

[We are discussing the fall of Barcelona]

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Friday, Jan. 27 '39 We are discussing the fall of Barcelona today and Mr. MacCurrie is in the midst of an explanation of the political, religious and economic aspects of the Spanish rebellion when Josh Innocent comes in. Mr. Innocent, a young man in his late twenties, is obviously jubilant, filled to the bursting point with good news of some sort. We are not kept waiting long.

"I got a job," he says. "I was over to New Departure this morning and they told me to come in Monday. They're hirin' back all their old help—runnin' three shifts. The guy at the employment office says when I come in, 'I was just gonna send a card,' he says."

Mr. MacCurrie: "No more chasin' bugs for you then?" (Mr Innocent has been employed for several months on a special WPA project.)

"No more," he agrees smiling broadly.

"They'll be payin' you a bit more than you were gettin' on WPA," ventures Mr MacCurrie cannily. But Mr. Innocent is not to be taken in.

"You said it," he rejoins. "Some of the lads were sayin' that they were gonna pay the help forty hours wages for thirty-two hours work. But that sounds too good to be true."

Mr. MacCurrie: "Yer goddom right it's too good to be true. They wouldn't be givin' you a whole day's pay for nothin'. You work piece work over there?"

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Mr. Innocent: “No, everything is production. You get a straight day rate for your eight hours' work. Of course they know just about how much you ought to do, but they don't drive you. You got to work pretty steady. You can't fool around like you can in some shops, but sometimes you can get a little ahead, and then you can take it easy. 2 “When I was workin' there before I worked the three to eleven shift. Sometimes I'd have my work all done by eight o'clock, and then I'd coast. They're pretty good in some ways, too. If a guy can't do a job, they give him somethin' else. They shift you around till they find out just what's best.”

Mr. MacCurrie: “Not much like this place doon here, then.” (Seth Thomas Clock Co.) “If you can't do the job oot you [go?]”

Mr. Innocent: “They tell me it's gettin' to be a regular sweatshop. Since they put that time study system in, it's a hell of a place to work.”

Mr. MacCurrie: “They're hirin' in quite a few these days.”

Mr. Innocent: “But they won't take nobody from town, they say. Why the hell is that?”

Mr. MacCurrie: “I didn't hear that. They took on a few lads from town, I know that for a fact.”

Mr. Innocent: “They bringin' over any more Germans? For some reason or other they always give them greenhorn Dutchmen a break in that shop. That burns me up more than anything else. They bring those bastards over from the old country and give them good jobs here, and Americans have to go on the WPA. What kind of a break would you get in their lousy country? All you got to do is read the papers and you can figure it out yourself. How many of them are on relief, or on the WPA? Not a goddamn one. They worked all durin' the depression, most of them.

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"I see the paycheck of that lad that lives up in Stuart's house when I was in the bank one time. How much do you think it was? Close to fifty dollars!"

Mr. MacCurrie: "Yes, but he has some kind of a special job. He's a technically trained mon."

Mr. Innocent: "Ah, that's a lot of baloney. They all say that when they 3 come over here. If they say they've got a trade, it's easier for them to get into this country. I know one that never looked at a clock before he came over here. He brags about it now. Passed himself off as an expert watchmaker."

Mr. MacCurrie: "Well, of coorse, there used to be quite a few of them old time German clockmakers. They were pretty dom good, no matter what you say. It was them started bringin' over all the Germans. Some of them got up pretty high doon there. Of coorse it's natural for them to favor their own kind."

Mr. Innocent: "Well, I wouldn't want to work there, from what I hear. They got the prices figured so goddamn close you can't even take time out to go to the toilet. And if a new lad comes to work those time study men watch him, and if he happens to be faster than the others in the room, they scale the price so that all the rest have to work just as fast."

Mr. MacCurrie: "Sometimes the help is to blame for cuttin' those prices. They get too dom greedy and hungry and they put in too much. Then they get a cut."

Mr. Innocent: "That might have been true when you worked there, Andrew, but no more. They got those prices down these days, and don't you think they haven't. They watch you all the while. Every new job you get, two lads stand at your shoulder and watch every move you make, and estimate the price. Talk to some of them, that's all you got to do, just talk to some of them."

Mr. MacCurrie: "I know, I know."

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Mr. Innocent; "Another thing I can't see, is all these married women workin. I don't believe in that."

Mr. MacCurrie: "They were goin' to fire them all doon here one time, but they never went very far with it." 4 Mr. Innocent: "Why hell, they got women workin' down there, there's no excuse for it. Just keepin' jobs from someone that needs them. You know them as well as I do. Their husbands makin' good money, most of them. The women'll work for damn near nothin'. Most of them keep what they make to spend on clothes or whatever they want to. That ain't right. They kill the job for everybody else. They'll work for eight or ten dollars a week. Why don't the gov'ment do something about that, if they're goin' to do anything."

Mr. MacCurrie: "I doot if it's constitutional"

Mr. Innocent: "Ah, constitutional my eye!"

Mr. MacCurrie: "Some of them need the work."

Mr. Innocent: "Well, if they need the work, all right. But make 'em prove it. Make 'em prove they're not just workin' for themselves."

Mr. MacCurrie peers up at the clock, discovers it is long past time for the paper. He goes out to the hall, finds it in the usual place, at the bottom of the stairs. Back in his chair by the window, he spreads it open in his knee, takes out and adjusts his spectacles. While Mr. Innocent and I engage in desultory conversation, he reads, and comments upon, various of the news items, until he comes upon one which interests him particularly. Then he lays the paper aside.

"I see they're fightin' over that bill to prevent the legislators from holdin' state jobs," he says. "I knew goddom well they'd have a fight over that one. They all go over there to feather their own nests, you know. You and I and the rest of the people be dommed."

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Mr. Innocent: "I see our friend here in town was in line for the county commissioner job."

Mr. MacCurrie: "He's just like the rest of them" 5 Mr. Innocent: "What do they have to do?"

Mr. MacCurrie: "Dommed if I know. Not much of anything. In the old days they handled all the liquor licenses in the county. Used to be dom good job. Paid six thousand a year, and all you could make."

Mr. Innocent: "Sounds good."

Mr. MacCurrie: "It's just a political job. I don't believe there's a dom bit of use for it any more."

Mr. Innocent: "Guess I'll be movin' along towards home." He gets up, yawns, stretches.

Mr. MacCurrie: "You ought to sleep good tonight Josh. You're all set now."

Mr. Innocent: "Yeah, I'm damn glad I'm gettin' out of the outdoor work. Two nice cold months coming along."

Mr. MacCurrie: "I didn't sleep so good last night myself. They had company up at the house. Joe Young and his wife. They got singin' those goddam Harry Lauder songs, Joe did, anyway, and there was no use tryin to sleep. I get so mad I can't sleep. I got up and read the Saturday Evenin' post till they went home."

Mr. Innocent: "Was Joe in the bag?"

Mr. MacCurrie: Hell, no, he don't drink a drop. He don't have to be drunk to be noisy."

Mr. Innocent: "Well, if you're goin' my way——"

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Mr. MacCurrie: "I suppose it's pretty near time." He bends down, begins to grope under the radiator for his overshoes.