

The Commoner

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Labor's Progress

(Abstract of Labor Day Address of William Jennings Bryan, Chicago, Sept. 5, 1921.)

On this day, which is to Labor what the 4th of July is to the United States, we may with propriety consider the progress that Labor has made during the last quarter of a century, Labor's present problems, and Labor's future tasks. While progress measured from day to day seems slow, the past twenty-five years have recorded many important steps taken in advance.

A little more than twenty-five years ago, organized labor secured for the public the Australian ballot, by which the individual could express his wish without coercion. While other groups aided in the securing of this reform, organized labor furnished the largest and most active influence. Twenty-five years ago this summer opposition to government by injunction was for the first time expressed in the platform of a great party, and nearly twenty years afterwards it was substantially realized in the Clayton bill.

Twenty-one years ago one of the great parties demanded a secretary of labor, and in 1913 Secretary Wilson became the first representative of labor at the President's council table.

For years the eight hour day was urged by labor, and as a result of the campaign of 1916 it was given national endorsement after it had been embodied in a hotly contested statute.

Child labor laws have become a reality in many states, and, at last, a national law attempted to secure this great and needed reform. An adverse decision of the court has temporarily suspended the law, but the conscience of the nation will, before long, guarantee to the child the enjoyment of the American birthright.

Labor has contributed largely toward the securing of the popular election of the United States senators, of the primary, of the income tax, and suffrage for women—each an epoch making reform. This is a splendid list of achievements, important in themselves and indicative of Labor's attitude. They prove loyalty to the Democratic idea in government—the idea which led to the expenditure of billions in the recent war.

Just now, organized labor is demonstrating its devotion to popular government in Germany. Eleven millions of wage earners have just pledged their support to the Republic, and it is likely that their prompt action will prevent any attempt of the monarchists to restore arbitrary government there. What other class in Germany has so unanimously proven its faith in a government of the people.

Labor has its pending problems in this country—foremost among which are the vindication of the right to organize, to bargain collectively, and to persuade wage earners to join the organization, and these rights will all be secured as it has secured other reasonable demands. The public will approve of every persuasive effort that labor may see fit to employ, and no friend of labor will go beyond that. The right to

DANGER AHEAD

Congress has under consideration a measure for the revision of the revenue act of 1918. In its effect on the fortunes of the people generally, the proposed legislation is the most important bill that has come before congress in years.

The gigantic combinations of capital, the profiteers that fed on the substance of the people while our boys fought the battles of our country, and the ultrarich, all are exerting every means in their power to escape their just burden of the costs of the war. They are seeking to repeal the excess-profits tax, the surtaxes, and other measures, in order to shift the load on the backs of the consumers.

The Democratic minority has taken the side of the people in this battle, and is calling for support of the independent, free-thinking people of the country in its fight for their interests.

Congressman Oldfield of Arkansas, in a speech which is reproduced in part on other pages in this issue, mercilessly scores the efforts of the wealth of the country to escape its just share of war taxes, and sounds a warning note that should arouse every red-blooded American. Read what Congressman Oldfield says and then write your senators and congressmen to get behind the Democratic minority in its efforts to protect the people from the exactions of the proposed inequitable Republican revenue measure.

coerce belongs to the government, and to the government alone. No class is more vitally interested in the prevention of class government than the laboring class—its safety lies in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people.

The great problem for the future is the reconciliation of labor and capital, and the harmonizing of the interests of all through the spirit of brotherhood. This can best be secured by organized provision for the legal investigation of every dispute before it reaches the stage of strike or lock-out. Compulsory arbitration is repugnant to the spirit of our institutions, but investigation is necessary to the formation of that public opinion which, in the end, controls all elements of our society.

A GREAT CAMPAIGN ISSUE

The Republican reactionaries are giving the Democrats the greatest issue they have ever had. The revenue bill, as prepared by Republican leaders, is the boldest, most unblushing effort to favor the rich at the expense of the poor ever presented to congress. If the Democrats can not win on that issue they are in a bad way. But to take advantage of that bill the Democrats must try to defeat it. Wanted—a good debater in each congressional district to keep the provisions of the bill before the people.

W. J. BRYAN.

The farmer finds prices down when he sells and up when he buys. How long can he stand this disjointed price level?

Unblushing Piracy

The revenue bill, as presented to the House, was the most unblushing piece of piracy ever proposed in congress. It was so indefensible that a Republican caucus struck out the retroactive clause and, by so doing, prevented (for this year) a gift of 540 millions to the profiteers and men with big incomes. But as the bill passed the House it relieved the rich and big business and relatively increased the burden on the poor. If the people stand for such exploitation, the plutocrats will bite still bigger next year, but it looks like the farmers, the laborers and the small business men are about to revolt. It is time.

W. J. BRYAN.

FOUR—AND THE PRESIDENT

The President has announced the "Big 4" through whom he will speak in the Disarmament conference. He has selected four prominent men—three of them could not well be ignored. Secretary Hughes is head of the delegation ex-officio, Chairman Lodge of the Foreign Relations Committee is also there ex-officio, and ex-Secretary Root would naturally come third, but President Harding will have the final word. The four are his advisors, but success or failure rests with President Harding.

PROSPECTS BRIGHTEN

No telling what may happen next year—it will be a year of surprises. If the Democrats will exercise care in the selecting of congressmen and candidates for governor a winning man may develop into a presidential candidate in 1924. Be careful! No wet or Wall Street men need apply. The underworld can not help and Wall street will not nominate men whom the people trust.

W. J. BRYAN.

LOCATING THE PROFITEER

On another page will be found statistics to show that the wholesalers are blaming the retailers for keeping up high prices. SOMEBODY is to blame and the patient public is trying to locate the responsibility. Nobody accuses the farmer of keeping up prices—he is the goat. Why not examine the tax returns and see who is reporting excess profits?

KEEP EXCESS PROFITS TAX

A \$10 tax on every auto, a two cent tax on every bank check and a 1 cent tax added to every letter will not raise as much as the excess profits tax. Why annoy all the people with these taxes in order to relieve the profiteers of a just tax? They ought to be punished instead of being favored.

W. J. BRYAN.

REACTIONARIES AT WORK

The reactionaries are at work. The action of the Republican caucus in striking out the retroactive clause of the revenue bill does not suit Wall street. They want to keep the excess profits already collected from the public this year. But wait until the voters have a chance to speak next year.

W. J. BRYAN.