

A Word as to Candidates

It is impossible to consider the relative availability of candidates until we know what issues are likely to be paramount. As the issues will be framed by congress and as congress does not convene until December, it will be well into the winter before anyone can discuss intelligently the personnel of the next campaign. There are certain general principles, however, that should govern no matter who may be a candidate. The first is that the question of location plays a less important part than in times past. It does not matter so much whether the candidate comes from the east, west, north or south as it does that he shall stand for the things that the people want. Neither does it matter whether the candidate is prominent or not. There is nothing like a campaign to make a man known. An obscure man who will grow as the people become acquainted with him would be better than a prominent man whose popularity would decrease with investigation.

The attitude of the candidate upon the liquor issue is important. He must be dry and in favor of enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment and the laws passed for its enforcement. The Democratic party cannot encourage lawlessness or enter into partnership with the lawless element of society. It would be fatal to do so if only men voted—it would be absurd to expect the women to vote for such a candidate.

Our candidate must be with the people as against Wall Street. That issue cannot fail to be prominent in the next campaign, owing to the influence big business has exerted over the present administration. If the Republican leaders, with over two-thirds of the House and nearly two-thirds of the Senate, could not show the people with big incomes the favoritism that was attempted and could not pass the ship subsidy bill, how can Democrats expect to win without a straightforward, unequivocal declaration in favor of the disinherited masses and the victims of the profiteer?

It is difficult at this time to estimate the relative importance of the international issue. The President has set out to secure co-operation with other nations in the promotion of peace. He is right, as far as he goes, and to the extent that he succeeds the importance of international questions will be lessened. It is quite likely that we shall, before the next election, be participating in the international councils—reserving, of course, the right to independent action. No surrender of our right to decide questions of war will be advocated by either party.

Neither government ownership of railroads nor government ownership of coal mines is likely to play an important part in the next campaign, but the right of the people to regulate the railroads and to regulate the mines also will have to be admitted or fought out.

W. J. BRYAN.

LIBERTY AND LAW

On another page will be found a cablegram reporting Premier Mussolini of Italy as saying that the people are tired of liberty and want law and order. Mussolini is so new to public life that this blunder may be due to a misunderstanding of government rather than to a disregard for liberty. There is no conflict between liberty and law; in fact, liberty and law are not only consistent but they are indissolubly linked together.

Our Declaration of Independence sets forth certain self-evident truths; first, that all men are created equal; second, that they are endowed with inalienable rights. These are fundamental; they are the basis of liberty and the source of love of liberty—a sentiment which has been in the heart of man from the creation.

The second and the fourth of these self-evident truths relate to government; that it is established among men for the purpose of securing to them the enjoyment of these inalienable rights, and that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed. If Mussolini does not understand that law and liberty travel together, he has something very important to learn. If, however, he knows the relation between liberty and law and puts law above liberty or considers government as a thing independent of liberty, he will prove dangerous to human progress in proportion as he has influence.

It may be that his bloodless victory was due to the fact that the plutocratic element—an ele-

ment to be found in every country—saw in him a valuable ally. If it proves to be true that he is in sympathy with the reactionary forces of society and the champion of great capital in its assault upon human rights, the plunderbunds of other countries will be looking for a Mussolini to lead the masses into the slaughterhouse.

W. J. BRYAN.

THE ISSUES OF 1924

April 11, 1923.—Mr. Lester Markel, Sunday Editor, The New York Times, New York City. My dear Sir: Responding to your request, I submit a brief answer to the question: "What will be the issue in 1924?"

It is the business of newspaper men to ask questions and it is a pleasure to answer them when an answer is possible. It is easier, however, to be far-sighted in asking questions than in answering them. One can ask without limit but in answering one is restricted to what he knows, or thinks he knows. The future itself refuses to answer questions and those who do venture to answer must be very cautious if they have any regard for their reputation, because no one knows what a day may bring forth in politics.

The issue—or I think it is better to say, issues—of 1924 will be determined largely by what the next session of congress does and by what is done in Europe between now and the convention. We have the domestic questions with us always; in each campaign we have a paramount issue—the issue that is made paramount by events. Domestic issues absorb attention except when the American people are compelled to lift their eyes above the domestic horizon and survey the world at large. At home there are four questions that are being widely discussed, although no one can now estimate their relative importance, and of course there will not be unanimous agreement as to their relative importance even when election day arrives.

First, I would put the condition of the American farmer. He is suffering more than any other class and the farmer makes up one-third of the nation in population. The price level is disjointed; the farmer buys upon a level nearly fifty per cent higher than the level upon which he sells. This is ruinous and, in time, spells bankruptcy. No other question is likely to influence the farmer's thought and political action as much as this question.

The second question affects the laboring class, the next group in size to the agricultural group. There are certain readjustments necessary to insure equity to the laboring men, but the most disturbing feature of the situation is the increasing antagonism between labor and capital—the class consciousness manifested by members of both groups. The attitude of the government is alarming to the laboring men and this alarm has been increased by the recent decision of the Supreme Court in which five of the court denied the right of congress to fix a minimum wage—three judges dissenting and one not taking part in the decision. This is another of the five to four decisions and still further intensifies the desire of the masses for legislation or Constitutional provision which will make it impossible for a bare majority of the Supreme Court to nullify legislation on questions which are more political than judicial in their character.

The third issue deals with the curbing of the profiteer. Those who are in position to organize can charge what the traffic will bear and are doing so while those who can not organize are the victims, not only of natural conditions but of the artificial conditions which monopoly creates. Something must be done; it remains to be seen whether the situation will be relieved by the action of the next congress or aggravated by its failure to act.

Taxation is the fourth domestic issue. Mr. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury, is already suggesting a further reduction in the surtax—a policy which puts the pecuniary interests of the rich above the necessities of those not so well-to-do. It is shifting the burden of taxation from the backs of the strong to the backs of the weak. As the Democrats and the progressives combined will have a majority in both houses, it is not likely that any such reactionary policy can be successful.

There will, of course, be many other issues but I mention the above as issues that affect very large groups and which will, therefore, have strong public opinion back of them. When we know what the issues are we shall be in position to discuss candidates. Events make issues and issues make candidates.

Very truly yours,

W. J. BRYAN.

Making Banks Safer

The Bank Guarantee Law has compelled banks to feel an interest in each other; since they are joined together in the protection of depositors they are interested in insuring each other's solvency. I venture to suggest three things that will lessen the number of failures and thus lessen the assessments made to pay depositors of failed banks.

First; there should be laws, state and national, making it a penal offense for any bank official or bank employee to speculate upon the stock market or the produce market. No gambler can be trusted; the fact that a bank employee desires to gamble is conclusive proof that he is not the kind of a man to trust with the handling of other people's money. Even if he were a perfectly reliable man at the beginning of his gambling, his honesty would not last long. For his own protection, as well as the protection of the bank, he ought to be restrained from speculation. The public has just as much right to protect banks from the menace of the gamblers and speculators as a powder factory has to prohibit the carrying of matches by those working with powder.

The second law needed is a statute requiring the capital and surplus combined to bear a reasonable relation to deposits. The capital and surplus furnish the margin that protects the depositors. A bank requires a borrower to have property in excess of the face value of his loan—enough more to give him margin for shrinkage. Bankers ought to live up to their own rules and give depositors a margin in the way of surplus sufficient for protection against possible shrinkage in loans.

The third law is even more necessary than the first and second above mentioned. Bank officials should be held personally liable for the violation of rules made for the protection of the bank's solvency. The laws, state and national, limit the amount that can be loaned to one person or firm, but there is no penalty fixed for the violation of the law. Bank officials are continually violating this law under the pressure of influence or interest. It is sometimes difficult for a bank official to refuse the demand of a powerful customer. A criminal law would give him something to back up against. He could say to a man desiring to borrow more than the law permits, "I cannot accommodate you at the risk of being sent to the penitentiary." The borrower sometimes gives the bank official an indirect pecuniary interest in the loan. A criminal penalty would give the official strength to resist such temptations. No one will question the wisdom of the laws above proposed, or the need of them. Why will legislators allow banking influence to prevent the enactment of such legislation?

W. J. BRYAN.

BENTLEYVILLE SETS EXAMPLE

Professor C. C. Pearsall of Bentleyville, Penn., asked the students of the junior and senior high schools of that city, numbering four hundred, to join with him in signing a total abstinence pledge. Three hundred and seventy-five of the four hundred signed with him. It was a splendid example. His action will be brought to the attention of the high schools of the country and professors and teachers will be urged to lead their students to pledge themselves to abstinence from intoxicating liquor as beverage. This is the most effective way to aid enforcement of prohibition. It will not take long to dry up wet spots if the churches and schools build up total abstinence sentiment back of the prohibition amendment.

W. J. BRYAN.

ON DANGEROUS GROUND

If the execution of Vicar Butchkavitch was due, as seems probable, to hostility to religion in general, it is the surest evidence yet given of the irresponsible character of those in authority in Russia.

Tolstoy defines religion as the relation that man fixes between himself and his Maker, and adds that morality is the outward manifestation of religion. If morality rests on religion, as I believe it does, then the entire absence of religion destroys the foundation upon which civilization rests.

W. J. BRYAN.

The robin and the summer hat are pretty fair harbingers of spring, but the average man is not likely to believe that it is really at hand unless there are predictions in the newspapers that the mine operators are about to have their men strike on them again.