

What is a Liberal?

At a time when the words "liberal" and "conservative," to say nothing of "Fascist" and "Communist," are being bandied about, a self-styled liberal Republican set himself to definitions.

Speaking before a Commencement Day audience at Syracuse University, Sen. Joseph H. Ball (R.-Minn.) said:

"The conservative is merely one who says let's go slow about destroying or changing our present institutions. The opposite of a conservative is a radical, who is always ready to try almost any experiment. Both conservatives and radicals may be liberal in their basic philosophy or they may be the opposite of liberal, which is authoritarian.

"It is my conviction that to be a political liberal, one must be devoted to liberty. I mean liberty . . . for all individuals as individuals.

"A political liberal in my dictionary has two primary objectives. One is to assure the greatest degree of economic and political freedom for all individuals consistent with enjoyment of the same degree of freedom by all other individuals. The second objective is equality for all individuals. I do not mean absolute equality, which is impossible among human beings and could be achieved only if we turned into robots, but equality of opportunity and equality before the law for all individuals. . . .

Uncommon Man. "You will never find a liberal, according to my definition, talking about the "masses" or "the common man" or even "the average man." To my kind of liberal every individual is very

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uncommon. . . .

“The authoritarian in politics is the one who believes that a particular group, whether it be in government, in labor or in business, has a special mission to plan the whole pattern of society and to require all individuals, whether they like it or not, to fit into the pattern. They may be well-meaning people who want nothing more than to do good for everybody. Or they may be individuals who want power simply because they love the exercise of power, in which case they are tyrants.”

And, without going into definitions, ex-Secretary (now columnist) Harold Ickes said “Amen” to indiscriminate use of terms, particularly the term “Communist.” Asking that the same standards of decency which operate to protect American women be adopted by political gossip-mongers, he wrote:

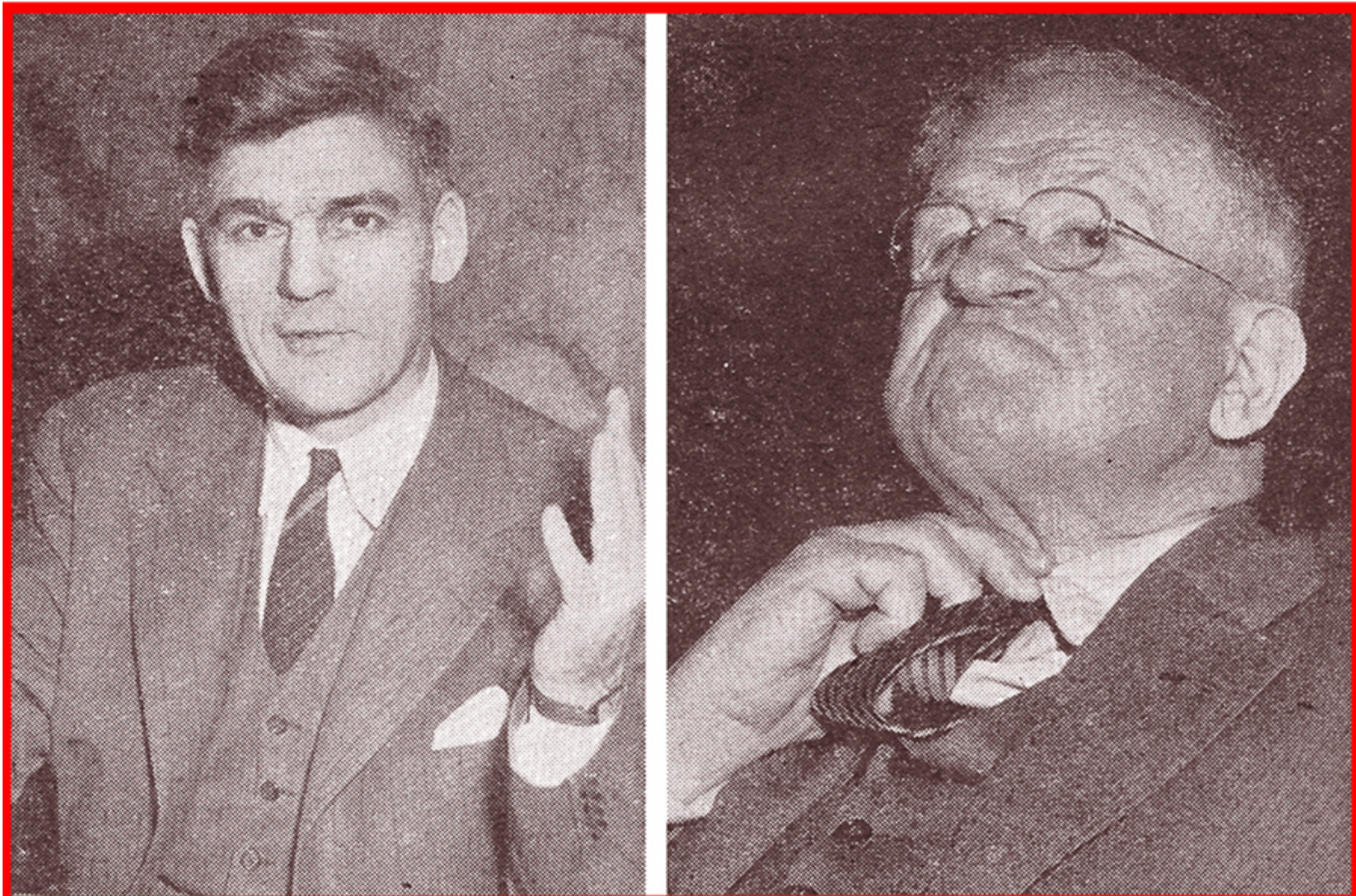
“Obviously . . . it would be too great a strain to ask the political rakes to stop talking about the liberal organizations. It is not, however, too much to suggest that some criteria be set up below which back-fence gossips of any category be not expected to fall.

Little Red Whistle. “I do not believe . . . that an organization professing liberal objectives should be classed as ‘Communist’ just because on some occasion a Communist whistled at it.

“Neither do I believe that a liberal organization ought to be smeared as a ‘red front’ or as a ‘mouthpiece for Moscow’ because the Communists might like to seduce it.”

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PERTURBED. Sen. Ball (left) worried about definitions of words; Columnist Ickes about the use of them.

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