

THE TWENTIES IN POLITICAL CARTOONS

Twelve political cartoons examining facets of economic prosperity in the 1920s appear on the following pages. From four general circulation (white-owned) newspapers and one black-owned newspaper, they span the years 1919, when the nation was mired in postwar recession and unrest, to 1928, when unparalleled prosperity seemed in the grasp of anyone with capital, energy, and gumption.

PROSPERITY

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 does the object labeled "prosperity" (in all but three of the cartoons) impact the cartoon's point?
- ❑ How did white and black cartoonists address the unequal distribution of American prosperity in the 1920s?



"Sound as a Dollar"
Los Angeles Times, October 20, 1927



"Getting Ahead of the Band Wagon"
Los Angeles Times, November 24, 1928



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“Careful!”

Los Angeles Times, August 19, 1919

Cartoonist: Edmund Gale



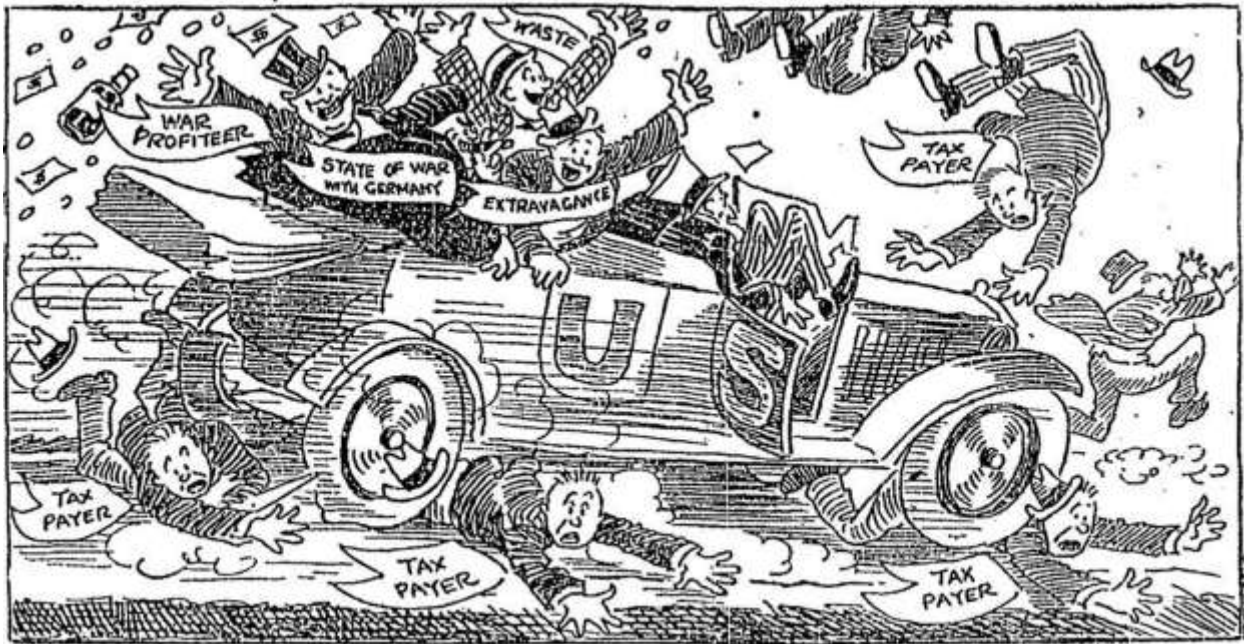
Reproduced by permission of the Jay N. "Ding" Darling Wildlife Society. Digital image courtesy of the University of Iowa Libraries.

“A Simple Remedy for Insomnia for Those Who Lie Awake Worrying About Being Blown Out of Bed”

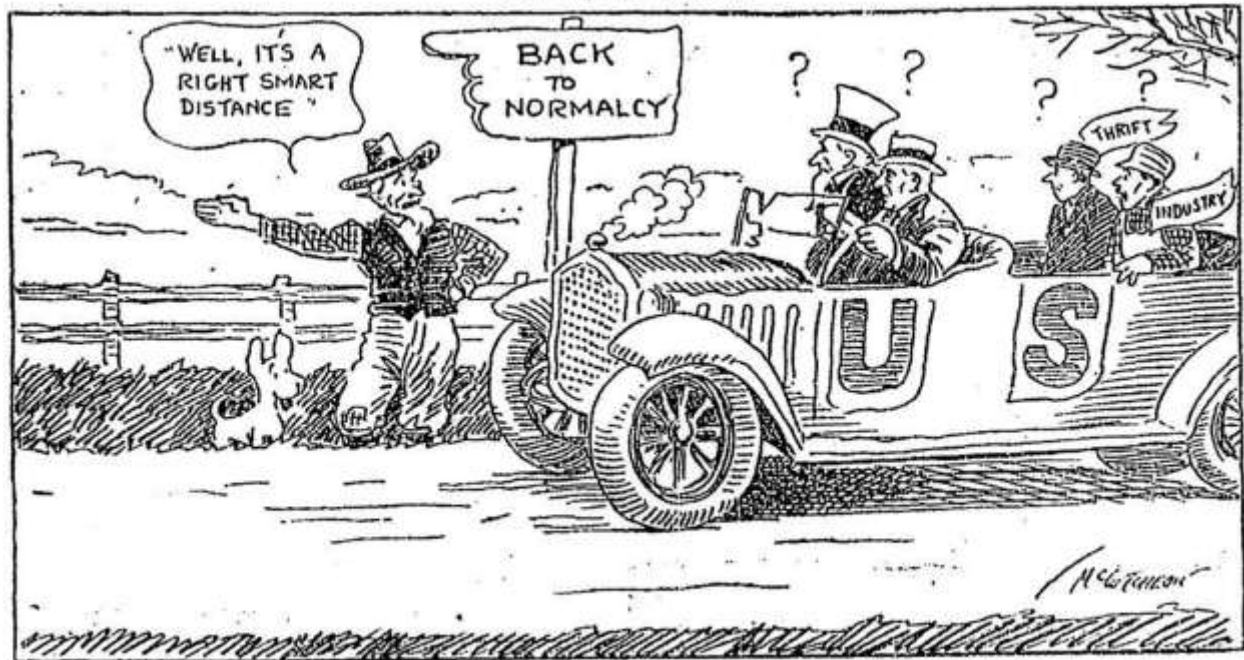
Des Moines Register, November 17, 1919

Cartoonist: Jay N. "Ding" Darling

Industrial Magnates. U.S. INDUSTRIAL PROSPERITY. Don't blow the safe / Here is the combination —
 D-I-V-I-S-I-O-N-O-F-P-R-O-F-I-T-S. Some of the cake. Some of the comforts. A dram of the [—]



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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“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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Reproduced by permission of the New Pittsburgh Courier. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

“It’s Hard to Fool Those Backstage”

The Pittsburgh Courier, June 13, 1925
 African American newspaper. Cartoonist: Wilbert Holloway.

Prosperity. “Todoot.” Labor. Full dinner pail. Needy families. Empty. On part time. Factories.
 Uncle Sam (with question mark). Cal (Pres. Calvin Coolidge). The American press.



"Watch Your Step!"

Los Angeles Times, November 14, 1925

Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

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“Hot Dog”

Los Angeles Times, July 25, 1926

Cartoonist: Morris [George Matthew Adams Newspaper Service]

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Copyright holder of Sykes cartoons unidentified; search in process. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

“Prosperity! Blah!!”

Public Ledger, Philadelphia [n.d.]
as reprinted in the *Los Angeles Times*, Sept. 14, 1926
Cartoonist: Charles Henry “Bill” Sykes

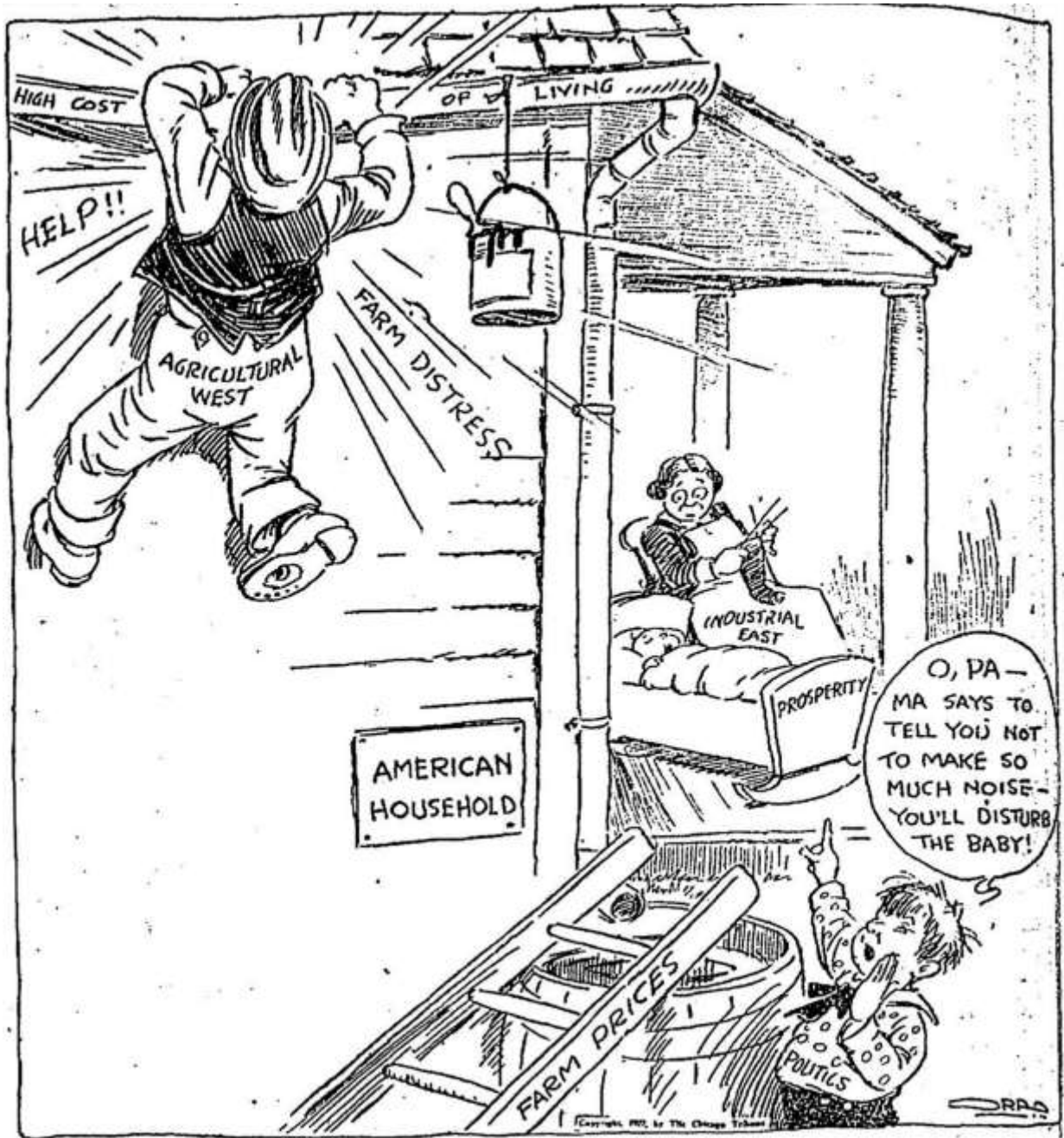


Copyright holder of Adams Newspaper Service content unidentified; search in process. Digital image courtesy of ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

"Neglecting the Other Child"

Los Angeles Times, October 11, 1926

Cartoonist: Morris [George Matthew Adams Newspaper Service]



“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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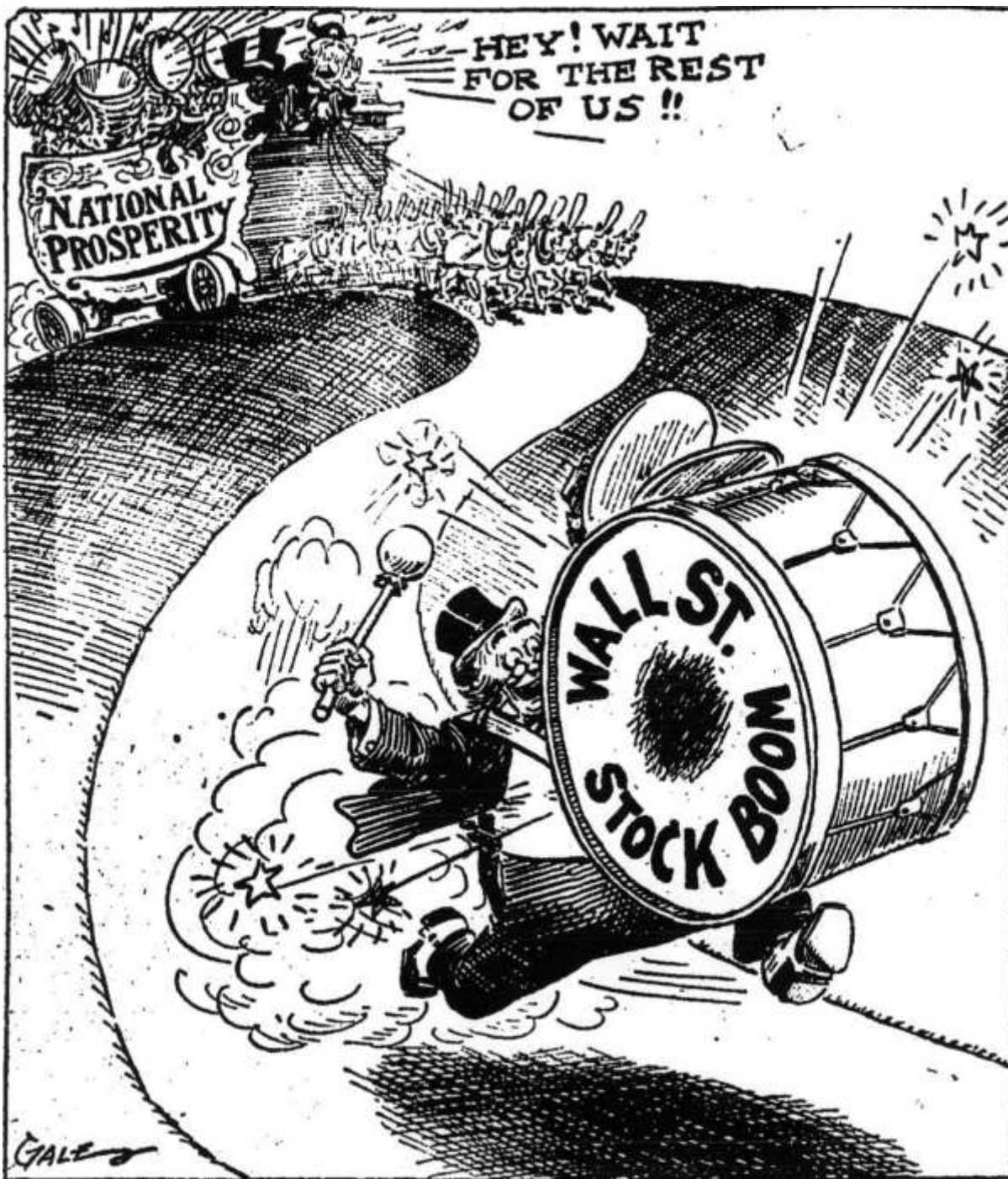
“Sound as a Dollar”

Los Angeles Times, October 20, 1927

Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

Regular surveys of business “health” were conducted by the U.S. Dept. of Commerce under Secretary Herbert Hoover.

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“Getting Ahead of the Band Wagon!”

Los Angeles Times, November 24, 1928

Cartoonist: Edmund Gale

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