

EDUCATIONAL SERIES

Dissolving the "Solid South"—Mr. Taft and the New South

In his inaugural address Mr. Taft said that he hoped to increase the already good feeling between the south and other sections. He said his chief purpose was not to effect a change in the electoral vote in the southern states. That he declared is "a secondary consideration." He said he looked forward to an increase in the tolerance of political views of all kinds and their advocacy throughout the south. In this connection he declared that the negroes were entitled to all their rights. He advocated, by implication at least, the adoption of educational qualification for black and white voters alike. He said that the fifteenth amendment would never be repealed and never ought to be repealed, and he said it was the duty of their white fellows to make their path as smooth and easy as possible. But evidently Mr. Taft did not desire to be misunderstood on this point, so he added:

Any recognition of their distinguished men, any appointment to office from among their number, is properly taken as an encouragement, and an appreciation of their progress, and this just policy shall be pursued.

But it may well admit of doubt whether, in the case of any race, an appointment of one of their number to a local office in a community in which the race feeling is so widespread and

acute as to interfere with the ease and facility with which the local government business can be done by the appointee, is of sufficient benefit by way of encouragement to the race to outweigh the recurrence and increase of race feeling which such an appointment is likely to engender. Therefore, the executive, in recognizing the negro race by appointments must exercise a careful discretion not thereby to do it more harm than good. On the other hand we must be careful not to encourage the mere pretense of race feeling manufactured in the interest of individual political ambition.

Personally I have not the slightest race prejudice or feeling, and recognition of its existence only awakens in my heart a deeper sympathy for those who have to bear it or suffer from it, and I question the wisdom of a policy which is likely to increase it. Meanwhile, if nothing is done to prevent, a better feeling between the negroes and the whites in the south will continue to grow, and more and more of the white people will come to realize that the future of the south is to be much benefited by the industrial and intellectual progress of the negro. The exercise of political franchises by those of his race who are intelligent and well-to-do will be acquiesced in, and the right to vote will be withheld only from the ignorant and irresponsible of both races.

HAMILTON OR JEFFERSON?

The Houston (Texas) Post prints the following letter from Mr. A. F. Jones, of Woodville, Texas:

To the Editor: After reading the inaugural address of Mr. Taft any student of history, anyone with any knowledge of the facts, can not fail to see how utterly Mr. Taft misunderstands the southern people and the million and one things he does not know about the negro question. Mr. Taft's winter sojourn in the south and his frank statement of his purpose to break the solid democratic vote of the south and deliver at least one or more of the southern states over to the republican party should cause the democrats of the south to study carefully the situation, and as citizens and taxpayers to seriously study political economy and social and race problems until the principles of the g. o. p. are changed radically.

I, for one, am opposed to any change in the politics of the south. Let us see, let us compare, let us look back some years and study the question or candidly ask if or not any change from democracy is to be desired. Frankly, I think not. Texas is one of the best governed states in the union. I know this is a big assertion, but I simply defy contradiction or successful contradiction, at least.

With a lower tax rate than any northern state, Texas keeps up her eleemosynary institutions and other machinery of government, with a good school system and school fund, with a constantly increasing efficiency in the execution of law and maintenance of order. Texas certainly, it seems to me, could not be benefited by turning to the republican party, thus changing her entire policy of government.

What is true of Texas is in the main true of every southern state. Is it for government patronage that this change is desired? Surely if the south could recover from the wounds of the civil war and live and prosper as she has after the saturnalia of robbery, loot and thievery of that awful period, that nightmare of horror when almost every white man had a federal bayonet at his breast, disfranchised, at the mercy of the carpetbagger and his tool, the scalawag, and his laws made by ex-slaves who could neither read nor write, but passed or made just such laws as the carpetbagger dictated; when property was taxed until it was impossible to make the rich soil produce sufficient to pay such taxes and support the owner—I say, surely now, with all the present advantages, the south can get along without government patronage.

Let Mr. Taft and every other man on earth also know once and forever the south, the white people, will not be governed by a small number of white men backed by the solid vote of negroes. This would be the most perfect form of slavery to former slaves and that of a class not too far removed from barbarism; not so

far that there are not frequent lapses into the most horrible crimes of barbarian people.

I may be wrong, and God forgive me if I am. I do not wish to arouse sectional animosity. But every one who has studied knows that the fifteenth amendment cost the poor ignorant slave oceans of blood, for he could use it only as the creature of designing, corrupt politicians and it took the K. K. K. to save white supremacy and awaken the north to the fact that fanaticism sat enthroned and that with the martyred Lincoln there fell the balance wheel of sanity. I say the fifteenth amendment was a sin, a curse and an outrage against the white race, and further declare my belief to be that so long as there live men who lived through the period of which I speak and children of such men, the republican party can only hope to win in the south by colonizing it with northern men. And, by the way, give them two years' residence and they will be democrats, most of them.

No. The old south and the new south have their traditions, their precious memories, their literature, their heroes and martyrs; let us be true to them. We have in the south every facility we need to render us independent of the world—the wood, the water, coal, iron—all needful, and the richest soil, with cotton, corn, stock rice and the ability to manufacture. Let us be true to the Jeffersonian principles of democracy, intensely loyal to our flag, for it is ours, and every fold has been again and again baptized in southern blood. Southern heroes have borne it on many bloody battlefields; southern heroes unfurled and maintained it on foreign territory and maintained it there until that territory—an empire in quantity, quality and resources—became our territory by right of conquest, made necessary by insult and invasion of foreign foes. I refer to the great territory acquired from Mexico.

I believe southern men now regard every United States officer as their officer and are as loyal to them as any of the north, east or west.

Yes, the time has come when the wounds caused by the war are healed, but let us not reopen them. I have very little respect for the men of the south who hang around the pie counter at Washington, ready, if they could, to hand over the south to the g. o. p. if they can thereby get their hands in the government crib. They are generally disgruntled men who have been turned down by the democratic voters and can not get any patronage from the states, hence they drift into the g. o. p. so they may be bosses of colored voters and get jobs from Uncle Samuel.

Mr. Taft certainly shows discernment when he impliedly promises not to appoint negroes to offices in the south; he promises herein to respect the feelings of the people and deserves credit for it, for it is a distinct departure from

the Rooseveltian plan. The negro question is a great and overwhelming one, there is no doubt of that, but I believe if Mr. Taft and others will let the negro and the people of the south alone they will solve the question properly.

When the negro respects himself, is honest, saves his money, buys his home, pays taxes and makes a good citizen, then and not until then will white men respect him, either north or south. When you stop to think of the negro being thrust on the south as a voter and legislator and inspired to hate his former master and upheld by bayonet rule, you are simply made to wonder how, after long years of oppression and repression the white people of the south once more came into their own, they could tolerate the colored man; it was because of the old master and the old slave; the old master taught his children that the negro was not to blame, he was only the tool and shuttlecock of demagogues. The old ex-slave taught his children to respect those whom he had loved and served so faithfully, and gradually, very gradually, there grew up between the races, or the better class of both races, a mutual respect for each other in their proper places. Then the educators and pastors or churches took up the matter of trying to adjust society to the changed conditions and had not demagogues excited distrust and aroused race hatred this problem would have been solved long ago. The south needs the negro. The negro loves the south and does not flourish in a cold climate, hence the negro must largely live in the south. Ah, Mr. Taft, the future is in God's hands. He will rule and overrule men's mistakes for His glory and their good, so don't let us worry. God will bring it to pass, but just so long as time lasts patriotic men should protest against the south selling its birthright for a mess of pottage, in this case the birthright is to rule and govern themselves true to the time-honored, well-proven principles of Jeffersonian democracy. The pottage is government patronage given in exchange for what? Surrendering the above to Hamiltonian ideas of government, represented or carried out by republicanism. I think the negro is doing fairly well in Texas. If he pays his poll tax he can kill my vote. The white taxpayers are educating his children, making absolutely no difference in the amount of money per scholar; he has his churches, his schools, his lodges and his citizenship and does not long like his colored brother of the north for social equality and that can never be realized, north or south, and ought not to be, for it degrades the white race and does not elevate the colored; but I shall say this just here. My purpose herein is simply to raise my voice against republicanizing the south until the g. o. p. changes its base and brings forth fruits meet for repentance. No, Mr. Taft, if the g. o. p. is the same that ruled and misruled during the days of reconstruction I, for one southern man, beg to be excused from voting Texas into that column. Mr. Taft is a very takable man, genial, whole-souled; all in all, a well-rounded out character. More, he is a great man. No man of mean ability could have risen as he has. He has proven a fit in nearly or quite every place he has occupied. He is my chief executive and I propose to be loyal to him and every man he appoints to help administer and execute the laws, and I hope for prosperity, but I will not, nay, can not, be smiled, cajoled or misled into the g. o. p. I may be joined to my idols. If so, I am a satisfied idolater, and bid the big, cheery, brave president Godspeed and vote the democratic ticket.

Woodville, Texas.

A. F. JONES.

BISHOP CANDLER ON THE "SOLID SOUTH"

The Atlanta Journal, in its issue of January 17, printed an article entitled "Dissolving the Solid South." This article was written by Bishop Warren A. Candler and was as follows:

Objection is being urged to the solidity of the "solid south," and intimations have been given out that an effort is being made to disintegrate it. Concerning the political phases of the subject, in the light of which men determine their party affiliations, I have nothing to say; but about the general subject I have some reflections to offer.

And first of all I would like to inquire why so much objection is urged to a "solid south" while nothing is said of a "solid New England?" The solidity of the latter is as obdurate and persistent as the solidity of the former, and for much the same reasons, doubtless. There is no