

ACCEPT REGULATION OR OWNERSHIP

The Commoner printed recently a series of articles written by a gentleman who having had wide experience in railroad matters was able to give men generally considerable information on the subject of railroad rate legislation. This same gentleman, writing to The Commoner, says it is significant that most of those republican senators who insist that the rate bill must contain a court review provision object to any rate legislation whatever. He points out that these senators not only insist upon a court review amendment, but also insist that the review must come before the commission's orders go into effect. He says that advocates of rate regulation well understand that the legality of the commission's orders can not be kept out of court entirely, but they believe that rates fixed by the commission should go into effect and remain in effect until declared unjust, unremunerative or confiscatory by the courts. He says that the courts can not definitely determine in advance whether a rate will be unremunerative, there being no rule or standard by which an unremunerative or confiscatory rate can be detected.

On this point the writer says:

"These senators know that any rate fixed by the commission which will afford just compensation is a lawful rate. If the court review comes

before the rate goes into effect it will be impossible for the railroad to prove that the rate will be unremunerative or confiscatory. The only thing the railroad can do is to claim that the rate will not afford just compensation. That the railroads will press this claim vigorously, persistently and tenaciously goes without saying, and this will result in raising a doubt in the mind of the court. There is no uncertainty as to who will receive the benefit of this doubt.

On the other hand the railroads will have to prove that the commission's rate is depriving them of just compensation. They will not only have to show an actual decrease in gross and net earnings sufficient to make reasonable profits impossible, but they will have to prove that this decrease was caused by the commission's rate.

"The proposed rate regulation bill should contain no ambiguous provisions. It should be so shaped that its purpose may be realized. If the supreme court declares that congress can not regulate railroad rates there is but one policy to adopt, and that is government ownership. In its report to the senate (Senate Report, first session 49th Congress, Vol. 2, page 53) the select committee on interstate commerce said:

The time may come when the people of the United States will be forced to consider

the advisability of placing the railways of the country completely under the control of the general government. * * * This would seem to be the surest method of securing the highest perfection and greatest efficiency of the railroad system in its entirety, and the best method of making it an harmonious whole in its operation and of bringing about uniformity and stability of rates which is the greatest need of trade and commerce.

"That report was made before the present interstate commerce law was passed. In fact the present law was the result of the report of this committee. When that bill was before congress the railroads insisted that congress could not regulate them; that such a law would be declared unconstitutional. The law of 1887, known as the interstate commerce law, has never been declared unconstitutional. The supreme court did decide, however, that the power to fix rates had not been conferred upon the commission by congress. There should be no mistake made on that particular point in the new law. Then if the supreme court decides that congress can not constitutionally delegate this power, government ownership is the only solution."

"The Past Generation, like an Imbecile Old Father, has Disinherited its Children. But They will break the Will."

To a symposium entitled "Socialism in America," and published in the New York World, General James B. Weaver of Iowa contributes the following:

To the Editor of the World: The movement toward socialism in the United States and elsewhere is strictly defensive and abnormal. It resembles the movements of opposing armies in the field. The socialists prefer that the multitude shall own and operate everything rather than that a few shall absorb all. It is economic war, and lying hidden within it are dislocations fearful to contemplate. The same plutocratic forces which engendered socialism in the old world have begotten it here and are giving it growth, strength and vitality.

Senator Hanna's prophetic vision was clear and accurate if his economic and political theories are to continue. He contemplated a continuance of the present plutocratic regime and he had at that very time been slated by monopolistic wealth for eight years' service as president of the United States. Visions of gigantic trust combinations and ship subsidy schemes controlled his great brain. Under such conditions, of course, nothing could avert the socialistic issue in 1912. He would have forced exactly that issue had he lived and succeeded in his ambitions. He, his confederates and associates have precipitated a life-and-death struggle between artificial persons created by the state, called corporations, and natural persons of flesh and blood created by the Almighty. The former, reinforced by an allied army of speculators, have driven the men of flesh and blood into the overcrowded market of day laborers, have absorbed the sources of wealth, including the soil; have set the laboring men at war with themselves, while the government in all its branches is used chiefly as a police force to keep the peace while the corporations get in their work.

The allied corporations say nobody shall do

business but themselves and that competition shall be eliminated. They have forced labor to say that a man who does not belong to the union shall not work, and they will say whether or not he may join. The past generation, like an imbecile old father, has disinherited its children. They will break the will.

The senate of the United States at this moment is creating socialists faster than they can be organized and equipped. It is a great socialistic recruiting station and is destroying patriotism faster than Abraham Lincoln ever built it up. Nothing but a sudden halt in political affairs, state and national, and a change in public policy, can avert the struggle. It is an ugly condition, but the conflict, as was once before the case, is again irrepressible if present conditions are to continue. Fortunately there are signs of an awakening, and it is nation-wide. It is adumbrated in the skies. Something is shaking the conscience of the nation and it is not socialism. It is simply the mighty tread of true democracy and Christianity walking hand in hand. Do not be alarmed. The alliance is wholly holy. There is neither excuse nor necessity for socialism in this country if the government will honestly and conservatively align itself once more with the people. But let me assure the reader that the safety of both persons and property demands that this shall be done speedily and without sham.

How to check the growth of socialism:

First—There must be less money spent for military and naval establishments and more for reclaiming our unwatered empire, thus furnishing homes for destitute people, and we should help poor settlers if need be to get a start. Our policy in this particular must be broad, liberal, aggressive and must be inaugurated at once. The army of foreigners daily landing upon our shores can then be consistently required to settle upon and cultivate this reclaimed land.

veto an act of parliament, but the right is never exercised, and so the commission will be likely to acquiesce in measures sent to it by the assembly.

The commission is composed of four Americans and three Filipinos, but the Filipinos, being selected by American officials, may or may not represent Filipino sentiment. It had been the experience in our own country that minority representatives of a board are not representatives at all if they are chosen by the majority. Democrats selected by republicans do not, as a rule, represent the democratic party and republicans selected by democrats do not, as a rule, represent the republican party. Bi-partisan boards are generally a farce when all the members are selected by one party; they enable the party in power to do what it pleases and to throw part of the odium upon the minority.

The native members of the Filipino commission should be chosen by the Filipinos themselves

Second—We must take up the question of land reform, nationally and in states. Land monopoly is monstrous, un-Christian and uncivilized.

Third—There is but one way to control the railroads. It is not necessary that the government shall own and operate our vast railway system. The tentative way to approach that problem is to pass an act authorizing the government to construct or purchase three transcontinental lines—north, south and through the center of the continent. If such a law were passed the present lines would be quick to sell at reasonable rates. Questions of connecting with these lines and all subsidiary and collateral matters would be easy of adjustment.

Fourth—We must elect United States senators by popular vote.

Fifth—The struggle for community control of public utilities must continue—and it will. Restore the competitive equilibrium even if we have to discourage corporations for private gain. If they will insist on destroying competition and crushing the individual, to that extent destroy them by recalling their charters. If it is a question of which shall live—the corporation or the man—let the man survive. The duty of the state is to the individual. These remedies will be tried first before the nation takes the Cimmerian leap into socialism on the wide scale contemplated by your question.

Sixth—Finally, nominate and elect a conservative ticket in 1908 whose very names will inspire confidence in all classes. It will not be hard to find such a ticket, but it will have to be selected with a view of tackling living and vital issues. No namby-pamby administration at war with itself can possibly grapple with the mighty problems now pressing for solution.

JAMES B. WEAVER.

Colfax, Ia., April 20.

WORK FOR FILIPINO ASSEMBLY

The Filipino assembly provided for in the Philippine law will give an authoritative expression of the popular will. The assembly will not only inform the American officials as to the needs of the natives, viewed from a Filipino standpoint, but it will give the Filipinos an opportunity to demonstrate their capacity to deal intelligently and deliberately with public questions.

Some of the Filipinos have under-estimated the value of this assembly. Because the Philippine commission, being a co-ordinate body, has virtually a veto power over acts of the assembly some have feared that the assembly would be of little use. This is an error; the commission, whatever may be its statutory rights, will hesitate to obstruct the passage of a measure which clearly represents the settled convictions of the Filipino people. The king of England has the right to

and the Philippine assembly is the proper body to make the choice. Our government ought to hasten to make this change in the law before the assembly has time to request it; it would be acceptable as a strong proof of the nation's intention to live up to the promise—"The Philippines for the Filipinos."

LET THEM LAUGH

The Washington correspondent for the St. Louis Globe-Democrat says that the speech delivered by Senator LaFollette has been "a distinct disappointment." This correspondent says that at times "the senate was close to laughing at him." Well, Senator LaFollette can stand the "laughter" of "the senate." The American people have considerable more confidence in Senator LaFollette than they have in some of his colleagues.