

THE COMMONWEAL February 10, 1939

Notre Dame, Ind.

To the Editors: Last year at the Western Electric Factory in Chicago, where most of the telephones in the world are made, excursions were held so that the several thousand employees and their families could go through the giant factory and see just how a telephone is made. Even those who had been working there for many years were "simply amazed" at how other divisions of the factory operated.

I was not surprised when the Chicago *Tribune* solemnly praised the wisdom of this novel idea. (Oh the brilliance of the mind who conceived that people might actually be interested in knowing what they were making!) I only grunted when a popular magazine dedicated to lauding the cult of Progress commented enthusiastically on the scheme. But I was taken aback when THE COMMONWEAL editorial ("Toward Industrial Democracy," pages 369-370) gravely listed it as a nice gesture to stimulate the workers' creative interest. That's quite all right, but --

Does no one see the irony of the report? Isn't anyone amazed at the spectacle of thousands of adult workers crowding through the factory where they have been working for years, eager as kids at their first circus, to see just what in the world they have been making all this time? To what limits must specialization go in the name of Progress before anyone starts to laugh? ;

How I wish G. K. Chesterton were still among us--- what a rollicking poem he would have written! Convinced that G.K. will rest uneasy in heaven unless someone attempts to commemorate the event, I have managed a verse.

Oh bees of the field who gather the honey,
Oh horses and mules who plod ahead
To harrow the soil that wheat may grow,
You are the ones who make certain our bread.
So come watch the wheels of the flour cavalcade--
Take a vacation and see how it's made.

And militant Communists who take the stand
To get us to shake the outstretched hand,
Don't give up hope: you have an ace,
But absence of facts weakens your case.
Stalin is leading the liberal crusade---
Take a vacation and see how it's made.

Oh poets and preachers of blazes in Hades,
We don't take to your stuff very well.
Our troubles on earth are so many
We pass over your descriptions of Hell
So here's a tip to help you persuade---
Take a vacation and see how it's made..

These things I dreamed
And I thought them good sense,
Until a big-hearted capitalist
Infused new eloquence:

Oh faithful employees, dear to me all-
Even you who stamp "0" on the dial--
Your touching zeal deserves a reward
So let up on your work for a while.
Pass through *our* factory, zone by zone,
And observe how *we* make a telephone.
Yea, have the day off, and still be paid!
Take a vacation and see how it's made.

EMERSON HYNES