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RADIO TALK SCHEDULED FOR DELIVERY BY ELMER F. ANDREWS, ADMINISTRATOR  
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Over

STATION WJSV, WASHINGTON, D. C.  
MAY 7, 1939 AT 9:45 P. M.

Fifty years ago a small furniture factory was established in a mid-western village.

The owners were the village banker, the lawyer and a retired farmer. Every one of the nine employees was a skilled cabinet maker, capable of producing a table or a desk from the first drawing to the polished, completed product. There were band saws and planers in the factory but most of the work was done by hand.

A good deal -- if not most -- of the manufacturing of fifty years ago was done in towns and little cities scattered over the country. The village of Fairhaven, of which I speak, was representative. In addition to the furniture factory there was an iron foundry, a glass factory, and, beside the creek that skirted the town, a flour and grist mill to which the farmers of the surrounding plains brought their wheat and corn, taking back home with them in the cool of the evening the winter's supply of flour and corn meal. Fairhaven was pretty largely self-contained. It bought little from the outside world and it contributed to the outside world as little in return. There was no problem of "interstate commerce" to trouble these pioneers of an industrial age.

Meager as the village economy was, it was sufficient to sustain a flourishing intellectual life, which revolved largely about the church and school.

There were, of course, no moving picture theaters, no radios and no automobiles. Ankle deep in the unpaved streets lay the dust of summer and the mud

of winter. The barn dance, the husking bee and the church social under coal oil lamps were adequate to the simple entertainment needs of our less gregarious fathers.

The retired farmer owned a third of the furniture factory and managed its affairs. He knew his workmen, not as numbered cards in a filing cabinet, but as flesh and blood men. He knew their home environment and their family problems. It was not unusual for Mike to come to him and say, "John, my old woman's sick and we've got to have the doctor. Can you let me have five dollars on next week's pay?" Not only would he get the five dollars, but in the evening after supper the manager and his wife would walk over to see how Mrs. Mike was getting along. Friendly neighborliness characterized the industrial relations (though the term had not then been invented) of Fairhaven as well as its social affairs.

There have been striking changes at Fairhaven within a half century. Old men who were born there, returning to scenes of their boyhood, find little now that seems familiar. Where the furniture factory stood there is today a gas station. The old mill has fallen into dilapidation. The foundry has been converted into the Brown Betty tea room, and the old hotel where traveling salesmen of a former day exhibited their wares in the spacious sample room, has been nudged into oblivion by the Elite theatre.

From many standpoints the new Fairhaven is more attractive than the old. Mud no longer bogs down the buggies on Main Street on rainy days. Mud and buggies both have disappeared. Nearly every family owns its car and radio, many of them have their electric washing machines and vacuum cleaners. Unquestionably, whatever Fairhaven has lost, it has gained immeasurably in a wealth of creature comforts, though the young people who remain complain that Fairhaven is a dead town.

While this transition was occurring in the villages of the land, changes even more striking were taking place in the larger towns. In 1890 there were three cities in the United States of more than a half million population. By 1930 there were thirteen.

The furniture, the iron castings, the glassware and the flour are not typically made today in small village factories but in mammoth plants employing not five or ten men but five to ten thousand. The worker no longer sees his employer face to face. In the historic sense, he hasn't any employer. He has a personnel manager. The owners are not fellow townsmen visible in the flesh, but ten thousand men and women scattered over the country. Indeed, ownership changes day by day and hour by hour. Mike ends his day's work after the stock market closes in New York for a different set of owners than he toiled for in the morning.

Ask one of these owners if he is Mike's employer, and he might not be able to tell you without first going to his bank and looking into his portfolio. Some of them couldn't even tell you within a hundred miles where the plant is located. To them Mike is no longer a friend and neighbor, but an abstraction labelled Labor -- with a capital L.

In 1890 there were no workmen's compensation laws, no social security, no minimum wage laws, only rudimentary factory inspection, and not much need of them. In a still expanding country it was an exceptional person who could not find a useful job of some sort to work at. The family system supplied security enough for its aged and handicapped members. Those who sank momentarily in the competitive struggle could rise again out on the geographic or economic frontier.

If the common man could, by his own efforts, or with the help of relatives and friendly neighbors, find a solution to his economic problems, the

merchant and the manufacturer were no less fortunate. In a nation that could double its population within three decades, there were many mouths to feed, many bodies to clothe. The "market" was everywhere and it was growing.

I am not pining for the good old days. We cannot bring back our golden age, and even if we could we probably should find it sadly tarnished. For all of its glory that shines now through the mellow haze of memory, we didn't really care much for that economic order of 1890. We tore it down to build a better one -- one in which we can travel in rubber-tired ease farther in an hour than our fathers could ride horseback in a day; in which we can span the continent between dawn and dusk; in which the touch of a button wipes out the dreary hours of filling and cleaning coal oil lamps, and the twist of a wrist brings to us instantly the wisdom or the folly of a statesman orating at a distance of a thousand miles.

Little that is worth having can be gained without cost, and the benefits of our inventive age are no exception. We pay the price in unemployment; in depressions; in work relief. Every time we turn out another hundred thousand automobiles we build a new hospital somewhere to repair the damage; every time an inventor gives us a new device to make life more luxurious and to ameliorate the hardship of back-breaking toil, we dig deeper to pay the added cost of unemployment relief. The problem of statesmanship in this highly integrated industrial society inevitably centers more and more upon a humanitarian effort to save the pieces.

Adam Smith believed that enlightened selfishness alone could be depended upon to give us the best of all possible worlds. No matter how much the economic order might list from time to time, it would right itself eventually if left severely enough alone. The weak manufacturers would fail, the marginal farmers and merchants would go bankrupt, the unemployed and the unemployable would be eliminated by the rigors of the competitive struggle. And eventually, having sheared off

the unproductive margin of our economy, the farms and the mills that persisted would be adequate to the needs of the survivors. As an academic concept it is pretty in theory; in practice it is far from pretty. We haven't the heart to go through with it, and please God, we never shall. The collapse of a bank that wipes out the life savings of thousands, or of an industry that throws a million men and women into the street is something from which no man of good will derives satisfaction.

For a century and a half we laid waste the beauty and wealth of our continent. We slashed the forests and polluted the streams. We watched the rains wash into the rivers and thence into the sea some of our most fertile acres. We saw the sky over cities as far east as Cleveland made black with powdered topsoil that had been lashed by the winds from the farms of the Middle West. We saw farmers evicted from their little homes and were moved to pity as we read of one-cent auction sales. We saw men bowed by the machines that might have liberated them, and heard echoing in our city streets the aimless footsteps of the millions who had been rejected by our civilization.

And so we called a halt.

We enlisted the skills of millions of our jobless fellow citizens in the building of highways, bridges and schools, thus adding to the public convenience and the nation's wealth. We built dams to hold back the floods and sought to conserve the life-giving soil. We invited our farmers to co-operate with government in a search for economic safety. We invited restless youth into the forests to recapture our timber resources. We have determined that man shall be the master of the machine and not its puppet. We have determined that the sale of gold bricks to the unsuspecting shall no longer be countenanced as a triumph of Yankee shrewdness.

To the aged and the weak we have brought a measure of security.

We have decided, in short, that we need not forever drift "while wealth accumulates and men decay," but that we can summon up sufficient intelligence to give purpose and direction to our national life so that every willing man and woman can find a useful place in it and participate in its benefits.

Congress has put a floor under wages and a ceiling over hours. We have made up our minds that labor is not a commodity, to be bought and sold in an unrestricted market without reference to social consequences. We have determined that, the law of supply and demand to the contrary notwithstanding, there shall be limits to the exploitation of the economically weak. Congress stipulates that for this year no worker shall be paid less than 25 cents an hour or worked more than 44 hours in any one week without the payment of time and a half for overtime. The minimum wage is to be raised and the maximum hours lowered until, within a few years, the minimum becomes 40 cents an hour and the maximum workweek 40 hours unless overtime is paid. Even this requirement in a nation that boasts the highest standard of living in the world is modest enough.

The Wage and Hour law is not a conspiracy against business. It is a device in behalf of business, because every advance in the lower wage brackets is translated immediately into the purchase of goods. You can't sell radios and electric refrigerators and automobiles to families who have nothing above the level of mere subsistence.

I don't have to labor the point with practical business men. Most of them are on record in support of higher wages and shorter hours, but no one of them can accomplish much alone. There is always the fellow out on the periphery of our economic life watching for a chance to chisel a competitive wage or hour advantage

for himself at the expense of his fellows. Well, the law enables us to take care of the chiselers while business as a whole is busy about the task of raising the standards of American life.

Walter D. Fuller, president of the Curtis Publishing Co. of Philadelphia, said the other day: "Greater prosperity than ever before experienced is possible in this country if we will raise the incomes of more than one half the urban population now below \$25 per week per family."

Twenty-five dollars a week is a good deal more than the Fair Labor Standards Act is shooting at, but Mr. Fuller, I think, has enunciated the true doctrine.

Working together, we can make this a better fed, a better clothed, a better housed, and therefore a happier country. I do not contend that we have here a panacea for all the ills to which flesh is heir; I do maintain that we can come to some common understanding on what the rules of the game shall be so that business can do a far better job for America than it has been able to do before.

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