

THE CZAR GRANTS RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

The Czar has made another concession to his people—this time a great concession. But for the fact that Russia is still so far behind the western world in matters of government the concessions granted by the present czar would seem even more important than they do. At the birth of his son he released the indebtedness incurred by the former serfs when, upon their emancipation, they were permitted to purchase the land upon which they had lived. This was a great boon to the peasants. Later, the czar announced his intention to create an elective assembly, which, while it would not participate in the enactment of law, would be permitted to discuss proposed laws or decrees. While this comes far short of constitutional liberty, it was really a great step in advance, because public opinion is almost as effective as law when that public opinion can find expression through recognized channels. It has another advantage in that it permits the development of leaders of popular thought. At present there is no way in which a person can become a popular leader—no way in which public confidence can be centered in some able spokesman. This has

been one of the weaknesses of all reform movements in Russia. The representative body to be established gives a chance for the development of leadership and for the establishment of prestige with the people, and it will inevitably lead to a legislative body empowered to participate in the making of the laws.

The last concession granted—that of religious liberty—is the greatest of all. Nothing is more paralyzing to a nation's development than laws or decrees which forbid the following of one's conscience. When Jefferson looked back over his life he placed next to the Declaration of Independence the statute which he framed providing for religious freedom in the state of Virginia. With a conscience free to work and to express itself a new era opens before Russia. While, of course, it is impossible to know whether this concession is due to the war or could have been secured without the war, still it will probably be regarded as a result of the embarrassment brought by the war, and will go far toward making the people forget the hardships which have been imposed upon them by the sanguinary conflict between Russia and Japan.

The world moves. The forces at work for the advancement of the race are irresistible forces, and whether we view them in their contest with arbitrary power in the Czar's realm or in England, in Germany, in France, in Italy, in Spain, in South America, in the Philippines, or in our own land, the final result is always the same—victory for the right!

Japan has religious freedom as well as a legislature, and these things probably account in part, at least, for the enthusiasm with which the Japanese have supported their government. The restriction placed by the Russian government upon liberty of conscience, of thought and of tongue have contributed largely toward the uprisings which have embarrassed the Czar.

The people of America will heartily congratulate the Russians upon the concessions which they have won during the last two years, and will hope for still further concessions until the people of Russia at last enjoy freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences, freedom to think as they please, freedom to express their opinions by tongue or pen, and full participation in the government under which they live.

SECRETARY TAFT AND THE G. O. P. TEXT BOOK

The Republican Campaign Text-Book for 1904 provides interesting reading in the light of recent developments with respect to the tariff question. Several pages of that book were devoted to an effort to show that American goods were not sold abroad cheaper than at home. And where it seemed impossible to deny that in some cases foreign prices were cheaper, an effort was made to explain away the fact by the statement that American manufacturers were seeking to build up a market for the benefit of American labor. Where it was inconvenient to deny that American prices were much higher than foreign prices, an effort was made to explain away the fact by the assertion that it is a duty to buy at home, and that even when Americans pay exorbitant prices for American-made goods, they are merely "paying the money into their own pockets."

Dealing particularly with the duties on iron and steel the text book sought to establish the claim that those duties are not prohibitive as to imports, and that it is not in the power of the manufacturers to maintain such prices as they may choose in the home market.

In another chapter an effort was made to show that prices in the United States, were as a rule much lower than prices in England.

The proposition that the foreigner pays the tax was asserted by this text book and it was said: "The claim that the foreign producer or merchant pays at least a part of the tariff levied on imported goods is now admitted in free-trade England."

One chapter of the text book was largely devoted to an effort to show that trusts do not control prices. In this chapter it was said that "trusts are utterly unable to control the markets." An extract from this chapter follows:

It is doubtless true that occasional sales of American manufactures are made abroad at less than the established prices at home, just as the manufacturer or merchant frequently sells below his regular price in the home market for the sake of gaining new customers or of disposing of his surplus produce at cost, rather than close down his factories and deprive his workmen of employment.

Emphasis was laid on the report of a commission to the effect that "a great majority of the answers (to its inquiry) indicate that prices

are no lower abroad than they are for domestic consumers, and a considerable number indicate that foreign prices are higher."

In another chapter it was asserted: "Circumstances in the United States do not justify the assertion made by the free traders that a protective tariff results in an advance of prices or in high prices in the country adopting it. Certainly it has not been the case in the United States."

These statements are particularly interesting at this time. They require no comment other than that provided in what is known as "Secretary Taft's free trade order." It will be remembered that, according to the dispatch carried by the Associated Press, the canal commission acting with the approval of Secretary Taft—who acted with the approval of President Roosevelt—decided that the money consideration in the purchase of canal supplies was so great that it could not be ignored, and it was, therefore, decided to purchase material in the markets of the world. As explained by this press dispatch "it was held that in many cases fully 50 per cent more would be charged for the material needed in the canal construction than the same goods could be procured for in Europe."

THE PREVAILING FORCE IN THE COUNTRY

The Wall Street Journal recently published a series of articles on insurance. They were written by an expert and every American citizen should read the Journal's review. Unquestionably many people who imagine they had some conception of the immense sums of money being gathered in by these great insurance companies will be surprised by the Journal's statement that in the year 1904 the gross income of life insurance companies in this country aggregated nearly \$600,000,000. In the last fiscal year the total income of the United States government was \$684,000,000, only about \$84,000,000 in excess of that of the insurance companies.

Some other extracts from the Journal's articles may be interesting. For instance there are now outstanding in the United States upwards of 25,000,000 life insurance policies of all kinds. The Journal admits that "the accumulation of vast assets under the control of the managers of these companies, and especially the accumulation by the three leading companies, has resulted in the creation of a financial power which promises before long to be the prevailing force in the business of the country."

One may better appreciate the accuracy of the Journal's prediction by a glance at the statement showing how rapidly life insurance assets have increased in the United States.

A table giving the total assets in five-year periods from 1880 to 1905, follows: 1905, \$2,500,000,000; 1900, \$1,742,000,000; 1895, \$1,159,000,000;

1890, \$770,000,000; 1885, \$551,000,000; 1880, \$452,000,000.

The Journal compared this growth with the estimated increase in the wealth of the country since 1880. This is shown by the following table:

		P. C. of Assets	
Year	Wealth of Country	Life Ins. Assets	to Wealth
1905	\$103,000,000,000	\$2,500,000,000	2.42
1880	42,000,000,000	452,000,000	1.07
Increase		\$61,000,000,000	\$2,048,000,000
P. C. of inc.		145.2	454.2

The Journal says:

This exhibits very plainly the fact that insurance company assets are increasing much more rapidly than the aggregate wealth of the country. In 1880 life insurance assets amounted to only but little over 1 per cent of the total wealth of the country. They now amount to nearly 2½ per cent of the total wealth. While wealth has increased in twenty-five years 145 per cent, life insurance assets have increased 454 per cent. Nor is there any sign of a slackening of the speed of insurance development. The increase in assets last year was greater than in the year preceding.

After making this showing the Journal seems disposed to offer an apology to the insurance managers when it says:

The awakened interest in life insurance,

therefore, is reasonable and it is timely. It is not an interest which is unfriendly to the insurance companies. It aims not at destruction. The people simply want to know what life insurance is, what its full meaning is, what are the ethical and economic principles underlying it, and what are its methods. They want to know, also, more concerning the financial operations of these companies, investment of their assets, the disposition of their income, and the percentage of their operating expenses.

While it is true that the people want to know these things it is also true that they want to apply a remedy, for, according to the Journal's own showing, a remedy is called for. The awakened interest in life insurance is reasonable and timely, because investigation will open the eyes of the people to the absurdity of maintaining the present system. If "the accumulation by the three leading companies has resulted in the creation of a financial power which promises before long to be the prevailing force in the business of the country," then many who were reluctant to move for the abolition of the system will be inclined to join with the already large number of people who believe that one of the most important reforms to be brought about is the substitution of insurance by the state for the present plan through which a few men are now amassing untold wealth.