

Mr. John Doe---Public Hero?

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Have you ever wondered how many tons of paper roll daily out of the nation's thundering presses to imprint the legendary and statistical status of Mr. John Doe upon the hearts of the masses? Neither John Gunther, the World Almanac, nor the "Fact and Fiction Department" of the Kremlin could cast any light upon this ponderous query. Although this matter seems to have escaped momentarily the attention of "Renegade Joe," I am certain that Moscow will waste no time in ferreting out the requested statistical lore.

In the meantime I must content myself with the legendary aspect of this famous public figure, Mr. John Doe. (P. S. to "Renegade Joe": Don't forget the Mister as our friend Doe is very touchy on the subject.) These same tons of paper I was speculating about perform a tremendous task of molding the public concept of the man-on-the-street. Each of us assimilates a certain proportion of this newsprint according to his valid powers of concentration; and henceforth each considers this portrait of John Doe to be his own original work of art.

Whether we accept the power of the press to influence our ideas concerning Doe (alias Mr. Average American) or not, the majority of us have come to accept the fact that the gentleman consumes the same foods upon which we individually thrive. He wears his favorite old hat at the same angle, reads his morning daily over the same-tasting orange juice and gives as generously as the Doe budget will permit to the same humanitarian organizations. In addition, we have set John up as the very embodiment of all that springs good and

kind from the American heart; we like to feel that the virtues embraced by the revered Mr. Doe derived their humble start from our own altruistic souls cradled beneath the spotless exterior clay of human form.

This contention that our public hero took his embryonic start in life, that he evolved from the human heart, leaves us wide open to the broadsides of the opposition forces. What opposition? That which strides forth gallantly to do battle under the banner and inspiration of Conscience—your small but mighty Man Friday. All of us at one time or another have faced this valiant little trooper and have felt his sharp stinging blows. Conscience wastes no words in condemning the weak spots in our liberal attitude toward "human" behavior.

Any decent dictionary will tell us that the term "human" refers to the qualities of man, neither divine nor brutish. Most of us have managed to corrupt this definition to suggest that a sort of mortal divinity has attached itself to the self-worshipping human race. As the result of this assumption, we are bound to further disgrace the dictionary; our behavior consequently takes on the hue of brutishness. It is this brutish activity which bids my Conscience to ride forth in quest of atonement.

I refer specifically to the American weakness of condoning any act which tends to the unethical side of the game as long as it squeezes precariously by the "letter of the law." I refer to the American habit of turning one's head away from shady behavior as long as the results of such doubtful activity are not deposited heavily and painfully in our own backyard.

At the risk of being tagged a left-winger, an adherent to "Renegade Joe's" anti-capitalist fanaticism and unloyal to the American tradition, I shall further my prosecution of Mr. John Doe by baring for your inspection likely samples of his erratic behavior. By doing so, I wish to emphasize, I am not forsaking my fealty to "Old Glory"; neither am I expressing favorable sentiment for any land-grabbing capitalist-hating Brutus. To heighten the picture of my lusty patriotism I would enjoy nothing more than expounding my humble theories supporting universal military training—except for the fact that such a discussion would be an irrelevant digression from criticism of John Doe.

Pull up a comfortable ottoman and prepare to defend yourself and Brother Doe against the accusations of Conscience. Ask yourself how large a portion of Mister John's questionable actions is the direct product of your—yes, your—behavior. How many situations in the following category precisely express your public performance as a citizen of our broad land? Is it time for a housecleaning in your spiritual abode?

John Doe—excuse me, Mr. John Doe—is captivated by the fancies and whims of money-worship. He finds it a very demanding religion, taking up all of his waking hours and possibly many of his dreams. It isn't the smile on your face or the kind word on your lip that he judges you by; rather it is the amount of silver that jingles in your pockets. If your pennies don't ring as loud as his nickels, you won't rate that last page of his address book.

Mr. Doe abhors the dictatorial methods of his office superiors although he isn't particularly opposed to roughshod tactics incorporated in his own treatment of employees. Tread lightly upon the toes of the boss

and let the heel fall heavily on the hapless foot of the office boy.

Doe doesn't believe in crucifying the "Chosen People." On the other hand you won't find any Levinskys or Greenbergs on his payroll. He holds in disdain the order of the Fiery Cross . . . He doesn't oppose the practice of "Jim Crow" taboos; he does oppose the right of the colored race to compete with him in the business world.

Mrs. Doe always knows better than to speak to her husband before mealtime in regard to a household problem. His perspective returns as the dinner progresses. Dessert finished, he is prepared to tackle any domestic difficulty. He can't understand why all the hungry peoples of Europe haven't already sworn allegiance to democracy.

Mr. Doe is grabbing bigger commissions than he ever dreamed of in the groping days of NIRA; he doesn't want them pared down but he wants cost of living prices sliced in half. He dreads to see inflation spiraling to new and dizzier heights. He demands more and bigger tax reductions, larger profits and, inversely, smaller production costs.

If you have been fooling yourself about the "Simon-pure" pattern of John Doe's existence, I repeat: get out that discarded broom and sweep away the greed and prejudice pervading your spiritual repose. A good thorough housecleaning on your part will permit Mr. Doe to walk again with straight shoulders—straighter than he has carried them since he solemnly affixed his signature to a piece of paper ". . . in order to establish a more perfect union . . ."

After you have completed the task, may I borrow your broom? It is possible that Conscience has misplaced mine . . .