

# THE TWENTIES

## IN Chicago Daily Tribune POLITICAL CARTOONS

Founded in 1847, the *Chicago Tribune* is one of the oldest American newspapers in circulation. In the 1920s its Republican editorial stand mirrored mainstream American political opinion.

Twenty-four political cartoons from the *Tribune* are presented here—two per year from 1918 to 1929—created by the longtime *Tribune* cartoonists John McCutcheon and Carey Orr, whose instantly recognizable work was widely reprinted throughout the country.

To analyze a political cartoon, consider its:

- ❑ **CONTENT.** First, basically describe what is drawn in the cartoon (without referring to the labels). What is depicted? What is happening?
- ❑ **CONTEXT.** Consider the timing. What is happening in national events at the time of the cartoon? Check the date: what occurred in the days and weeks before the cartoon appeared?
- ❑ **LABELS.** Read each label; look for labels that are not apparent at first, and for other written content in the cartoon.
- ❑ **SYMBOLS.** Name the symbols in the cartoons. What do they mean? How do they convey the cartoon's meaning?
- ❑ **TITLE.** Study the title. Is it a statement, question, exclamation? Does it employ a well-known phrase, e.g., slang, song lyric, movie title, radio show, political or product slogan? How does it encapsulate and enhance the cartoonist's point?
- ❑ **TONE.** Identify the tone of the cartoon. Is it satirical, comic, tragic, ironic, condemning, quizzical, imploring? What adjective describes the feeling of the cartoon? How do the visual elements in the drawing align with its tone?
- ❑ **POINT.** Put it all together. What is the cartoonist's point?

### QUESTIONS

- ❑ How did the *Tribune* cartoons reflect the mainstream Republican stand of the 1920s?
- ❑ Which cartoon would you select as the most successful in delivering its point? Why?



"A Little Premature, But—They're Just Tuning Up"  
*Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 8, 1918



"When the Historians Meet to Name the Dying Decade"  
*Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 29, 1929



## **“A Little Premature, But—They’re Just Tuning Up”**

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 8, 1918

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

Three days before the armistice was signed ending World War One, a rumor of war's end spread across the country and led to all-out street celebrations. *The Chicago Tribune* reported, “It began with a rumor and ended in the most madly riotous scene that Chicago has ever witnessed. ‘The war’s over!’ ‘The kaiser’s licked!’ . . . Telephone messages carried the news like lightning to all parts of the city. Factory whistles loosed shriek on shriek. The clangor of street car gongs became continuous as motormen heard the rumor. . . . ‘The war’s over!’ ‘The kaiser’s licked!’”

“Wild Crowds Howl Kaiser’s Dirge in [Downtown] Loop / Whole City Goes Mad; Courts, Offices Closed,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Nov. 8, 1918

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### **"Interrupting the Ceremony"**

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 27, 1918

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

Peace proceedings. League of Nations. Foreign entanglements. U.S. Senate. Constitutional rights.

In December 1918, soon after the end of World War One, Pres. Woodrow Wilson sailed to France to participate in the Versailles peace conference, while fervent opposition to his proposal for a League of Nations coalesced in the U.S. Senate.

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## “UNANIMOUS”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, February 18, 1919

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

Bolshevik agitator. Life of Trotsky. I.W.W. Labor. Farmer. Press. Legislator. Public. Capital [business/industry].

*I.W.W.*: International Workers of the World.

*Leon Trotsky*: a Bolshevik leader of the 1917 Russian Revolution.

In February 1919, fear of Communist/Bolshevik agitation in the U.S. was heightened by the nationally covered Seattle general strike, the Senate Overman Committee investigation into Bolshevik activity in the U.S., and daily coverage of the brutal civil war in Bolshevik Russia and of Communist uprisings in other European nations.

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## “The Missionary’s Sons”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 30, 1919

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

I.W.W.: International Workers of the World

East St. Louis riots: May/July 1917

Chicago riots: July/August 1919

Washington, DC, riot: July 1919

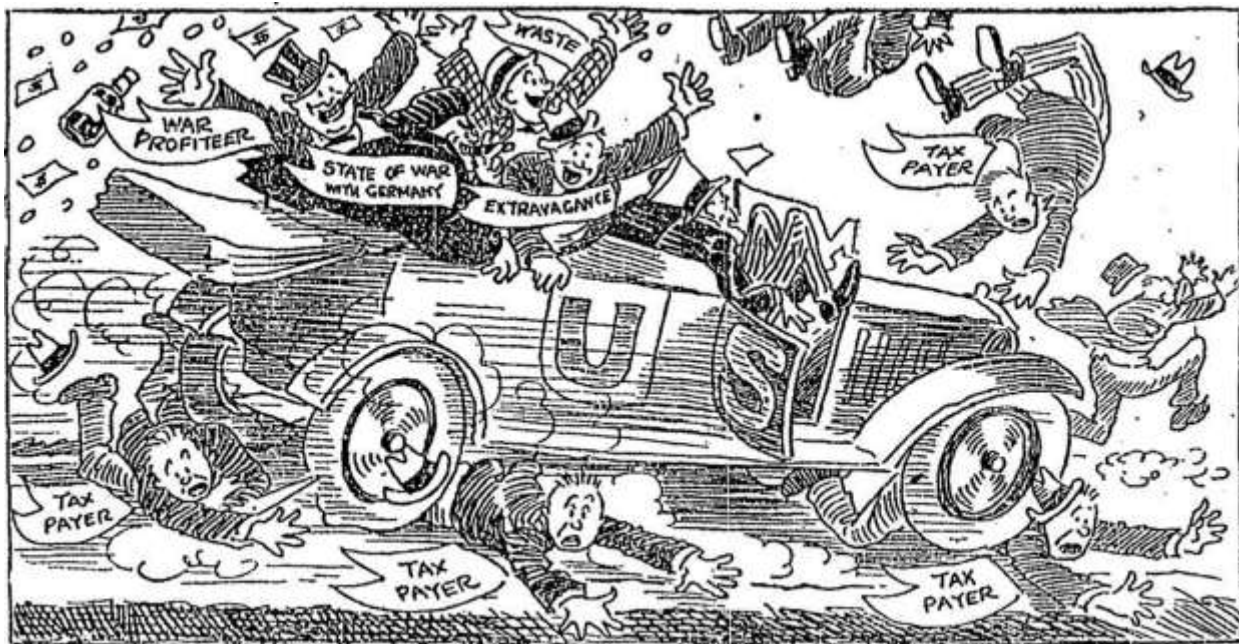
Boston police strike: Sept. 1919

Omaha lawlessness: Sept. 1919

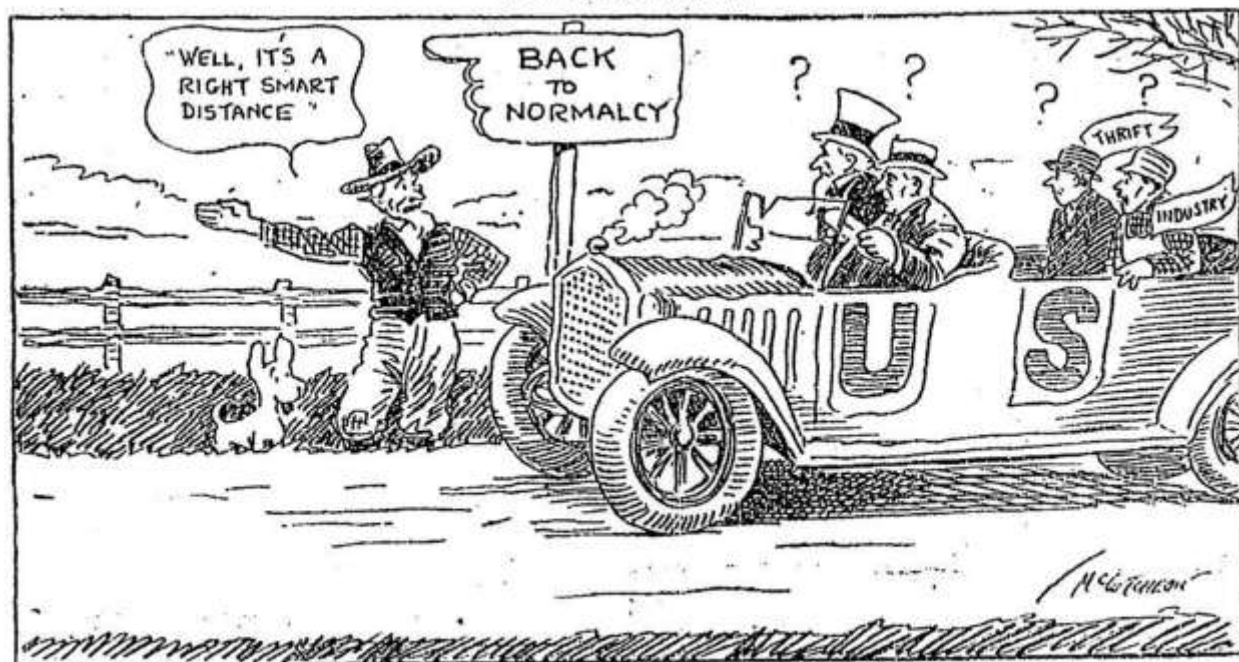
Uncle Sam’s “missionary with a mandate”: Wilson’s Fourteen Points and proposal for a League of Nations.

Figures on the European continent represent the outburst of postwar violence and uprisings in 1919 (specifically the Russian Civil War, the Greco-Turkish War, and the Barcelona, Spain, General Strike).

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OUTWARD BOUND.



HOMEWARD BOUND.

## "On the Road to Normalcy"

Chicago Daily Tribune, November 6, 1920

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

Outward Bound: Tax payer. War profiteer. State of war with Germany. Waste. Extravagance.  
 Homeward Bound: Thrift. Industry.

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*The average imperfect mortal doesn't like the extreme in that direction—*



*And he doesn't like the extreme in the other direction—*



*But he does kind o' like the No Man's Land midway between.*

## **"The Two Extremes"**

*Chicago Daily Tribune, December 12, 1920*

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

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## **“The Tariff and Immigration Questions”**

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 1, 1921

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

U.S. Household. Capital. Labor. Cheap foreign labor. Cheap foreign goods.

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One hundred years ago the population of the U. S. was two-thirds farming and one-third city population. Today the city population is greatly in excess of the country population.

## “City and Country Population”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, August 29, 1921

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

The 1920 census revealed that, for the first time in U.S history, more people lived in urban than in rural areas (51.2% / 48.8%).

+W. J. Bryan: William Jennings Bryan, “Cross of Gold” speech, July 1896: “You come to us and tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms, and your cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.”

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### **"Misplaced Economy"**

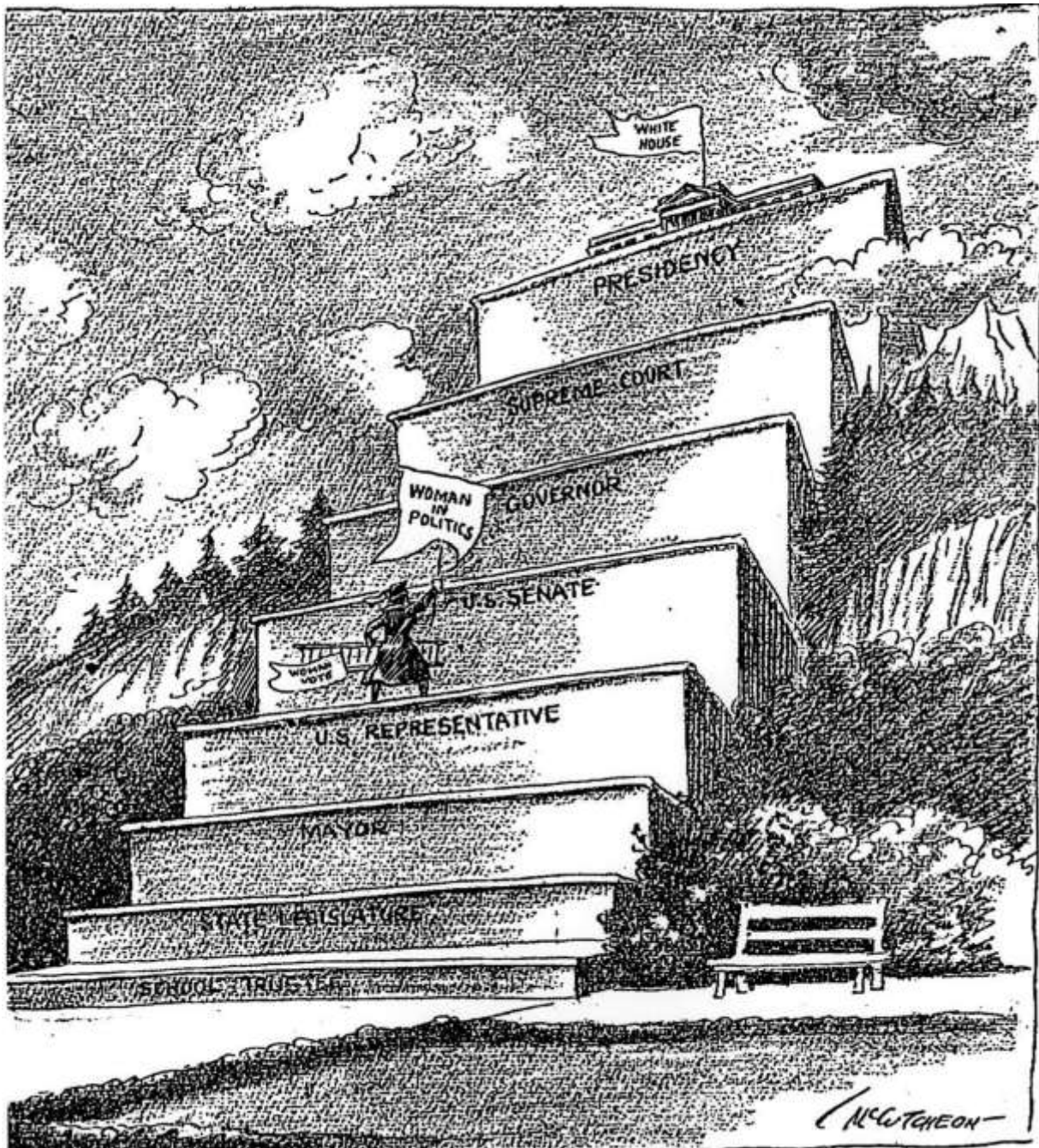
*Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 25, 1922

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

Although the U.S. avoided "foreign entanglements" during the isolationist 1920s, issues of foreign policy and defense preparedness never left the front pages of American newspapers. One contentious issue in 1922 was funding for military aviation.

On April 19, 1925, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a naval appropriations bill that reduced aviation research funding from \$4.2 million to \$2 million a year. One day before this cartoon appeared, the *Tribune* reported that "Japan is conducting an unprecedented campaign of aircraft building, research, and training. . . . Our committee would spend \$2,000,000 in one year while Japan is spending \$30,000,000 annually." In June the Senate voted to restore the funding.

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## “How High Will She Go?”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 29, 1922

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

Step labels: School trustee. State legislature. Mayor. U.S. Representative. U.S. Senate. Governor. Supreme Court. Presidency.

*Woman vote*: 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, ratified 1920.

*Woman in politics*: In 1917 the first woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives took office (Jeanette Rankin, Montana). In 1922 there were three women in the House: one elected, and two appointed to fill the seats of their deceased husbands. In 1932 the first woman was elected to the U.S. Senate.

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## “A Counter Explosion”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 5, 1923

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

Communism. Red. Radical agitators. Radical program. *Pink theories*: Communist theories.

*Brookhart*: Smith Wildman Brookhart, U.S. Senator from Iowa whose Progressive stand for farmers' aid and railroad regulation antagonized his fellow Republicans, earning him such labels as “agrarian radical” and “renegade Republican.”

*Lafollettism*: Support for the Progressive policies of Wisconsin Senator Robert M. La Follette.

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**“The South Will Soon Be Demanding  
Restriction of Migration of Its Labor”**

*Chicago Daily Tribune, May 10, 1923*

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

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Life is just a joyous song through the happy land. Jazz and ginger everywhere—gosh! hain't it grand?



Mother's at the beauty parlor  
Running up a bill—



Father's in the cellar  
Working at the still.



Sister's at a picture show;  
Hopes to be a star—



Brother's slightly jingled  
In his racing car.



Uncle's learning dance  
steps  
At the cabaret—



Cousin's at a petting party  
Hic! Hic! Hooray!



Auntie's in the runabout,  
Stepping on the gas—



Granny's at the phono-  
graph,  
Cranking out the jazz.



Gran'pa's at the radio  
Cussing out the static—



Sonny's at the roadhouse  
With his automatic.



Daughter's at the court-  
house,  
Getting her decree—  
Hopes to have another try  
Soon as she is free.



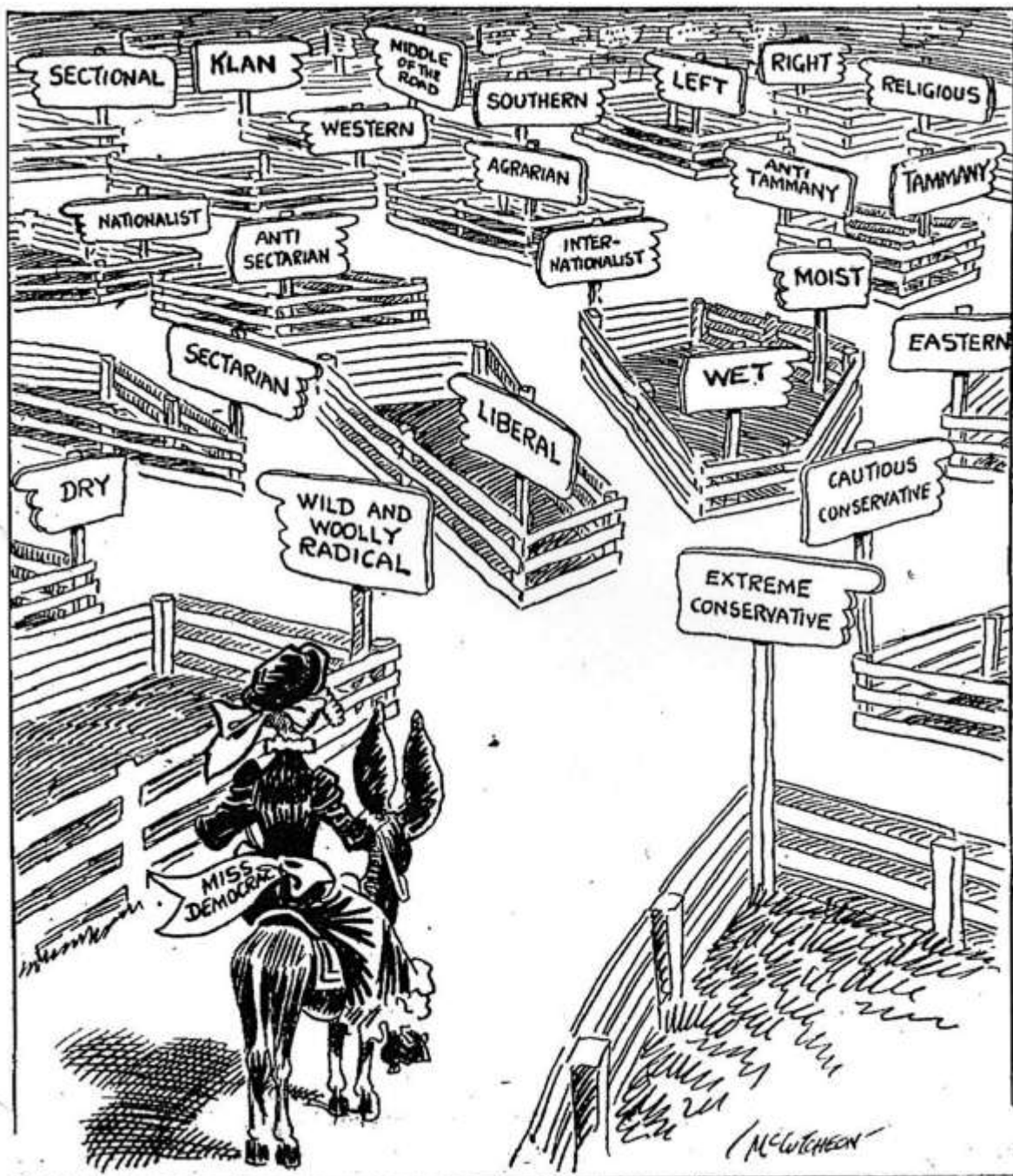
Baby, in the bathroom,  
Eats a poison pill.  
Buddy's drinking bootleg  
Guaranteed to kill.

## "The Happy Family"

Chicago Daily Tribune, April 13, 1924

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

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### “As She Looks for Her Standard Bearer”

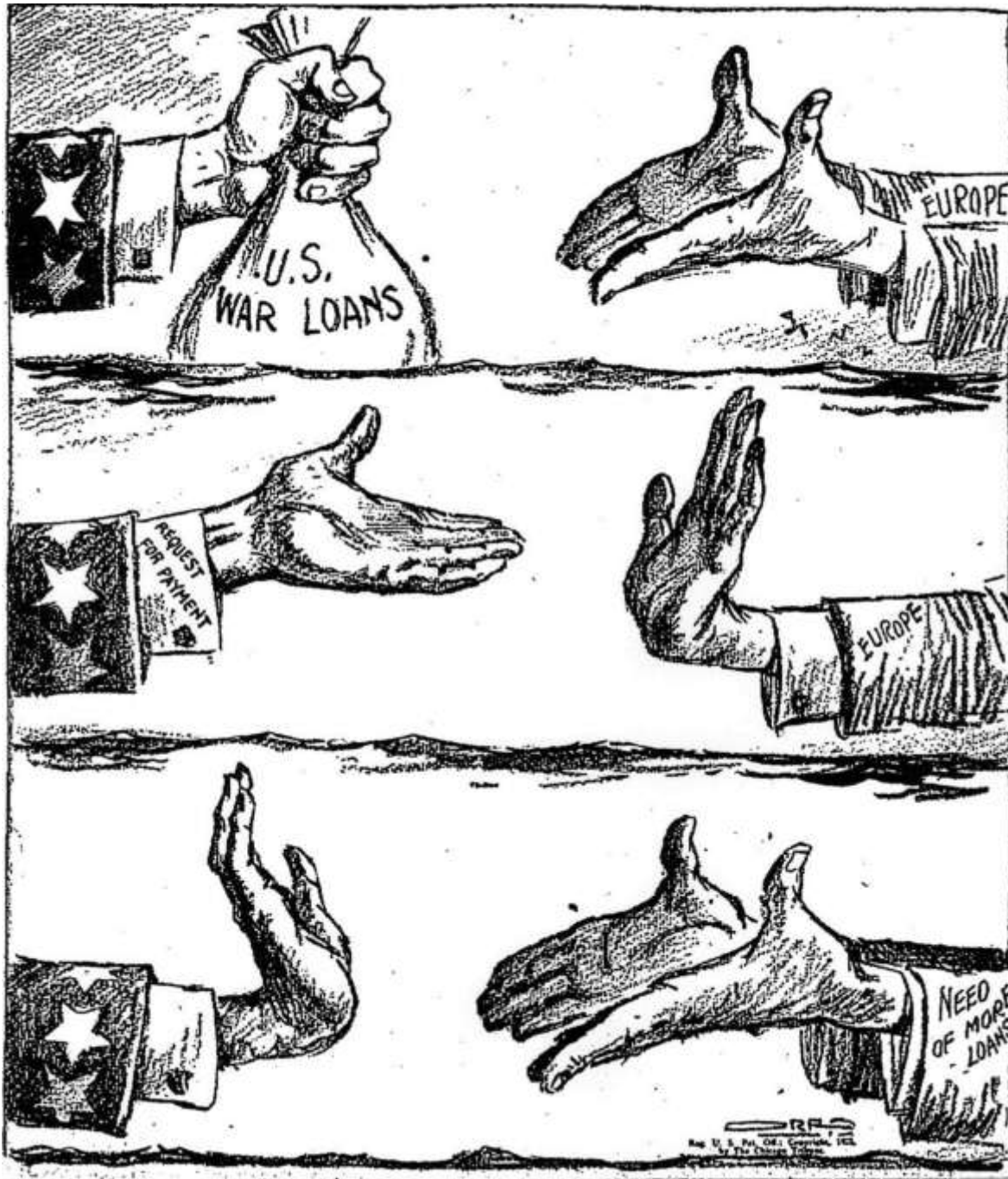
*Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 2, 1924

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

*Miss Democracy*: Democratic Party (symbol: donkey).

Divided among disparate and often bitterly competing factions—including the Ku Klux Klan—the Democratic Party opened its 1924 convention in New York City on June 24. It required 103 ballots over sixteen days to nominate John W. Davis as the party's presidential candidate.

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## “Hands Across the Sea”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1925

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

The U.S. loaned billions of dollars to its European allies during and after World War One, but the war-ravaged nations could not repay the loans and hoped the U.S. would cancel them as a shared war loss. To many Americans, its allies were ungrateful and demanding; to many Europeans, the U.S. was unrealistic and uncompassionate. Although the U.S. renegotiated the payment plans in 1922, the debts were not repaid; with the Great Depression the issue was laid to rest.

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### "The Unhappy Couple"

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, September 21, 1925

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

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## “Bullet Proof”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 29, 1926

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

The law. Justice. Organized crime. Bootleg profits. Gang rule. Pardon. Bond money. Money to bribe politicians. Money to bribe jurors. Money to beat the law. Money to hire “best” lawyers. “Organized crime” is depicted as an armored, hooded executioner with a bloody axe, wearing money bags.

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### “The Rival Santas: Striving to Please the Voter”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 12, 1926

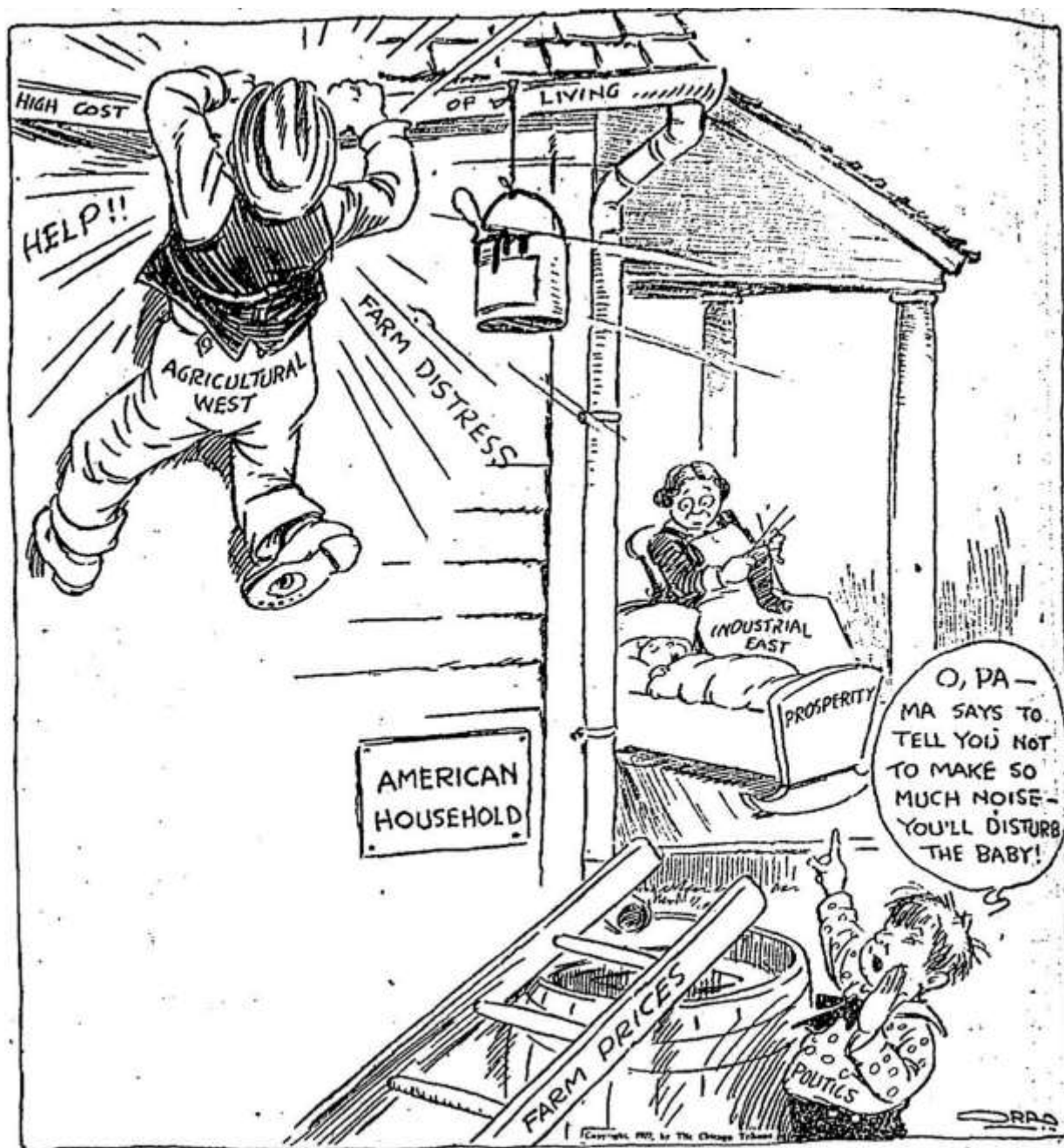
Cartoonist: Carey Orr

Republican Party (elephant; G.O.P.--“Grand Old Party”)—nationalism, Coolidge economy, farm relief, high tariff.

Democratic Party (donkey)—internationalism, tax reduction, farm relief, lower tariff.

1928: presidential election year.

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## “The Farmer’s Predicament”

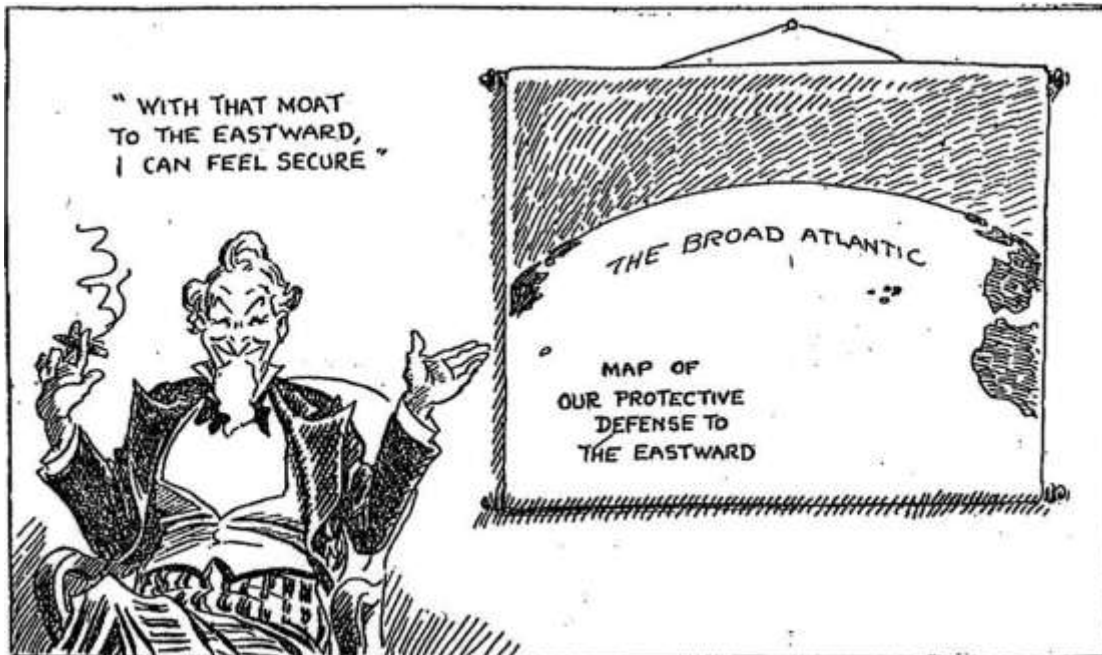
*Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 15, 1927

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

Agricultural West. Farm distress. High cost of living. American household.  
Farm prices. Politics. Industrial East. Prosperity.

In April 1927 a joint report of the National Industrial Conference Board and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce recommended measures to provide relief for American farmers who continued to struggle through an intransigent postwar agricultural depression while the nation’s business and industrial sectors expanded at a seemingly unstoppable rate.

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Map of the broad Atlantic moat before the flights.



Map of the Atlantic moat after the flights.

## "What the Lindbergh and Chamberlin Flights Have Done"

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 7, 1927

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

*Lindbergh flight*: first solo trans-Atlantic flight completed on May 21, 1927, by Charles Lindbergh (New York to Paris).

*Chamberlin-Levine flight*: nonstop distance flight record set on June 6, 1927, by Clarence Chamberlin and Charles Levine (trans-Atlantic: Long Island, New York, to Eisleben, Germany).

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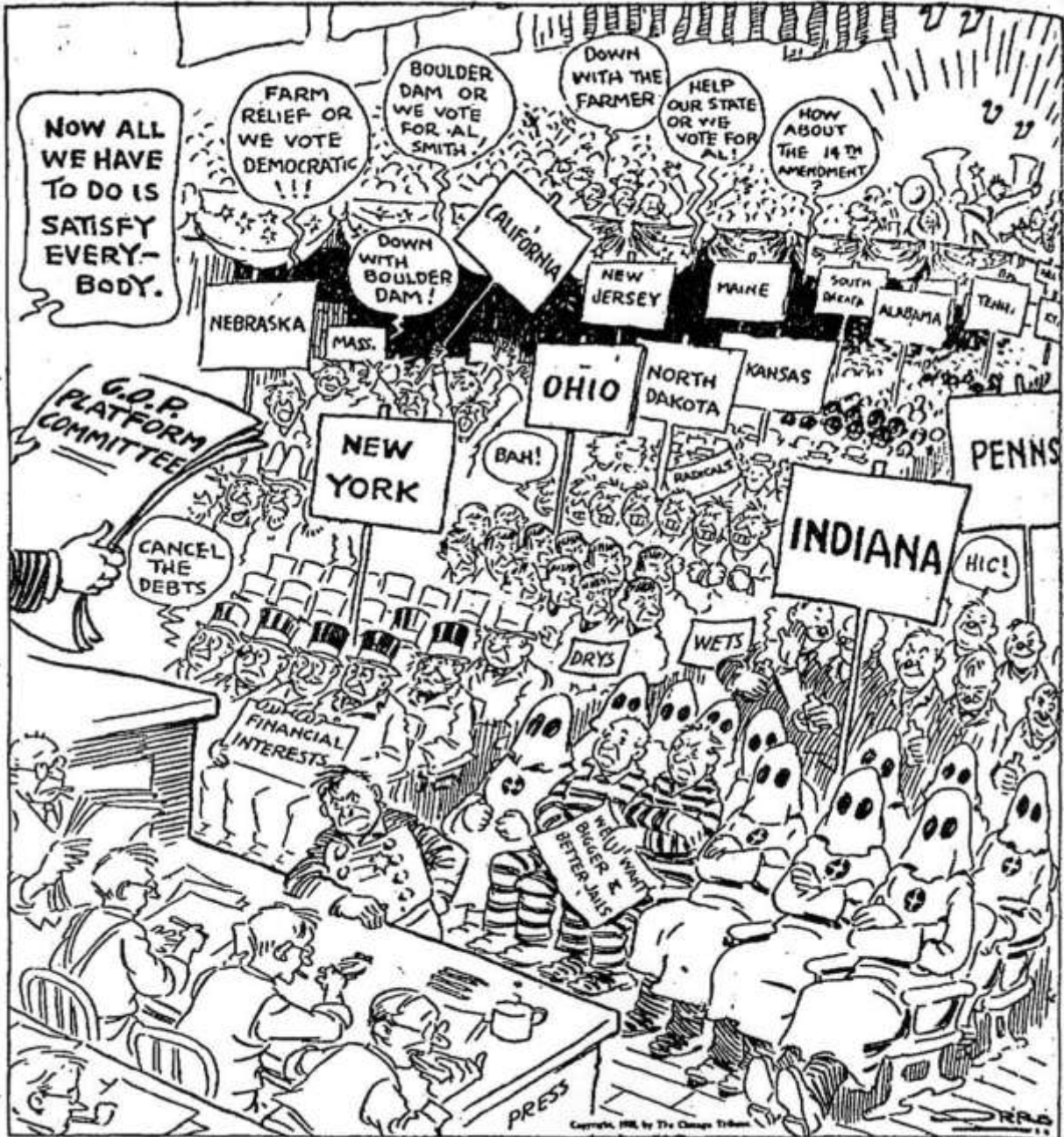


**“Still Suffering from the Same Old Nightmare”**

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 11, 1928

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

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## “The G. O. P. Convention”

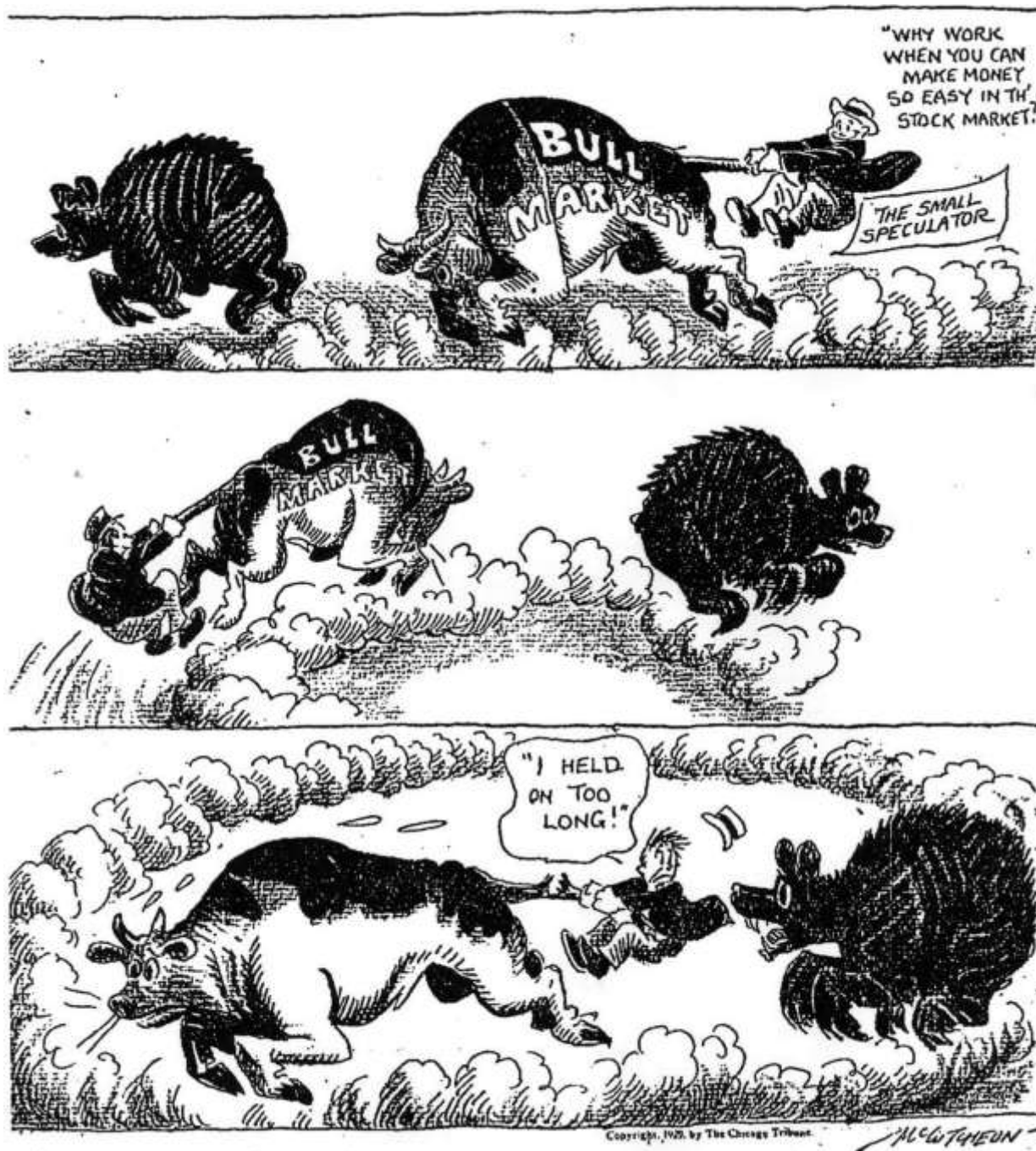
*Chicago Daily Tribune*, June 13, 1928

Cartoonist: Carey Orr

G.O.P.: Republican Party (“Grand Old Party”).

Although its political clout was greatly diminished by 1928, the Ku Klux Klan campaigned feverishly to oppose the presidential candidacy of Al Smith, the Catholic New York governor (nominated two weeks later at the Democratic convention). The Indiana Ku Klux Klan dominated Republican politics in the state, and its delegates fought for the vice-presidential nomination of Indiana Senator and Klan sympathizer James E. Watson. (Charles Curtis of Kansas won the nomination.)

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### “Taken for a Ride”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 25, 1929

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

*Bull market*: market in which stock prices **rise** over a period.

*Bear market*: market in which stock prices **fall** over a period.

On October 29, 1929, four days after this cartoon appeared, the stock market “crashed,” financially ruining many small speculators.

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## “When the Historians Meet to Name the Dying Decade”

*Chicago Daily Tribune*, December 29, 1929

Cartoonist: John T. McCutcheon

The Corridors of Time: 1880-1890: The Terrible Eighties. 1890-1900: The Gay Nineties. 1900-1910: The Roosevelt Decade. 1910-1920: The Tragic Decade. 1920-1930: The

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