

THE BYSTANDER —★—

Every Gun that is Made

Published in the Martinsburg *Journal*, October 7, 2018

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and not clothed. This world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children.

The cost of one modern heavy bomber is this: a modern brick school in more than 30 cities. It is two electric power plants, each serving a town of 60,000. We pay for a single fighter with a half-million bushels of wheat. We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people. This is not a way of life at all, in any true sense. Under the cloud of threatening war, it is humanity hanging from a cross of iron.”

These words were spoken by an American whose era seems long forgotten. Today, we would be lucky to have a person like this on the ballot, Democrat or Republican; someone who believed that the success of the economy is directly tied to the health of the workers; that the quality of our food markets, not the Stock Market, is the source and measure of our health.

Someone who bemoaned scarcity because it wastes the potential of our talents, intelligence, and energy; someone who could lead us without condemning an entire religion, saying “our form of government has no sense unless it is founded in a deeply felt religious faith, and I don’t care what it is.”

Someone who managed global projects without cheating people or declaring bankruptcy, who used concrete to make highways to connect people, not to build walls; who never profited from their status, and donated their farm to the National Park Service to preserve a sacred battlefield of our Civil War.

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Someone who saw diplomacy and compromise as the heart of strength, not as a sign of weakness, who spoke with forethought, knew how to strategize and didn't brag that they were a stable genius or accuse others of being "low-IQ." Someone who knew that our values and reputation in the world are important enough to build an entire military on, not the other way around.

Someone who feared the growing power of the Federal government even while sending the US Army to protect Black schoolchildren in Arkansas from violence, declaring racial discrimination a "national security issue."

That someone was Dwight Eisenhower, who might not even recognize the political party he represented as the 34th President of the United States. Today he could campaign as a moderate Democrat, if it wasn't for his "Lavender Scare" Executive Order 10450 that purged over 5,000 federal employees suspected of being homosexuals during the 1950's.

Reading his words makes one wonder if he would view today's Republican leadership as a cabal, abusing our democratic system to protect and preserve their own wealth. Always suspicious of Soviet Russia, he would probably advise us to be just as wary of American oligarchs as we are of their Russian counterparts.

In 1954, he said "I have just one purpose ... and that is to build up a strong progressive Republican Party in this country. If the right wing wants a fight, they are going to get it ... before I end up, either this Republican Party will reflect progressivism or I won't be with them anymore." Evidently, a five-star General of the US Army, the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in the European Theater, who called himself a "progressive conservative," was too liberal for some in the GOP.

Today it's obvious that we have to continue his fight, because the entire Republican Party itself seems to have become the "right wing" Eisenhower warned us about, for good reason, nearly 70 years ago.