

President Wilson's South and Central American Policy

On March 11th President Wilson issued the following formal statement of his policy toward the Central and South American republics:

"One of the chief objects of my administration will be to cultivate the friendship and deserve the confidence of our sister republics of Central and South America and to promote in every proper and honorable way the interests which are common to the peoples of the two continents. I earnestly desire the most cordial understanding and co-operation between the people and leaders of America and therefore deem it my duty to make this brief statement:

"Co-operation is possible only when supported at every turn by the orderly processes of just government based upon law, not upon arbitrary or irregular force. We hold, as I am sure all thoughtful leaders of republican government everywhere hold, that just government rests always on the consent of the governed and that there can be no freedom without order, based upon law and upon the public conscience and approval. We shall look to make these principles the basis of mutual intercourse, respect and helpfulness between our sister republics and ourselves.

"We shall lend our influence of every kind to the realization of these principles in fact and practice, knowing that disorder, personal intrigue and defiance of constitutional rights weaken and discredit government and injure none so much as the people who are unfortunate enough to have their common life and common affairs tainted and disturbed.

"We can have no sympathy with those who seek to seize the power of government to advance their own personal interests or ambition. We are the friends of peace, but we

know that there can be no lasting or stable peace in such circumstances. As friends, therefore, we shall prefer those who act in the interest of peace and honor, who protect private rights and respect the restraints of constitutional provision. Mutual respect seems to us the indispensable foundation of friendship between states as between individuals.

"The United States has nothing to seek in Central and South America except the lasting interests of the people of the two continents, the security of governments intended for the people and for no special group or interest and the development of personal and trade relationships between the two continents which shall rebound to the profit and advantage of both and interfere with the rights and liberties of neither.

"From these principles may be read so much of the future policy of this government as it is necessary now to forecast and in the spirit of these principles, I may, I hope, be permitted with as much confidence and earnestness to extend to the governments of all the republics of America the hands of genuine disinterested friendship and to pledge my own honor and the honor of my colleagues to every enterprise of peace and amity that a fortunate future may disclose."

Referring to the above statement the Associated Press says: The president read the above statement to the cabinet today and issued it shortly afterward to the press.

At the White House it was disclaimed that the statement was aimed at any particular country. It was declared that it would be sent to the diplomatic representatives to the United States of all Central and South American countries alike.

Governor Hodges' Novel Plan for Kansas

The Kansas City Star prints the following concerning Governor Hodges' novel suggestion as a substitute for the Kansas legislature:

Governor Hodges of Kansas affords another example of what the right kind of imagination will do.

Imagination is unafraid and it looks ahead to big possibilities rather than behind at moss-grown traditions.

Governor Hodges has the kind of imagination that is not afraid to destroy an established order for the purpose of building something better in its stead.

His recommendation to the Kansas legislature for the abolition of an inefficient, inadequate and outgrown legislative system for the establishment of a modern, up-to-date and responsive rule for the state, was inspired by an imagination that lays firm hold on the tomorrow and lets go of the yesterday.

For a quarter of a century the legislative system of the states has been a barrier to progress. Like the old ward form of government for cities, it grew out of a system patterned for the needs of a nation, and its cumbersome nature has made it an effectual bar to the application of modern thought to the government of states, as the ward plan has proved the obstacle in the path of city development.

With this type of legislature, too complicated in its makeup and too lacking in direct responsibility for efficient service, Governor Hodges has had long experience. For eight years he was a member of the body. For the present session he has had the chance to watch it as an outsider, but an outsider vitally interested in its success.

A legislature is composed of two independent houses, and both houses so large as to shield every member from responsibility and make accountability to the people impossible.

As a result the people of Kansas have, session after session, for as many years as the state has existed, witnessed the humiliating spectacle of its "representative" bodies doing many things a majority of the people did not want done, and flaily refusing to do things the majority were demanding should be done.

And they have called that "representative government."

The plan proposed by Governor Hodges is simple, concrete and understandable. It provides for a small, single body, composed of

eight men, the governor himself making the ninth member, all of them having equal powers and equal responsibilities, but each of them having specific responsibilities.

Every section of the state would be represented under this plan, but every member of the legislature would be accountable to every citizen of the state because he would be elected from the state-at-large and therefore would represent every citizen in the state.

Under the present system each voter is represented by only one member in each house. There are thirty-nine members of the senate and 124 members of the house that he does not vote for at all. He is not represented by them in any way, and yet they legislate for him without being at all accountable to him.

The plan proposed by Governor Hodges has every advantage over the old system, even to the point of economy. But its great advantage is that it puts the control of the legislature into the hands of the people of the state and makes the members accountable representatives.

Governor Hodges, being a man of imagination, sees the people of every state turning away from the obsolete system and turning to a modern plan of government. So he urges Kansas to take the lead in the big forward movement.

And Kansas being a state of big imagination, it is safe to say, will respond to the call.

Governor Hodges sent a special message to the Kansas legislature urging the commission form of government for the state of Kansas.

He did not send the message with any idea that a bill covering it would be considered at the present session but with the purpose of putting the proposition up to the members and to the people of the state for their consideration in the next two years.

The governor suggests that a commission of eight, and at most sixteen, men, paid decent salaries by the state, could handle the legislative work of Kansas much better and would more nearly meet the needs of the people and conditions that may arise than the present legislative system.

Governor Hodges in his message complimented the democratic legislature for its work, but said the record was due to efficient membership rather than to the legislative system which

he pronounced "antiquated and inefficient." "Our system," the message says, "is patterned after the English parliament, with its two houses based upon the distinction between the nobility and the common people, each house representing the divers interests of these classes."

The message continues in part:

"No such reason exists in Kansas for a dual legislative system and even in England at the present time the dual system has been practically abandoned and the upper house shorn of its importance.

"I believe we should now concern ourselves with devising a system for legislating that will give us more efficiency and quicker response to the demands of our economic and social conditions and to the will of the people."

"You senators and representatives can not but have observed the defects of our present system. In a short session of fifty days you are required to study and pass upon hundreds of measures and the hurry with which this must be done, must of necessity result in a number of more or less crude and ill-digested laws, which often puzzle learned jurists to interpret with anything like satisfaction to themselves or to the public.

"We have recognized in this state also that the old methods of city government are expensive, inefficient and unsatisfactory and everywhere the commission plan of city government is being adopted in almost every case is yielding high class results.

"My judgment is that the governor should be ex-officio a member and presiding officer of this assembly, and that it should be permitted to meet in such frequent and regular or adjourned sessions as the exigencies of the public business may demand; that their terms of office be for four or six years, and that they be paid salaries sufficient to justify them in devoting their entire time to the public business.

"Such a legislative assembly would not, I believe, be more expensive than our present system. It would centralize responsibility and accountability, and under the check of the recall, would be quickly responsive to the wishes of the people.

"A legislative assembly such as I have suggested could give ample time to the consideration of every measure, not only in relation to its subject matter, but to the drafting of it in plain, concise and easily understandable language. It would be ready at any time to deal with new conditions, and to provide relief in emergency cases, and, with time to inform itself about conditions, and to study the needs of the people, and of our state institutions, there seems to me to be no question but what it would be vastly more efficient than our present system, as well as vastly more economical.

"Our present system has been in vogue since Kansas became a state more than fifty years ago, and in that time we have seen the most remarkable changes in sociological and economic conditions take place.

"No private business concern now uses the methods of fifty years ago. In every activity of modern life, new and progressive methods have been adopted.

"Is there any good reason why political institutions should not change with the changing demands of modern social and economic conditions? I believe not. The leaven of this new idea of modern business methods for modern public business has taken root in the public mind. The people are everywhere talking it over, and I am one of those who believe that the people can be trusted to reach correct conclusions about their own public business when they are given adequate opportunity to study and discuss any subject.

"The people of Kansas are progressive; they know what they want. Give them a chance at the ballot box and they will get it. I am not in sympathy with the idea that any public officer knows better than the people themselves what they want.

"I am not asking at this time that any legislative action be taken on this subject, but am calling your attention to this subject now that you may carry back to your people the idea herein expressed and talk it over with them for the next two years to the end that when you come back to these halls at that time you may know and be of a mind to execute the will of the people of this state on this subject."

A dispatch from Topeka says the governor's plan stirred the legislators with varying emotions. The progressive democrats, the young men of the party, indorsed the governor's message. Also the progressives favored it. The standpatters viewed it with alarm.