

THE PRESIDENT ON TEMPERANCE

President Roosevelt's speech at Wilkesbarre, Pa., before the annual convention of the Catholic Total Abstinence union is one of the best the president has made. It is a wholesome and helpful speech. The Catholic Total Abstinence union is doing a very important work and the president is to be commended for lending the influence of his great office to the movement.

Strong drink is the fruitful cause of an immense amount of misery, and total abstinence, while not the only remedy, is the surest preventive. The president has added to the sum of human happiness by his visit to Wilkesbarre.

On that occasion Mr. Roosevelt spoke as follows:

I am particularly glad to speak to this audience of miners and their wives and children, and especially to speak under the auspices of this great temperance society.

In our country the happiness of all the rest of our people depends most of all upon the welfare of the wage-worker and the welfare of the farmer. If we can secure the welfare of these two classes we can be reasonably certain that the community as a whole will prosper. And we must never forget that the chief factor in securing the welfare alike of wage-worker and of farmer, as of everybody else, must be the man himself.

The only effective way to help anybody is to help him help himself. There are exceptional times when any one of us needs outside help, and then it should be given freely; but normally each one of us must depend upon his own exertions for his own success. Something can be done by wise legislation and by wise and honest administration of the laws; that is, something can be done by our action taken in our collective capacity through the state and the nation.

Something more can be done by combination and organization among ourselves in our private capacities as citizens, so long as this combination or organization is managed with wisdom and integrity, with insistence upon the rights of those benefited and yet with just regard for the rights of others.

But in the last analysis the factor most influential in determining any man's success must ever be the sum of that man's own qualities, of his knowledge, foresight, thrift and courage. Whatever tends to increase his self-respect, whatever tends to help him overcome the temptations with which all of us are surrounded, is the benefit not only to him but to the whole community.

No one society can do more to help the wage-worker than such a temperance society as that which I am now addressing. It is of incalculable consequence to the man himself that he should be sober and temperate, and it is of even more consequence to his wife and his children; for it is a hard and cruel fact that in this life of ours the sins of the man are often visited most heavily upon those whose welfare should be his one special care.

For the drunkard, for the man who loses his job because he can not control or will not control his desire for liquor and for vicious

pleasures, we have a feeling of anger and contempt mixed with our pity; but for his unfortunate wife and little ones we feel only pity, and that of the deepest and tenderest kind.

Everything possible should be done to encourage the growth of that spirit of self-respect, self-restraint, self-reliance, which, if it only grows enough, is certain to make all those in whom it shows itself move steadily upward toward the highest standard of American citizenship. It is a proud and responsible privilege to be citizens of this great self-governing nation; and each of us needs to keep steadily before his eyes the fact that he is wholly unfit to take part in the work of governing others unless he can first govern himself.

He must stand up manfully for his own rights; he must respect the rights of others; he must obey the law and he must try to live up to those rules of righteousness which are above and behind all laws.

This applies just as much to the man of great wealth as to the man of small means; to the capitalist as to the wage-worker. And as one practical point, let me urge that in the event of any difficulty, especially if it is what is known as a labor trouble, both sides show themselves willing to meet, willing to consult, and anxious each to treat the other reasonably and fairly; each to look at the other's side of the case and to do the other justice. If only this course could be generally followed the chance of industrial disaster would be minimized.

Now, my friends, I want to read you an extract from a letter I have just received from a Catholic priest, whom I know well, and whom I know to be as staunch a friend of the laboring man as there is to be found in this country. Now and then—not too often—it is a good thing for all of us to hear what is not perhaps altogether palatable, provided only that the person who tells the truth is our genuine friend, knows what he is talking about (even though he may not see all sides of the case,) and tells us what he has to say, not with a desire to hurt our feelings, but with the transparent purpose to do us good.

With this foreword, here is a part of the letter:

"I would humbly recommend that you lend your entire weight to the cause which the Catholic Total Abstinence union of America represents, and especially so in its relation to the working classes of this country, for whom it is doing so much good. You know that the temperance movement is a potent auxiliary to the institutions of our country in building up a better manhood, and a truer christianity among our citizens. It played a very important part in the two coal strikes of 1900 and 1902, respectively, by keeping the men sober, and thus removing the danger of riotous and unbecoming conduct. There is one discouraging feature connected with the upward tendency of the wage scale among the workmen of this country. The higher the wages, the more money they spend in saloons. The shorter the hours, the more they are inclined to ab-

sent themselves from home. An apparent disregard for family ties is growing among the poorer classes which will eventually lead to a disregard for the blessings our country affords them. Hence, with an increase of wages a corresponding movement for better manhood, nobler citizenship and truer Christianity should be set on foot. The dignity of labor should be maintained, which can be done only through the love that a man should have for his work, and through the intelligence which he puts into it. A steady hand and sober mind are necessary for this. Hence, the necessity of the temperance cause, and of the efforts which organized abstainers are putting into the movement."

Now, in what is here written this priest does not mean that the tendency is to grow worse; but he means that with shorter hours and increased wages there is a tendency to go wrong which must be offset by movements, such as this great temperance movement, and similar efforts for social and civic betterment, or else the increase in leisure and money will prove a curse instead of a blessing. I strive never to tell anyone what I do not thoroughly believe, and I shall not say to you that to be honest and temperate and hardworking and thrifty will always bring success.

The hand of the Lord is sometimes heavy upon the just, as well as upon the unjust, and in the life of labor and effort which we must lead on this earth it is not always possible, either by work, by wisdom, or by upright behavior, to ward off disaster. But it is most emphatically true that the chance for leading a happy and prosperous life is immensely improved if only the man is decent, sober, industrious, and exercises foresight and judgment.

Let him remember above all that the performance of duty is the first essential to right living, and that a good type of average family life is the corner stone of national happiness and greatness. No man can be a good citizen, can deserve the respect of his fellows, unless first of all he is a good man in his own family, unless he does his duty faithfully by his wife and children.

I strongly believe in trades unions, wisely and justly handled, in which the rightful purpose to benefit those connected with them is not accompanied by a desire to do injustice or wrong to others. I believe in the duty of capitalists and wage-workers to try to seek one another out, to understand each other's point of view, and to endeavor to show broad and kindly human sympathy one with the other.

I believe in the work of these great temperance organizations, of all kindred movements like the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian associations, in short, in every movement which strives to help a man by teaching him how to help himself.

But, most of all, I believe in the efficacy of the best man himself striving continually to increase his own self-respect by the way in which he does his duty to himself and to his neighbor.

THEY ARE NOT ENTIRELY PHILANTHROPIC

The Railroad Literary Bureau has frequently asserted that transportation charges in this country are not excessive, because they are as low, and in some cases lower, than the rates charged in other countries, especially in continental Europe. A Commoner reader who is well acquainted with railroad affairs says that this claim "lulls to sleep many people."

Referring to the claim, this Commoner reader says:

"The comparison may be fair and the figures may be right, but the fact that transportation rates are not higher in the United States than they are in Europe does not prove that the rates charged in the United States are not excessive. Transportation rates should be based upon the capital actually invested, as the charge for every other service should bear some relation to the actual cost of furnishing the service. This fact was not taken into consideration in the comparison of rates made by the railroads. They have begun a campaign of 'education,' so the pa-

pers state, and this is one of their strongest arguments. It was used by Secretary Morton, and it will be used over and over again, and with effect, too, for if it is not exposed and explained, the average person will think that the railroads are very charitable institutions if they do not charge more than do the railroads of other countries. I submit herewith a few facts which should be carefully considered in connection with a superficial comparison of rates charged in different countries, which, if properly presented to the public, will not leave the railroads in so favorable a light before the public. Whether we are charged excessive rates or not depends upon whether the rates are based upon the capital actually invested in the construction and equipment of the road and the actual operating expenses. I shall only cite a few facts regarding the cost of construction.

"1. In the United States the railroads were mostly built before the country was settled up and the right-of-way cost practically nothing as

compared with what it cost the roads of Europe to secure the right-of-way through densely populated countries where the value of land was very high.

"2. The government aided the construction of over 15,000 miles of railroad by grants of public land and by issuing bonds. This 15,000 miles of railroad was constructed without any cost for right-of-way, and in addition thereto the companies were given millions of acres of land as an inducement to build.

"3. Few roads were built that did not receive large donations from the cities and towns through which they pass. The town in which I live voted about \$150,000 to railroads to induce them to build through the town, and no doubt offered other inducements. The city's debt is now about \$100,000, all of which was incurred this way.

"4. The government subsidizes every railroad that carries mail by paying exorbitant rates for

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