

Another Plutocrat

In a recent issue of *The Commoner* the readers were given a sample of the kind of slush that passes for wisdom in plutocratic circles—I refer to the remarks of President Underwood of the Erie. And now comes Mr. A. B. Leach, president of the Investment Bankers Association of America, and enters the contest for the prize in asininity.

A recent issue of "The Bankers Magazine" quotes him as saying:

"We are creating bureaus and commissions and filling them with \$5,000 a year men to tell the \$50,000 a year heads of our corporations what to do and what not to do. The best government in the world never had a monopoly on honesty, integrity and efficiency, and this country would prosper more if it hampered business less."

It is strange that a man who could give utterance to the above sentiment should occupy a position of prominence in the business world.

According to Mr. Leach's logic, no public official should be permitted to take part in the regulation of any one drawing a larger salary than himself—a doctrine that would make regulation and restriction impossible. If Mr. Leach's theory is put into operation, the salaries of state legislators would have to be made as much as the incomes of those for whose regulation or restriction they make laws; a judge, according to this theory, could not sit in a case which involved the rights of litigants richer than himself; congressmen or senators with a salary of \$7,500 would, if his position were correct, have no right to make laws to regulate trust magnates with incomes measured by millions. What would Mr. Leach say of an attorney-general, drawing but \$12,000 a year, prosecuting the highly paid directors of a railroad, for wrecking the road? Even the president, with a paltry salary of \$75,000, would by Mr. Leach's logic be estopped from signing a bill affecting a railroad president with \$100,000, especially if by the exploitation of his stockholders the railroad president has made \$50,000,000 in ten years.

How far will Mr. Leach carry his theory that a \$5,000 man is unfit to oversee the work of a man with a larger income. Would he say that it would be improper for a sheriff with a salary of \$2,500 to arrest a bank cashier guilty of embezzling half a million? And should a governor, drawing only \$10,000 a year, be prohibited from granting a pardon to a rich criminal "whose health is being undermined by close confinement in the penitentiary?" Or would a different rule apply to this case?

Mr. Leach says that "THE BEST GOVERNMENT IN THE WORLD NEVER HAD A MONOPOLY ON HONESTY, INTEGRITY AND EFFICIENCY." What has that to do with the question? The government, acting for all the people, has a right to define honesty and integrity and to compel efficiency on the part of those in charge of quasi public corporations.

He says that "THIS COUNTRY WOULD PROSPER MORE IF IT HAMPERED BUSINESS LESS." He ought to be specific. He is in the banking business and he has ample reason to know that a handful of Wall street financiers did, for a generation, hamper business for their own enrichment—a great deal more than business is hampered by the government, acting unselfishly and for the public good. Men like Mr. Underwood and Mr. Leach would better understand the new era if, instead of glibly expressing their contempt for the people's representatives, they would address themselves to the science of government, and learn that a corporation has only those rights which are conferred upon it by the public, and that it is not fair to assume that the public would create a corporation without, at the same time, reserving the right to so limit and restrict it as to make it serve the public welfare. If "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the truth," it may become necessary to rely upon men with small salaries to execute statutes of restraint.

W. J. BRYAN.

There are times when one can discern the benefit that comes from a senate in which the administration party has but a narrow margin of voting strength. For one thing it enables the party members to find out, when a contest arises over a piece of legislation strongly urged by the president, the head of the organization, how many senators who claim to belong to and represent the party, are not mere pretenders.

FELLOWSHIP CLUB

President Howard of the Commonwealth Steel Company (Granite City, Ill.) has organized a Fellowship club among his employes. It began with fifteen members in 1906, rose to one hundred and twenty-one in 1907, and to five hundred and fifty in 1912. The club now issues a paper called *The Commonwealther*, the first number of which contains the following salutary:

"I issue from the heart of things to those who really love sincerity and truth.

"Reverencing a Supreme Power; doing unto others as we would have them do unto us; recognizing business as truthful service, a fair opportunity to all; safe and proper working conditions; honest work; just compensation; right thinking; true living; pure friendships and all the glorious fun in the world—are the things I most love and for which I stand.

"I am edited by good fellowship and published by all those who pass along my gospel of kindness.

"My price is beyond the reach of any but the very rich—those who are rich in kindness, honesty and good cheer.

"If you pay this price you can have me without money cost."

Success to *The Commonwealther*. President Howard is an enthusiastic supporter of the *Safety First* propaganda. He says:

"As our business is a proper one in its object to give right service and to protect life and property with its devices, it can not be necessary that we injure men in producing those devices. Let us then, and without timidity, set the mark for ourselves that we eliminate all accidents and set our faces resolutely to that end.

"*Safety First* shall be our policy, for if it were not so, we would value money above the lives, limbs, and health of our workmen, for every haste and so-called economy that the policy of *Safety First* would seem to interfere with, is measurable in dollars and cents. We older men must set the example to our Commonwealth Fellowship club boys and other young men that money to be enjoyed, must be well earned and be clean of all selfish cost. We should find, however, that safety work being a study of the right and orderly way to do things, will increase efficiency and aid economy.

"This is not only an appeal to the employes of the company to observe every care for the safety of themselves and of others. It is also a direct order from the company to every superintendent, foreman or other person having authority over its employes, to see that those under them take proper care for their own safety and for the safety of others in doing their work.

"More important than safe machines and safe places are habits of care and watchfulness.

"Remember that while every man is hired to do some particular work, the safety of himself and his fellow workmen is more important than that work.

"Remember that if a workman has a preventable accident, to that extent he is unsuccessful in his job; and to that extent his foreman is unsuccessful in his foremanship.

"When carefulness and efficiency become fixed habits, accidents will not trouble us."

Government chemists have discovered a method of treating petroleum by which the output of gasoline will be doubled and provide a supply of products necessary in the making of dyes and high explosives. These were problems that baffled the experts of the big corporations that are interested in these industries. Where the public benefits is that these discoveries by government chemists will be available to all who can make use of them. If the experts of the big industrial corporations had made them, the economies and the profits would have been theirs.

The New York chamber of commerce has adopted resolutions declaring as its opinion that the government should create a shipping board to ascertain the excess of cost over operating a ship under American registry over foreign registry, and then appropriate money to pay that difference. If the New York chamber of commerce will consult public opinion it will discover a fairly unanimous sentiment that revenues can be put to much more profitable uses.

Colonel Roosevelt is still proclaiming his belief that the "surest way to avoid war is to be prepared for it." There are seven or eight nations in Europe that the colonel will be compelled to pass over in selecting witnesses to support his claim.

TWO YEARS OF WILSON

On the fiftieth anniversary of Lincoln's second inaugural, Woodrow Wilson completes half his presidential term.

These two years of the Wilson administration have helped to make more history than any other two years since Lincoln. The coming two years of the Wilson administration must inevitably be the most momentous period that this country has known since the civil war.

It is a fact of enormous importance that this crisis finds in the White house a president who is completely master of himself. Being master of himself, he is master of his party and of his administration.

There is no kitchen cabinet. There are no back-stairs advisers. There are no secret influences that pull and sway the policies of the executive. No underground wires from the White house into Wall street or into the headquarters of any political committee. Men may agree with Mr. Wilson or disagree with him; they may like him or they may dislike him; but everybody knows that he and he alone is president. Everybody knows that during the remaining two years of his term he and he alone will be president.

A very unusual man, meet to cope with a very unusual situation in the affairs of mankind—a president who in all his official relations displays neither vanity nor resentment, nor anger nor personal ambition. If he has friends, their friendship counts for nothing in the affairs of state. If he has enemies, their enmity weighs nothing in the balance of government. He seeks neither to reward the one nor to punish the other.

So evenly does he hold the scales that the members of the diplomatic corps, with all their highly developed facilities for obtaining information, have never been able to learn where the president's personal sympathies lie in the great conflict that is now devastating Europe. Whatever his individual opinions may be, he has smothered them in the responsibilities of his office.

At this period in their first term most presidents have been carefully calculating their chances of renomination and re-election. Nobody knows whether Mr. Wilson intends to be a candidate for re-election or not. Not a member of the cabinet, not a member of congress, can say of his own knowledge that the president desires re-election or that he would not refuse a nomination. What all of them know is that the president would not stoop from principle to win either a renomination or a re-election.

That is where his great strength lies. That is where his great usefulness lies in this crisis. It is easy to rattle the sabre. It is easy to make the welkin ring. It is easy to be spectacular and sensational and theatrical. It is easy to be a demagogue. It is easy to juggle with the fate of a nation when no man can foresee what the next day will bring forth. But it is not easy to be calm and restrained and judicial. It is not easy to face every responsibility without prejudice and without passion. It is not easy to hew straight to the line of first principles, regardless of applause or censure or praise or denunciation. It is not easy to be sane when the world has given itself over to madness.

The enormous good fortune of the people of the United States in the storm and stress of these coming years is that their chief magistrate is sane—the sanest mind today that is intrusted with the responsibilities of government anywhere in civilization.—*New York World*.

President Wilson was unable, by reason of the opposition of a small group of democratic senators, to secure the enactment of the ship purchase bill. It was a sane and intelligent effort to provide a means by which the greed of the owners of vessels engaged in the ocean carrying trade might be curbed. The principal reason urged against it was that the competition thus created would be ineffective. At the same time the senate had before it the result of the government's action in establishing a bureau to sell war risk insurance, which was followed immediately by a tremendous reduction in existing insurance. Evidently the principal reason was not given.

Twenty-six treaties of peace negotiated by the state department were ratified by the senate during the congress just closed. This represented the first definite effort to put into practice and upon paper duly signed and sealed the peace protestations to which our nation has so often in the past given voice.