

He's Finally Getting the Hang of It



American cartoon, drawn by Dorman Henry Smith (1892-1956), who was anti-Roosevelt, isolationist, and employed by NEA Service, a publisher from Cleveland, Ohio

- The cartoon was published in numerous newspapers, including
- Ironwood Daily Globe, Ironwood, Michigan, on April 4 1949
 - The Phoenix Gazette, Phoenix, Arizona, in 1949
 - The Rotarian, a magazine for businessmen, in October 1949

“He’s finally getting the hang of it.” – Dorman Smith, 1949

Introduction:

The given cartoon is a primary remains source and was drawn by American cartoonist Dorman H. Smith in 1949.

At that time, there were no national newspapers but each town had its own newspaper

→ Therefore, the cartoon was published in multiple newspapers

Its intended audience were Americans, including workers and business owners who did not want to lose money, and war veterans who wanted to see Europe progressing.

Cartoon is set in the historical context of the Marshall Plan (USA giving economic help to Europe).

Message: Europe improved due to American help but it was hard work for both of them

Description:

On the right: Man in business clothes, labeled “American Taxpayer”

He is running alongside a big man on a bicycle, labeled “Europe”

The bicycle has the flag “One Year Old Marshall Plan”, saying how it was financed

The business man is pushing the bike in the direction of the sign “Self Support”

The running man is worried and shouts “Keep pumpin’ mister – keep pumpin’!”

The man on the bicycle is having trouble to continue riding on his own.

This can be compared to a father teaching his son how to ride the bicycle.

Analysis and historical context:

The cartoon illustrates the economic aid given by the USA to European states after WW2.

Europe (w/ childish bobble hat) is in contrast to the business clothes and glasses of the taxpayer.

→ Therefore showing the U.S. economic superiority, and the weakened Europe after WW2

The economic help occurred under the Marshall Plan from 1948 to 1952.

The bicycle, financed with the Marshall Plan, has helped the states’ economy for one year.

The American Taxpayer hopes that Europe will continue to improve until it can support itself, so that he no longer has to pay for them.

The cartoon was first published on 4 April 1949, the day the North Atlantic Treaty was signed.

This founded the NATO and placed an additional burden on the U.S.A. because they had to build up the European armies.

Message:

The cartoon displays how the Americans, while wanting to create a buffer zone for Communism, look for their own profit and want to pay as little as possible (i.e. no altruism). They have trouble keeping up with financing Europe and are steering Europe away from Communism to Capitalism.

Europe, drawn as an overgrown child, is helpless, not even able to ride a bike, and unaware of the American egoistic plans. Europe, while receiving economic help, has to do the actual build-up work itself, just as much as the U.S.A. has to work in order to provide the money.

Message is to show that Europe finally has improved thanks to U.S. help (*cf.* title of cartoon) but it was hard work and it is unknown how long they can keep the speed up, and whether Europe will actually become self-sufficient.

History has proved artist’s doubts wrong: Europe has improved and remained democratic