

THE PALIMPSEST

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Of Ding Himself

Jay Norwood Darling, using the name "Ding" and putting a cartoon before the people of Iowa every day—day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year, decade after decade—for a half century, has been called the most influential man in Iowa's history. He began drawing cartoons for Iowans on *The Sioux City Journal* in 1900. In 1906 Ding went to the *Des Moines Register and Leader* and there furnished a daily cartoon until he retired in 1949. He died in 1962.

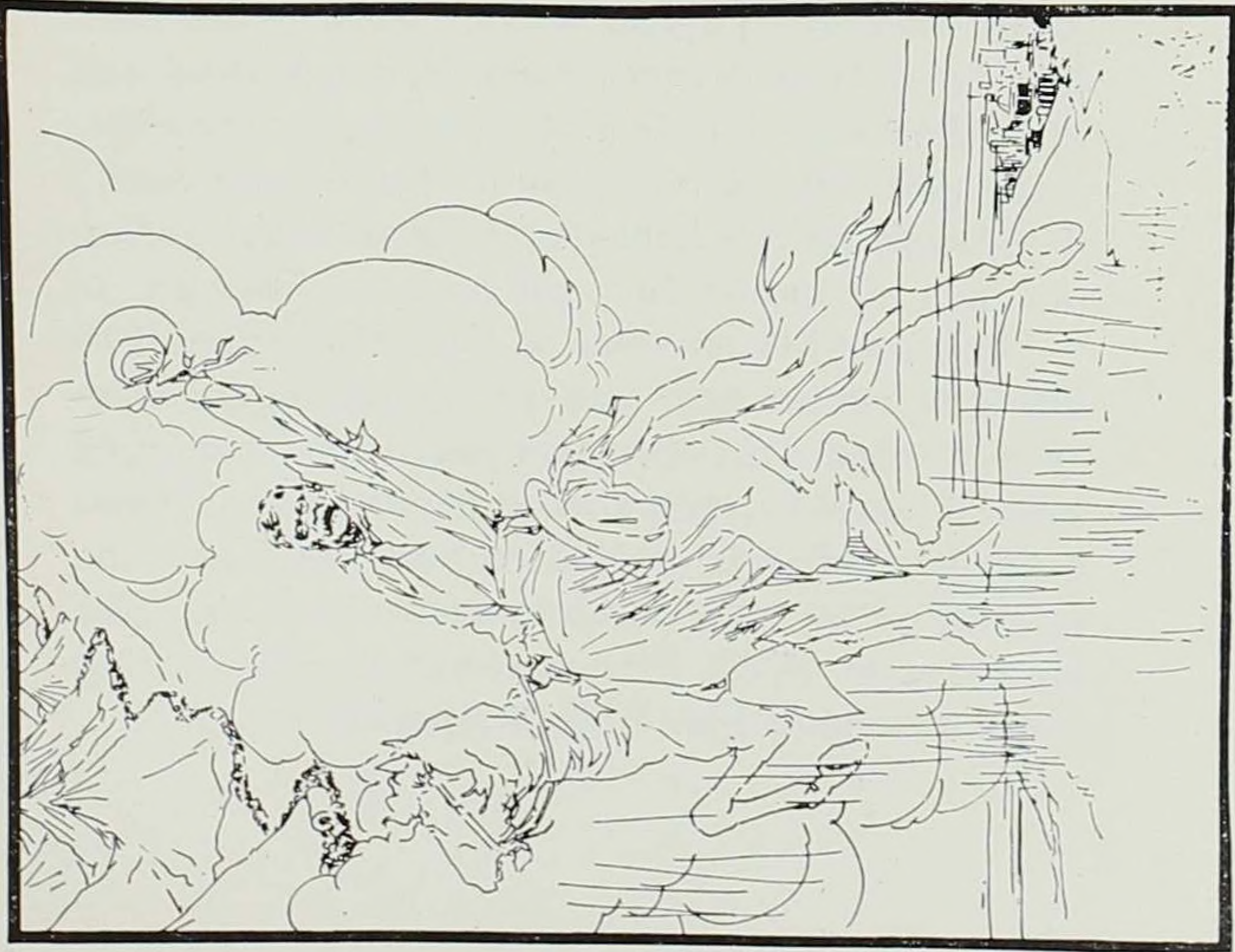
The selection of the cartoons reproduced herein has been made by the writer, a long-time associate of Ding, to whom Ding willed the proofs of his cartoons, and who has edited several books of the cartoons. His big originals, Ding willed to the University of Iowa.

The cartoons in this issue of *The Palimpsest* are classified in what the author believes is an interesting and significant way. One section is "new" in that it dwells on Ding himself, showing cartoons significant to him as an individual. Another details

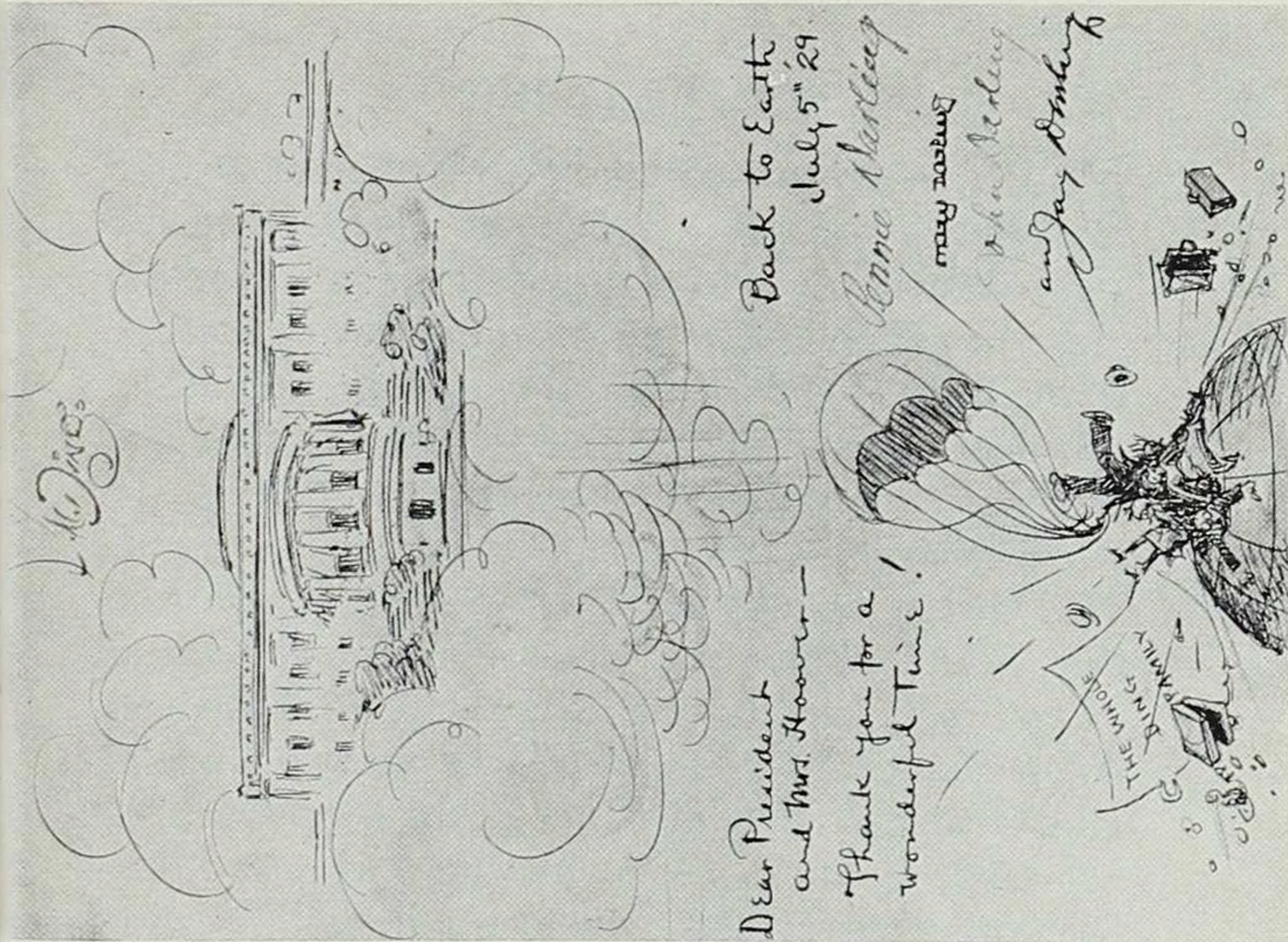
the fascinating little stories that go with the drawings, and that are just as true today as when the cartoons originally appeared. Another section emphasizes what already has been emphasized often—that Ding cartoons, which depicted scenes and episodes dating far into the past, are pertinent today. Still another shows some of the cartoons Ding drew about presidential campaigns—from 1900 to 1952—fourteen of them. And finally, there is a sort of browsing section of cartoons which members of the Ding family and the writer especially liked.

The first two cartoons—one of which has been the most reproduced of any of the more than 20,000 Ding cartoons, the other, a cartoon that has never before been published—are significant of the close friendship of Ding with two presidents of the United States—Theodore Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover.

The cartoon drawn at the death of President Theodore Roosevelt, in 1919, was hurriedly done by Ding when he learned late in the day of his friend's death. [1] He expected to furnish another later in the evening, but this was so instantly popular he drew no other. This cartoon has been reproduced more than any other—on paper, in stone, on metal, wood and concrete. Last year, TR's grandson wrote that every member of the family of the four generations had a copy of it, in some form, and it appears in hundreds of public places.



[1]



Dear President
and Mrs. Hoover—
Thank you for a
wonderful time!

Back to Earth
July 5th '29

Benjamin Franklin

may 20th 1793

and Jay's family

[2]

TR frequently invited Ding to visit him at Oyster Bay. For a while it was thought that the idea for this cartoon came from some of their horseback rides together. But Ding recalled that two years before TR's death, he had drawn one like this on the death of Buffalo Bill, and the idea stayed in the "back of my head apparently."

The cartoon showing the "return to earth" of the Darling family from a visit with the Hoovers in the White House was found among President Hoover's papers at the Presidential Library at West Branch in 1970. [2] Copies of it were made and furnished to Mrs. Darling, in Florida, who has since died; to Mary Darling, who is Mrs. Richard Koss in Des Moines; and to Dr. John Darling in Florida. In July of 1929, a few months after President Hoover's inauguration, the Darling family was invited to the White House, and upon their return this cartoon was sent to the President and Mrs. Hoover as a "thank you note." The family did not immediately recall the drawing, but their signatures brought back the memory.

Ding met Mr. Hoover at Des Moines in 1919 when he went to hear him speak, and to get a closer look at him for cartooning purposes. During the time he was Secretary of Commerce and President, Mr. Hoover, at his request, was sent the original of any cartoon Ding drew about him. The librarians at West Branch found scores of Ding cartoons among Mr. Hoover's papers.

It was not generally known, until the past year, that Mr. Hoover early in his presidency tried to buy the cottage at West Branch in which he was born. Ding acted as Hoover's agent but was unable to make the purchase. Some eight or nine years later Mrs. Hoover and their son, Allan, did buy the cottage and moved it back to its former location. The park development was started by William Anderson, which resulted in the building of the Hoover Presidential Library in the park with the cottage.

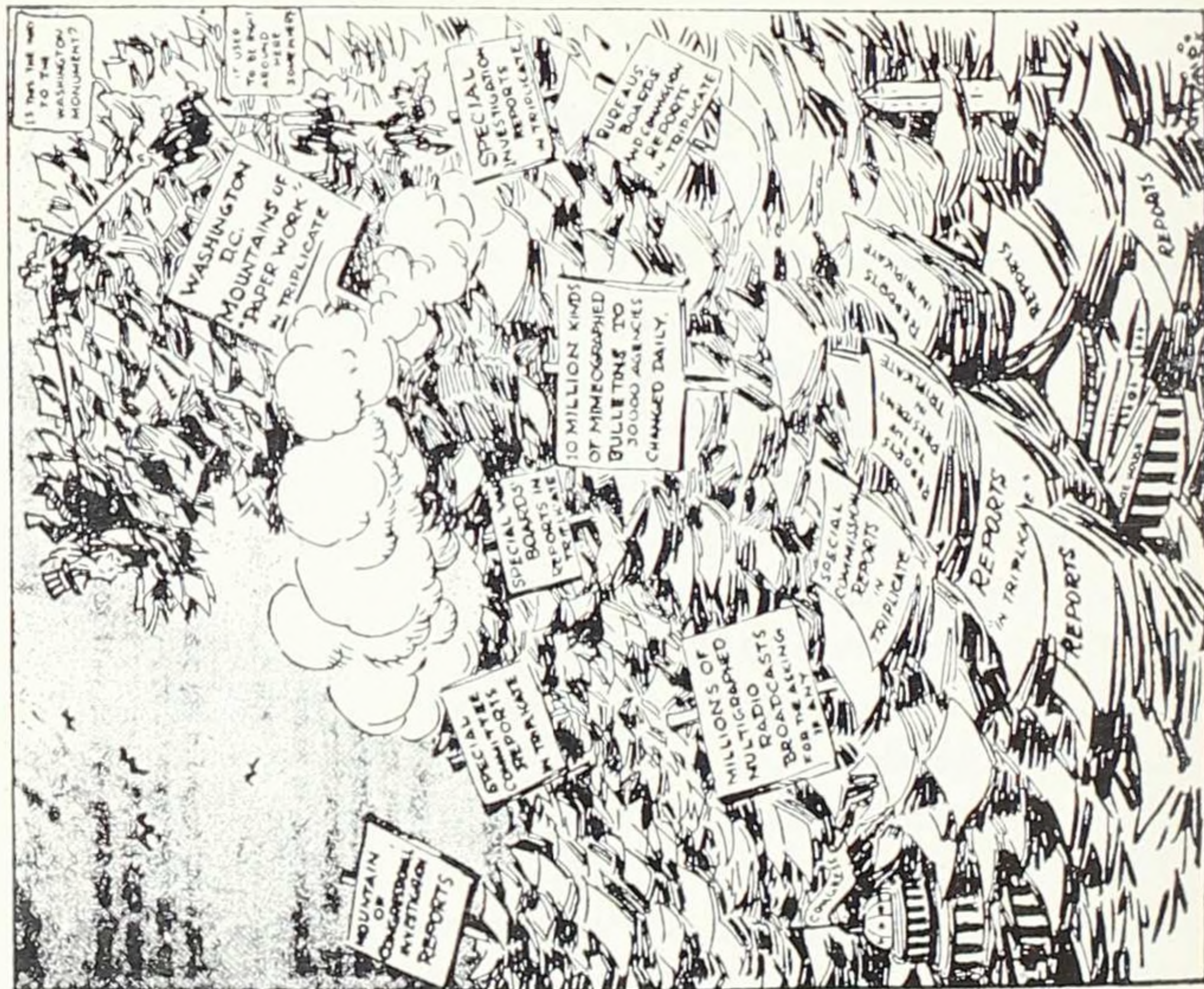
At the giant observance of Herbert Hoover's 90th birthday, at West Branch, in 1964, the State of Iowa presented Hoover with a book containing 100 selected Ding cartoons about Iowa's most distinguished son. The writer who edited the book, now has a leather-bound copy in his home, bearing the autographs of both Mr. Hoover and Ding, with a characteristic misspelling of a word by Ding. Ding often said that a person who could spell a word in only one way didn't have much imagination.

The Pulitzer prize is the highest award given for work in journalism, including cartooning, and Ding received the second granted to anyone—that in 1922. [3] He had drawn many cartoons worthy of consideration for such praise in the years before that, but the prize was not offered until the start of the 1920's.

Ding got his second Pulitzer award in 1943—



What A Waste Paper Campaign



and did not like it. [4] He often said he could not conceive why such a cartoon was given the prize. When a collection of his cartoons was made in 1961 (Ding's Half Century) he asked that it not be included, and it was not. He thought that another cartoon, depicting the effect of the atomic bomb, should have received the prize. [5]

Ding was disappointed that this cartoon was not given the Pulitzer prize. It was drawn immediately after the atomic bomb blasts over Japan. Later, another cartoonist used this idea for a cartoon, and the Pulitzer prize went to him.

Although he was one of the best cartoonists, and very articulate in every way, Ding wrote but twice on how to draw cartoons, and both times after he had retired. One explanation was in a personal letter; the other was a part of a chapter in the book by his friend, Gene Brynes, published in 1952. In it Ding explains how he developed an idea for a cartoon: [6]

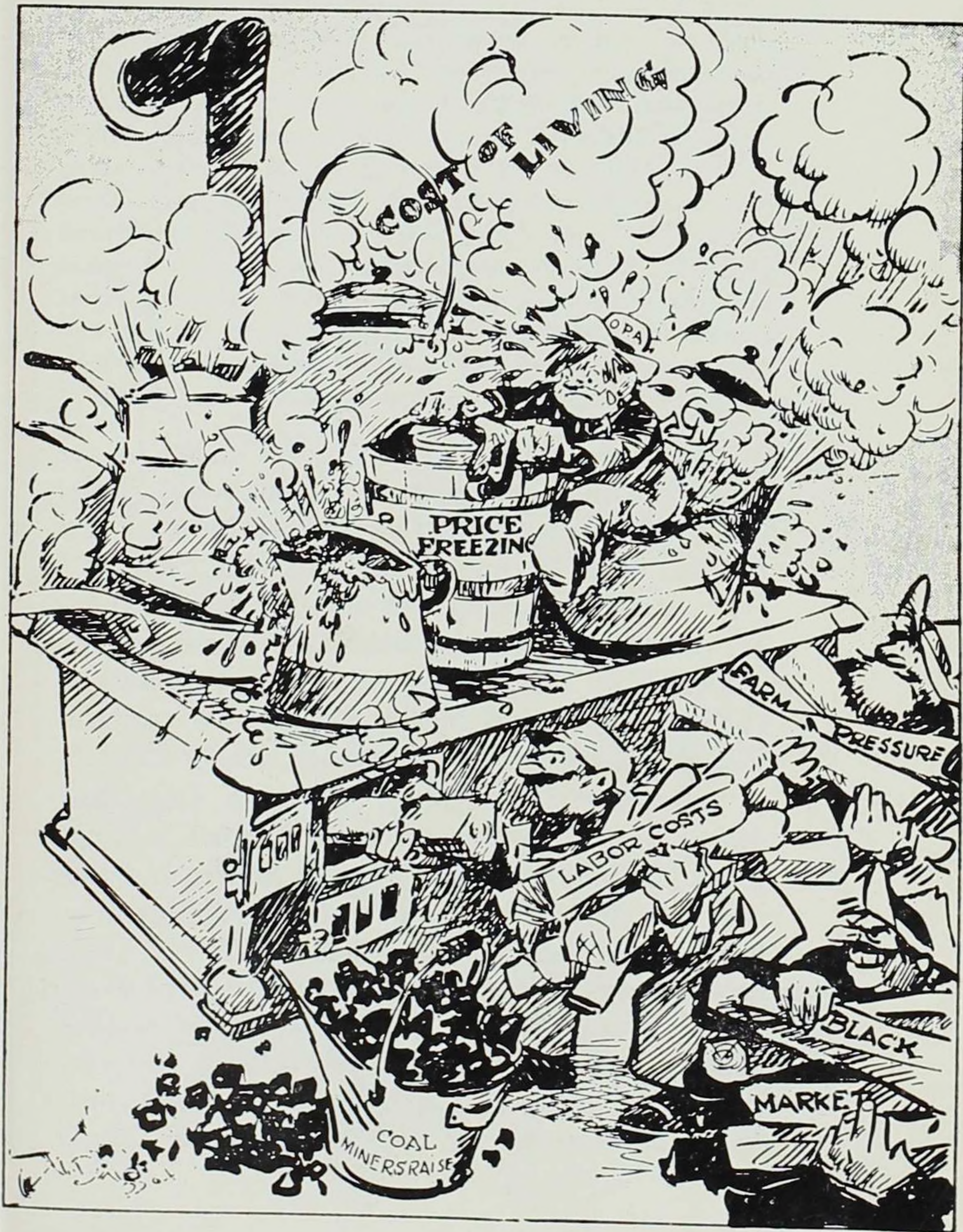
The cartoon started with the idea of freezing prices under difficulties. "Freeze" suggested what most every boy of my generation had experienced, that is—grinding away on an ice-cream freezer that wouldn't freeze. But how was I to explain the other end of the theme; that the people were preventing the freezing? They could be shown building a fire under the freezer. If so, they had to be building the fire for a reasonable purpose and only inadvertently putting the heat on the freezer. Well, where would most people build a fire? Probably in a cookstove to cook some-

Eventually, Why Not Now?

HELLO! HELLO!
IF THERE'S ANYONE LEFT ALIVE
I'D LIKE TO UNITE WITH 'EM
IN A WORLD LEAGUE TO
OUTLAW
WAR



Helping Johnnie With The Ice Cream



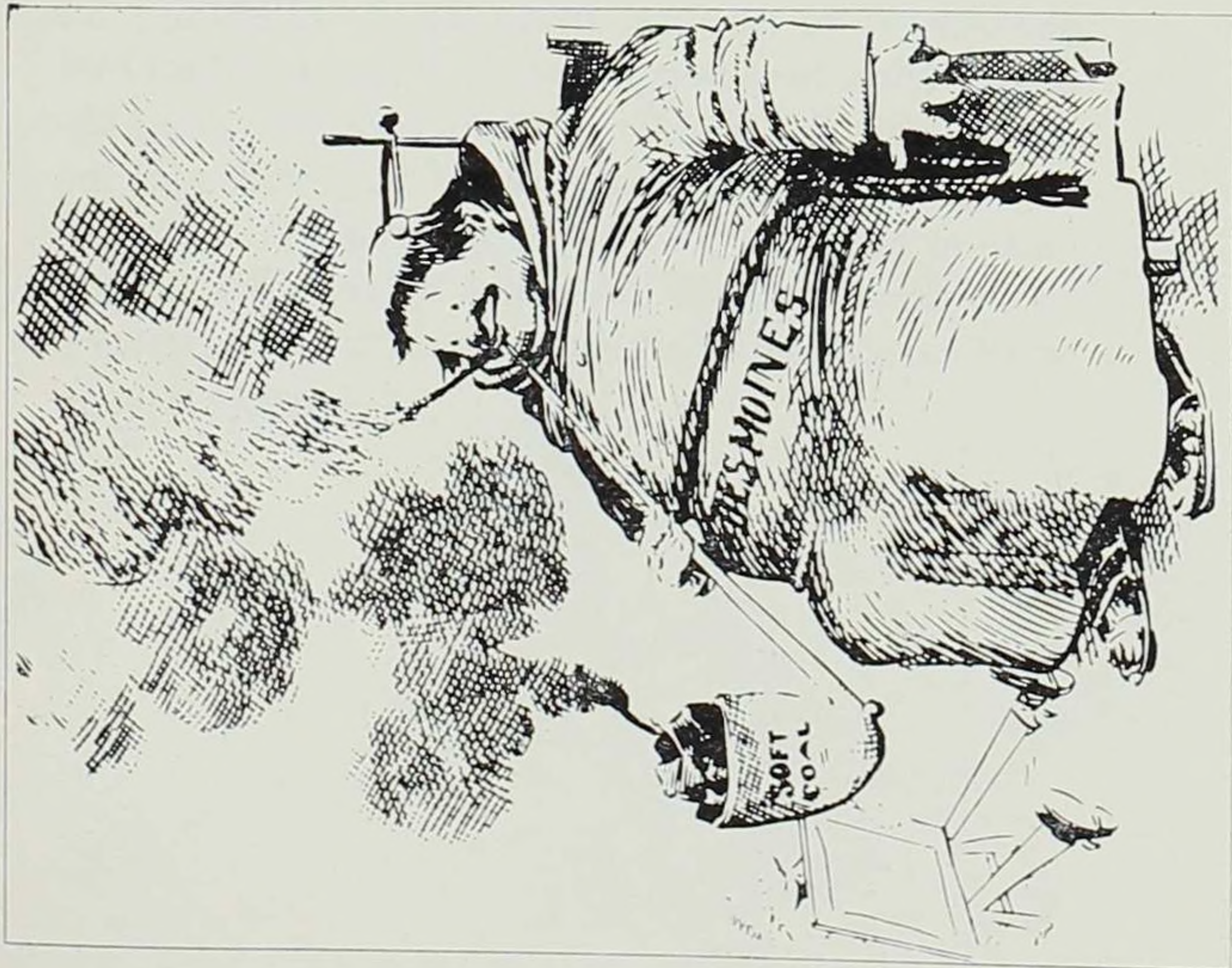
[6]

thing they wanted cooked. And what everyone wanted to cook now was more income and more profits for themselves. But, there the idea broke down, for it failed to take into account the boy turning the ice-cream freezer—unless I sat the boy with the freezer on top of the stove, along with the boiling pots and kettles of increasing costs of production and rising prices. Oh, but putting the boy on top of a stove to freeze ice-cream was absurd! Well, so were the rising costs of production and stabilized selling prices absurd. Yes, maybe it would work (to put the boy and freezer on the stove) and be effective (impress and please the reader) because of the obvious inconsistency. It did.

These two cartoons were bench marks in the career of Ding. That at the left, of the monk smoking, was his first for the Des Moines *Register and Leader*, when he joined that paper in 1906. [7] He continued drawing cartoons for that newspaper until 1949, when he retired. This cartoon, often cited as Ding's first of many on pollution, (now regarded as a current issue) drew criticism from the coal dealers and from the Catholic Church.

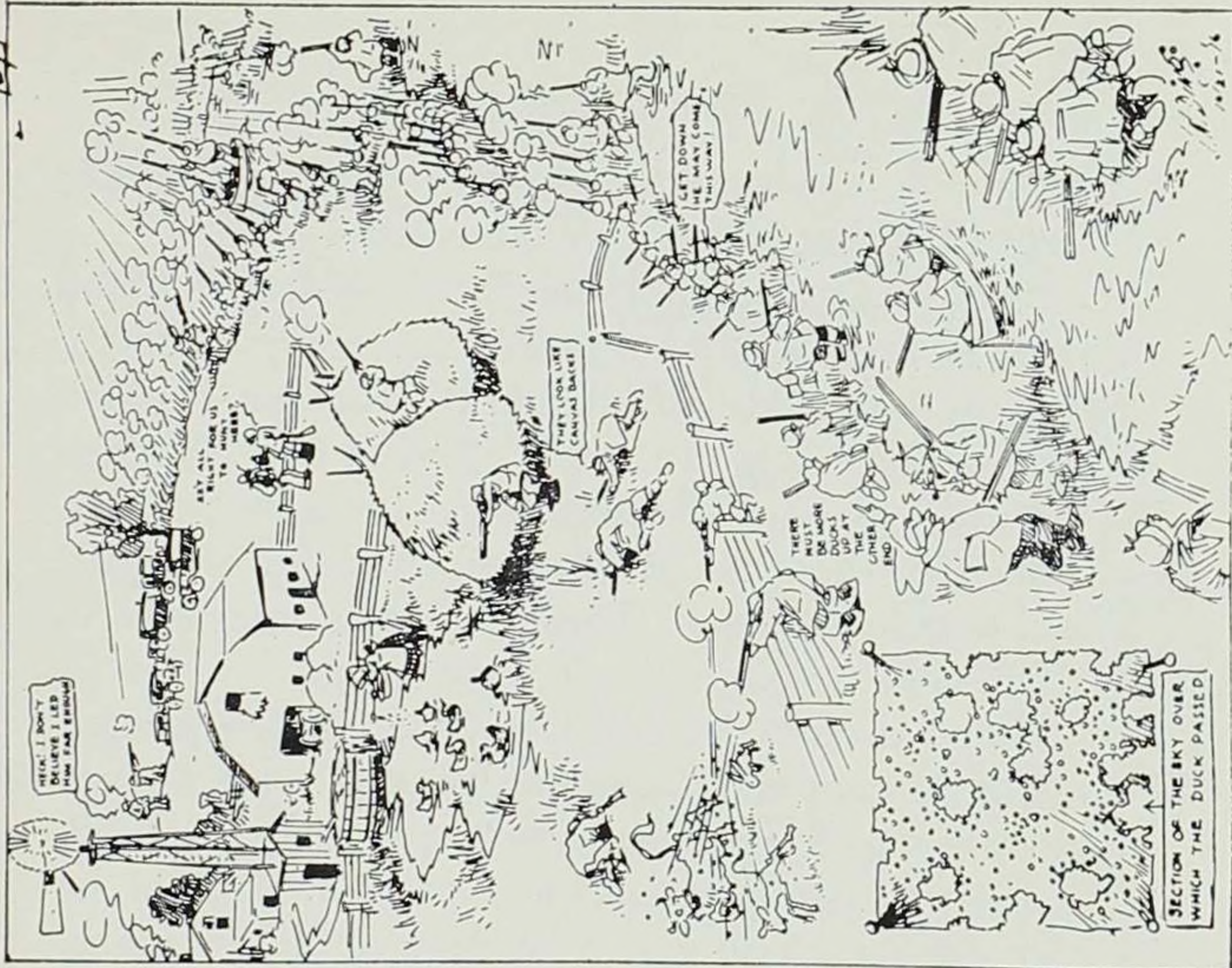
The other cartoon was one that Ding had drawn and published on his 40th birthday, ten years later. [8] He was an avid hunter and this was one of a score he had drawn on hunting. What made this one memorable was the fact that on that day, Henry Reed, representing the *New York Herald-Tribune* syndicate, arrived in Des Moines to arrange to syndicate Ding's cartoons to other newspapers. The *Herald-Tribune* syndicated the cartoons the rest of his career. Ding's

A Cartoonist Comes To Town



[7]

THE ANNUAL MIGRATION OF DUCK IS ON



[8]

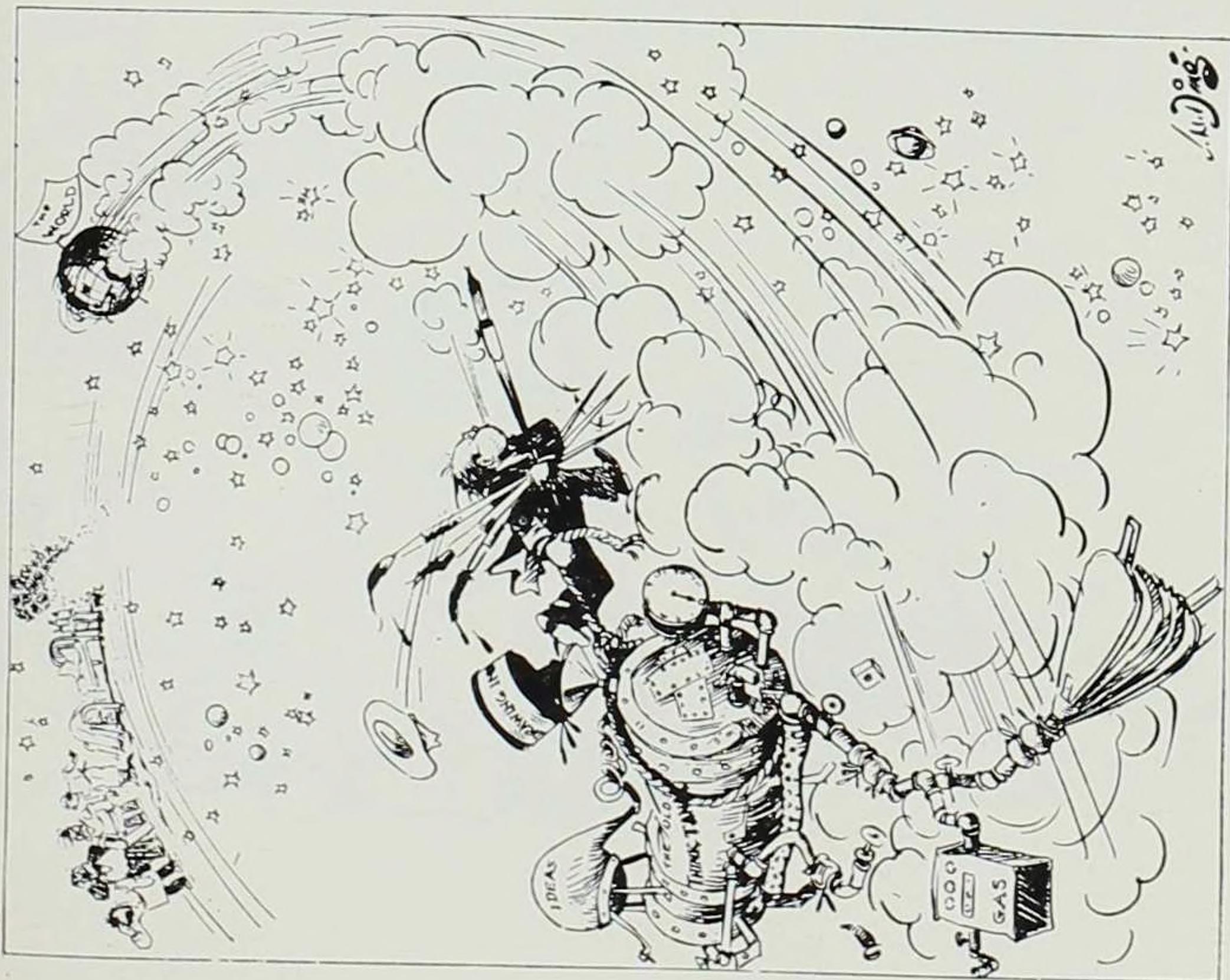
drawings appeared in the *Des Moines Register* and 135 other papers simultaneously.

Ding was a rugged man, over six feet tall, and able to withstand the rigors of hunting and fishing, and tough traveling. His trip over the Russian mountains is a saga in itself. [9] But now and then he did leave his drawing board for brief periods. When he returned, his drawings showed how glad he was to be back. These cartoons appeared in 1926. [10]

Ding drew a cartoon which he wanted printed after his own death. During his final years he was confined to a hospital from time to time. In 1959, during his convalescence in a St. Paul hospital, he drew this cartoon which he gave to his secretary, Mrs. Merle Strasser, directing that she keep it, showing it to no one. Immediately following his death, Mrs. Strasser gave it to Kenneth MacDonald, editor of *The Des Moines Register*, for publishing. Ding died on February 12, 1962, and the cartoon shown here [11] appeared the next day on the front page of the paper where some 20,000 of his cartoons had appeared in the decades before.

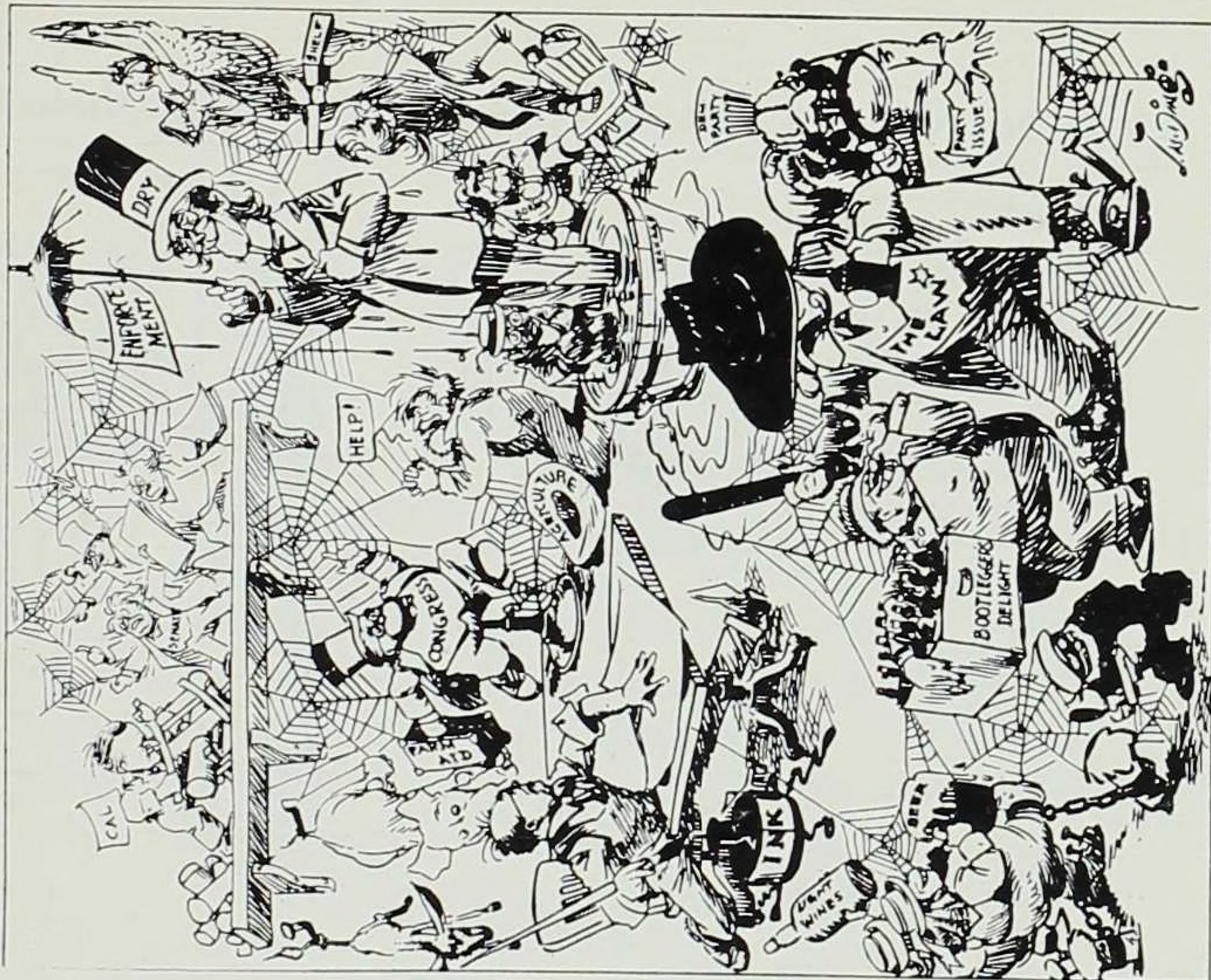
JOHN M. HENRY

If You Don't Think The World Moves, Just Try Stopping It



[6]

Things Seem Just About Where We Left Them A Year Ago



[10]

'BYE NOW-IT'S BEEN WONDERFUL KNOWING YOU.



[11]