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This Day And Time

By W. N. F.

Mr. Ickes' Letter

ONE OF THE more amusing interludes of recent weeks was supplied by Secretary Ickes in a letter to Amon Carter, Fort Worth publisher. It goes a long way toward furnishing an insight into the character of Harold the Ick, as he has been named by correspondents who have felt the sting of his virulent pen.

One part of Mr. Ickes' letter with which this column would like to take issue is found in the fourth paragraph of his "personal" letter to the Fort Worth publisher, under date of April 18, 1940. There, the Secretary says: "I have visited your State on several occasions and on no one of them have I made a political speech or talked politics privately. I have gone to Texas bearing gifts—rich gifts—not a few of them eloquently solicited by the Great Editor of Fort Worth—and you never thought of calling me a carpet-bagger."

A revealing statement, that, when it is considered that the rich gifts mentioned were grants from the Public Works Administration—a public agency, financed by taxpayers' money. Since when did PWA grants become "gifts" from a generous Secretary of the Interior? And if gifts they be, what did Harold the Ick mean by proffering them to Fort Worth? Was he trying to court favor with the Great Editor?

But that is not all. Consider the Ickes statement concerning the East Texas oil field incident. The Secretary says that "No more than I was a "carpetbagger," when I was helping distribute generous chunks of federal money, was I an oil dictator in 1933, when you great, strong, he-men wrung your hands while the price went down to 10 cents a barrel in the East Texas field. I was a fine fellow when I went into Texas, with the backing and the helping of the President, to pull you sturdy individualists out of the slough of despond that you yourselves had created."

Since when, might Texas ask, did it get to be such a favor of great magnitude for an agency of the federal government to assist a state in one of its problems? After all, is not Texas one of the 48 states, too? Then why is the Secretary now crowing about helping Texas, and in so doing finding himself in the position of deserving credit for nothing more sensational than carrying out the duties and obligations of the department of which he was the head? Is there anything so marvelous in that?

No, there is nothing marvelous about it. Fact is, Mr. Ickes was taken to task by the Fort Worth publisher for coming to Texas to tell Texans how to vote (so Mr. Carter thought) and during the course of Mr. Carter's denunciation of Mr. Ickes the term "carpetbagger" was used. This designation, which he immediately applied to himself (and which Mr. Carter said was not used directly in referring to him) seems particularly galling to the Secretary. Hence all the word battle.

But Mr. Ickes, has not always been a loyal Democrat and today is regarded as nothing more than a New Dealer, in some circles. For one "whose party record is of such late beginning," as Mr. Carter put it, Harold the Ick gets mighty hot under the collar when he is taken to task by a Democrat. Maybe the role of chameleon is increasing his blood pressure; perhaps he is wondering what his color will be after the next election—Democrat, New Deal, or back to his first love—Republican.

Whatever it is, if he continues in high office, it is assumed Texas must continue to witness the spectacle of a public official doing his duty—and bragging about it—while making "gifts" of public funds, for which he takes full credit. Texas doesn't care much for this sort of four-flushing.