

## A Beautiful Ending

The fight for the eight-hour-a-day law had a beautiful termination. The threat of a strike gave all the enemies of labor the opportunity to criticize the working men and impeach their patriotism. The acquiescence by the employers to the demands of the brotherhoods gave the jingo press a chance to eulogize the railroad magnates. Then a few hours afterwards—a very few hours—the supreme court rendered a sweeping decision sustaining the contentions of the working men and declared the eight-hour-a-day law constitutional—and all are happy. All is well that ends well.

The eight-hour-a-day law has been declared constitutional by the supreme court of the United States—the court standing six to three in favor of the law. The court, in the decision read by the chief justice, swept away all technicality and temporization and planted itself upon the substantial ground that the public must have protection and that the parties in the controversy having been unable to agree, congress discharged only its duty in stepping in and protecting the public's interest. The decision marks a decisive advance on the road to national peace and prosperity.

The recognition of the public's interest is not only timely, but necessary. The idea that the employer and employee, who together constitute not more than one-tenth of the total population, should be allowed to fight out a controversy to the injury of the public which furnishes both the profit of the employer and the wages of the employee, has ceased to be a tenable position. The largest party in interest is the public whose business furnishes to the railroads and their working men both the opportunity and the emolument. The way is now clear for economic progress; employer and employee are at liberty to confer and to agree, but the people will not be hopeless nor helpless.

The decision was a great victory—a victory for the working men, not that it gives them the shorter hours which they deserved, and the increased pay which present conditions makes necessary, but it helps the legislators by bringing to an end a long drawn out controversy and helps the public. The decision is thus a three-fold blessing to the nation.

W. J. BRYAN.

Below is an extract from Mr. Bryan's speech during the last presidential campaign. Following a reference to the part played by President Wilson in bringing about a peaceful solution of the controversy between the railroads and the brotherhoods in the summer of 1916, and securing the enactment of an eight-hour day law, Mr. Bryan said:

"The greatest effect was the support it gave to the eight hour day in the United States. While the immediate beneficiaries of this law number only between three hundred and four hundred thousand, every wage earner in the nation is a participant in the benefits of this law, for it has brought that struggle to a successful issue. It has been a long struggle. If you will read the platforms of the parties you will find that as far back as eight years ago both of the great parties declared in favor of an eight-hour day. I put myself on record as in favor of an eight-hour day years ago. I believe in it. These laboring men are a part of our community; they are a part of our business life; they are a part of our political life, and they have a right to live up to all the possibilities of American citizenship. If you drive the laboring man from his bed to his work and from his work back to his bed again, how is he to know the comforts of home life. And how is he to prepare himself for the discharge of the duties of citizenship? It is a farce to say to the laboring man that he is a citizen and then allow him to be prevented from preparing himself to enjoy the things you give him. The eight-hour day is now a fact, and it has been established under the leadership of a President who wisely used the opportunity presented."

There seems to be a dearth of candidates for the job of king in several European countries. There also seems to be a reason

### A NEW RUSSIA

The basis of the new government established in Russia shows that democracy has won a complete victory. It reads as follows:

"1. An immediate general amnesty for all political and religious offenses, including terrorist acts and military and agrarian offenses.

"2. Liberty of speech and the press; freedom for alliances, unions and strikes with the extension of these liberties to military officials within the limits admitted by military requirements.

"3. Abolition of all social, religious and national restrictions.

"4. Proceed forthwith to the preparation and convocation of a constitutional assembly based on universal suffrage, which will establish a governmental regime.

"5. The substitution of the police by a national militia, with chiefs to be elected and responsible to the government.

"6. Communal elections, to be based on universal suffrage.

"7. The troops which participated in the revolutionary movement will not be disbanded, but will remain in Petrograd.

"8. While maintaining strict military discipline for troops in active service, it is desirable to adopt for soldiers all restrictions in the enjoyment of social rights accorded other citizens.

"The provisional government desires to add that it has no intention to profit by the circumstances of the war to delay the realization of the measures of reform above mentioned."

Freedom of speech and of the press—these are not only fundamental but they furnish the broad base upon which to erect popular government. If the czar had permitted freedom of speech he might have known something of public sentiment and saved himself by yielding. The ruler who silences his critics and tries to run his government according to the flattery of his courtiers invites revolution.

"Universal suffrage" at one step. How different from the experience of the countries where the extension of suffrage has been gradual—each step won after a struggle. "The abolition of all social, religious and national restrictions," and "amnesty for all political and religious offenses!" They have torn despotism out by the roots and planted in its place the tree of liberty. The people are king—"long live the king!"

W. J. BRYAN.

### OHIO'S DRY DEMOCRACY

The dry democrats of Ohio have just held a state convention and adopted a set of resolutions which will be found on another page.

This is the first state convention the dry democrats have ever held—Ohio leads the way.

The resolutions refer to the approaching anniversary of Jefferson's birth—an anniversary made the more interesting by the adoption of Jeffersonian ideas in Russia and by the growth of these ideas in Germany.

The two points emphasized in the resolutions are, first, the need of prohibition to raise the standard of military efficiency and, second, the need of prohibition to conserve the nation's food supply. These two arguments will aid powerfully in securing legislation against the saloon, and the Ohio democrats were quick to make use of them.

The dry democrats pledge themselves to aid in the adoption of the prohibition amendment. Good for Ohio. The Commoner is at their service—its columns are theirs until the fight is won.

W. J. BRYAN.

Lieutenant Governor Howard, a staunch democrat, declared that the wet democratic majority in the Nebraska senate, when it passed a bill that if made into law would make prohibition impossible of enforcement in the state, "had crucified the democratic party on a beer keg." Mr. Howard has the splendid virtue of being able to state a fact in a striking manner.

With nineteen states dry and six others in process of drying up it is not difficult, when the chief executives meet, to recall just what it was that the governor of North Carolina said to the governor of South Carolina.

The pacifists are patriotic enough to hope that their fears may not be realized—patriotic enough to hope that events may vindicate the wisdom of those who wanted war.

## Two Important Decisions

The decision on the Webb-Kenyon law and the decision on the eight-hour-a-day law, rendered within a few hours of each other, have given the supreme court additional credit of popular confidence. All the power of the liquor lobbies had been brought to bear to defeat the passage of the Webb-Kenyon law, and the men with millions invested in the liquor interests employed their ablest counselors to urge upon the court the unconstitutionality of the law. When seven judges out of nine voted to sustain the law, a complete answer was given to any who might question the partiality of the court on this long disputed question.

The decision on the eight-hour-a-day law is even more convincing proof of the impartiality of the court. The law passed by congress was made an issue in the campaign and one of the candidates boldly charged that congress had been coerced into the passage of the law. It was made one of the leading issues in the campaign, and the railroads hoped to be able to nullify the law by judicial decision. The court met the issue fairly and squarely and stated its position in unequivocal language. The law stands; the authority of congress is vindicated; the power of the people triumphs; the country moves forward, and the highest court in the land enjoys the complete confidence of its citizens.

W. J. BRYAN.

### AS USUAL

The people of Nebraska have been given proof of the futility of expecting a political leopard to change its spots. During the 1916 campaign Mr. Bryan told the voters of his home state that he intended to vote only for those candidates for the legislature who were supporters of the dry amendment, regardless of their political affiliations, and advised voters to do likewise. The house elected was three-fourths dry, the senate three-fifths wet. The house passed a bill putting teeth into prohibition. Save in the respect that it was necessarily influenced by the Reed amendment to the Webb-Kenyon law, it was responsive to the wishes of the people who had supported the prohibitory amendment in 1916. It provided a law that made bootlegging almost impossible. The senate took the house measure, changed it into a bill that sought to permit the manufacture of beer that contains a low percentage of alcohol and which furnished a market for the brewers and distillers by throwing the mantle of protection around illegal sale by jointists and bootleggers. Wherever the house bill was strong, the senate bill made it weak. More than a hundred amendments, nearly all of them deliberately and purposely drawn for the purpose of making prohibition impossible were attached to the bill by the nineteen wet senators—seventeen democrats and two republicans—and put through. At this writing the bill is in the hands of conference committees. Six of the eighteen senators who supported the bill had pledged the people that they would support, if elected, any bill that the dries in the legislature would agree upon. They broke this pledge. It may or may not be that they had another pledge or promise out that they did not break. It was not the pledge the democratic party made in state convention either.

Legislative assaults upon the direct primary were as numerous as ever at the recent sessions of state law-making bodies, but so far as observed none of the states took a backward step in the matter. The politicians, who are the principal critics of the primary method of making nominations, for obvious reasons, seldom have the courage of their convictions when the people have their eye upon them.

There are a good many loyal citizens of the United States who had hoped that the time would never return when the people of any one section would arrogate to themselves sole claim upon the possession of the virtue of patriotism. To read an eastern newspaper one would suppose that patriotism was still a matter of geography.