but more and more widely it squares up to human as well as scientific productive needs.

M. Caillaux admits our shorter hours and higher wages, but finds in them nothing but an opportunity for his intellectually brutalized workers to use the leisure, he grants they get, in "trivial - I must confess that I almost said vulgar amusements." That is, the worker under our system has no refuge in his short day except running about in a motor car or going to a movie house - he is too exhausted to enjoy anything else.

Well, M. Caillaux has never spent as many hours as I have in American industrial towns. He has never watched as many American miners, steel workers, textile workers, pulling weeds in a garden around a little house that they were paying for. He has never seen as many of them as I have, sitting on the bleachers on a Saturday afternoon, cheering for their particular mine or mill team, struggling against some other mine or mill team. He has

never seen as many of them as I have, working for their town church - and going to it, regularly. As a matter of fact, I knew a good many industrial towns where the percentage of workmen church-goers is higher, I am inclined to think, than in any other kind of town in this country.

To be sure, ^{They have their} ~~they~~ have their car and tens of thousands of them use it to go to and from their work. It enables them to live out from under the smoke and dirt of the factory chimneys. It enables them to have a garden and to cultivate it. M. Caillaux takes a rap at this garden, which he seems to know is cultivated in certain localities; but he gets no joy in the idea of a man living in what he thinks of as an enclosure of pumpkins and turnips!

Well, I have seen hundreds of workers' gardens in one or another industrial centre in the United States, and I never saw one yet in which pumpkins or turnips or vegetables of any sort had run out the flowers. As a matter of fact, one of the beautiful and interesting features of the garden in the better developed industrial communities - the industrial community which is the ideal of the higher grade industrial organizations - is that it specializes to such an extent in daffodils and iris, peonies and larkspur, hollyhocks and sunflowers that I have known more than one manager of industrial relations to "view with alarm" the tendency of the workers to overlook the opportunity they had

of supplying their tables with green vegetables and to put down potatoes for the winter. No one can travel through the industrial towns of this country, or through the suburbs of industrial cities, without realizing the growth of the interest that your worker has in his yard and garden. In certain industrial communities there seems to me to be as great ambition for shrubs and flowers and vines on the part of the whole family as there is for a car or a radio.

M. Caillaux says that he would much rather go to a ravine, a thicket, than to live among pumpkins and turnips. Well, this American worker that he thinks is being so seriously brutalized has, in his better estate, not only pumpkins and turnips but crocuses and lilacs. And he has his ravine and thicket, too. His car takes him there every holiday and Sunday. The car, in the excursions it makes possible for him and his whole family, has become a substitute with hundreds of thousands of American workmen for the saloon which was once his only social centre, and which has been destroyed, let us hope forever, not only in industrial but in all American centres.

The trouble with M. Caillaux, as well as with many of us, is that we have not discovered in American industrial civilization, an intention, a trend toward anything except material well-being. As a matter of fact, our organized industry is shot through and through with ideals for human betterment - the desire that the worker and the family shall not only have food, shelter, leisure,

but that he shall have education, the opportunity for fine relations, for what we call culture. There is at work in our industrial life a passion for universal human well-being, the building up and the preservation of health, the development of appreciation of what is good and worthy. There is growing in all our industrial communities a larger toleration, an effort to create the machinery for co-operation and expression. In many quarters these ambitions have been largely realized, but it is slow business - slow business to change the point of view of workers as well as of employers, to establish confidence, willingness to co-operate where there has been general suspicion, and not only willingness but even a desire to fight. Slowly we are working out of this, and anybody that takes account of the civilization that is growing up in the United States must take account of these things. That is, our civilization is not, as M. Caillaux seems to think, devoted purely to sanitation, motor cars, radio and movie entertainment. All our workers do not use their leisure in a restless effort to get away from themselves. The picture he draws comes from a bad-mannered, noisy, highly conspicuous few. Thousands upon thousands of people in the United States are for the first time in their hard lives, finding themselves with the money to get some of the material satisfactions of life. It is not strange that for a period they should feel that these are

enough. The majority know better. The victims themselves learn better. A great steady mass in this country lead lives based on something besides material satisfaction. Our workers are not dumb, driven cattle though there are dumb, driven cattle among them. Their employers are not slave drivers, though there are slave drivers among them.

When you hear a leader of American industry like Owen D. Young telling his colleagues that America must furnish a cultural wage as well as one ensuring physical well-being, you know something is at work. Let us admit that it is going to take long to bring it to anything like full fruition - the seeds are there. The question is, Are these seeds healthy enough, are they widely enough scattered, is their cultivation going to be thorough enough, to run out the seeds of destruction that M. Caillaux sees in our civilization, and which unquestionably are there? Seeds of destruction are everywhere, and always have been. Let us say that there are such seeds in M. Caillaux himself as well as in his beloved France. They are in every one of us and in every nation. But men and the governments of the world, if they are intelligent, know that life is a series of experiments, of failures, of constant correction. American civilization as we see it is a mixed benefit; but it is not, as M. Caillaux intimates, simply a civilization "pulled with a string." There is consciousness of our dangers, indeed, possibly there never in the history of the world was franker recognition of national weaknesses than we have now,

a more persistent pointing of them out, a wider spread, more intelligent determination to conquer them through a steady development of the idealistic purposes, the humanitarian ends which are the very life blood of the best that we have today in the United States.