

Day After Day - December 1941

Dorothy Day

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Summary: Comments on union elections and favors John L. Lewis because of his opposition to war. Colorful description of her surroundings and the changing seasons. News of a wedding, illness, a birth, and visitors. (DDLW #377).

Today the CIO convention is going on in Detroit. We sent telegrams to Lewis, backing him in his fight in behalf of the miners, and for the closed shop, and also for his opposition to war. We sent another to Murray, calling his attention to the letter of Bishop Sheil in the November issue of our paper on unionism. I like Murray much, although I do not agree with him on his unqualified support of the President in foreign relations. I like Murray's robust Scotch and Catholic attitude usually. This statement is typical. He is speaking in relation to the miners:

"I insist and contend that the United Mine Workers are right in principle, they are right in good morals, they have a virtuous case, they have stated the facts, and the National Defense Board has exercised a reprehensible kind of discrimination in the recommendations which it has submitted by a majority vote." In speaking of his position in regard to the war he states that he is following his conscience.

Favor Is Fleeting

What a difference between this convention and last year's. I remember that convention particularly because Tamar came down to Atlantic City by herself on the bus from New York and joined me there. I had been traveling through the Middle West for almost a month and she came down to have Thanksgiving with me.

The convention was held in one of the boardwalk hotels and we had great pleasure in walking along the sea and basking in the sunlight. It was beautiful mild weather and the cries of the seagulls alone pierced the silence out of doors.

Inside the convention hall there were furious demonstrations in favor of Lewis. All the left wing unions were vociferous in their support. At the same time their leaders were not much in favor at that time. Michael Quill and Joe Curran were given half-hearted applause. When Joe Curran was elected one of the

vice-presidents of the CIO he was not enthusiastically received. The position of the Catholic Workers was in a way, with them in questioning the defense efforts, the prolonging of the war by our aid. They for the reason that Russia was in the anomalous position of having signed a treaty with Germany and we because of our opposition to war.

This year there is hostility to Lewis. Right now he is not even present at the convention and the newspapers are doing their best to build up the impression in the minds of the public, of a break between the two men. There may be a difference of opinion in regard to the foreign policies of the President, but when it comes to labor, both men seem to trust each other, and their interest in the welfare of the workers. Undoubtedly the organized workers who are not having difficulties over the union question, hours or wages, are with the administration. Those who are in difficulties at the moment, in the way of strikes, though they voted for the President during the last election, are opposing him now in his threat to send the troops in to take over the mines. They are thinking in terms of enlightened self-interest as it is called, in short-range action. I believe that Lewis is thinking in terms of long-range action, of what the future has in store.

Local Color

Today is a beautiful day, a soft haze in the air, gentle sunlight. All morning I was in my room, typing and my two windows look out on brick walls and the artificial lights in the rooms opposite. Walls, bricks, fences, fire escapes, all are dingy. The ashcans in the back yard are littered. The only bright spots are the clotheslines which hang in scallops between the buildings, laden with multicolored clothing.

I wanted to catch Peter today at noonday mass at St. Andrews, so I left the house at noon. The sunlight blinded me as I came out, hazy though it was. There are still leaves on the trees, women with their baby carriages were lined up in the park, and all the benches were crowded with idle men. Some of them slept, their heads on the backs, their bent arms, leaning against the backs of the benches. There is no grass in this park to lie on. It is made up of trees and shrubs, and the earth is packed hard and bare from the feet of many children. Mulberry bend and Chinatown are the most congested districts in New York City.

In Between Weather

A good part of my writing today was done sitting in front of the two stores at 115 Mott street. I dragged Margorie away from her letters to take dictation, and we sat out there in the mild air and luxuriated in the privacy of the open street. The office is always crowded, the telephone is always ringing, people are always asking questions. Besides it is stuffy, sitting inside on a day like this. The

inside of dank, dark tenements is most disagreeable in the in between seasons. In the winter you settle down in your corners and try to keep warm. You keep all doors and windows closed, to treasure the heat which comes from oil stove or pot-bellied stove, or open grate. The doors are always opening and shutting anyway, letting in terrific blasts of cold air. You are refreshed when you get out from the stuffiness within, and you welcome the warmth when you get inside. In the summer all doors and windows are open and it is easier to keep clean and comfortable. But spring is restless, one is comfortable neither inside nor out. And in the fall, the inside is most gloomy with the promise of discomfort to come, its halfhearted heat. Everybody longs to be out to capture and seize and hold the last remaining hours of beauty of the dying year.

The Commonweal

Calling attention to our reprint on the first page of this issue of Ed Skillen's review from the *Commonweal*, we'd like also to call attention to the magazine as a whole for a Christmas gift to your friends. Some of the articles we have liked most recently are those by Don Luigi Sturzo on his Political Vocation, on The Ways of Providence; an article by Fr. Orchard, Praying in War Time and many others, too numerous to mention.

Wedding

This month the only out of town trip was to Newport, Rhode Island, where Bill Gauchat, Cleveland leader of the Catholic Worker activities which include two houses of hospitality and a farm, was married to Dorothy Schmidt, also of Cleveland, but who had been working in Newport as one of Ade Bethune's apprentices for the past year. It was bright and beautiful weather, and Peter Maurin and I went up by bus on Thanksgiving Day. Sometimes we call the Newport crowd, a Catholic Worker craft group, a cell, and sometimes it is Lion's College, of which Ade is president. At any rate, it is now a sizable crowd, what with the de Bethune family moving up this fall, and the Clendenning aunt and niece next door, and Mary Krenzer, and Bridgit and Betty Finnigan there too. Present also at the wedding was Graham Carey and Father Joseph Woods, Benedictine of Portsmouth Priory, offered the Nuptial Mass.

Sickness

One of our fellow workers, Steve Hergenhan, went to Roosevelt Hospital last month and is now doing nicely. He'd probably enjoy letters and visits from his friends. A hint.

Visitors

During the month many visitors, including Dr. Feivus, exile from Germany; Helene Iswoeski, from Paris; Elizabeth Rossi, from Switzerland.

Included in news of the month—a new baby born to John and Margaret Magee, baptized John Joseph, October 26. John and Margaret formerly of the Upton Farm, are living on their farm at Orange, Mass., not far from Athol. John has been one of the leaders of the New England Catholic Workers for the past six years.