

SPEECHES DELIVERED AT BRYAN BIRTHDAY DINNER

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How far we are from the world he knew! How different our conditions from those which produced the man Lincoln! What manner of men will the conditions now obtaining among the idle rich, the real rulers of America, produce?

The impression that people generally have that society is composed entirely of frivolous people, living only for pleasure and freakish ostentation, is a false impression. Of course, I know that there are such, but they are very few, and the small unhappy few who are perpetually seeking pleasure, little realize why they are sinking so deeply into insignificance.

The truth is, that there are very few among the idle rich who do not have very serious moments with themselves. Most of them, were the question plainly put, would state that they care most for some of the real values of life—for sound knowledge—for opportunity to perform real service—for honors deservedly won from their fellow men.

I am not denouncing the idle rich. Even the useful workers at the bottom of the social ladder wisely ignore mere denunciation. The single sin of the idle rich is that they are the idle rich.

Let us enter a fashionable restaurant or the dining hall of a metropolitan hotel. What shall we see? Hundreds of people at dinner. At first sight, one might think they were there to nourish their bodies. Not at all. The orchestra plays, conversation hums, food and drink of a kind and of a quantity far beyond the needs of the diners is ordered. Why have the people gathered? To fill out the day with a pleasant diversion, that is all.

In a vacant field beside a brick school house in the country, a dozen boys are playing ball, and we hear shouts of joy, occasionally an angry word. Every child's heart is bent on victory. This is sport. A mile away is a fashionable country club. Young men and women in carefully tailored summer garments are playing golf. Listen for the shouts of joy and you will hear the cawing of the crows. The conversation turns upon the subject of how much more fun it is to do something else at some other time, at some other place. And so throughout the whole dreary list of the so-called pleasures of the idle rich. Yachting and horse racing, tennis and hunting, these are not sports. These are schemes prepared to keep people from being bored to death by the mere fact of living.

Think of the deterioration implied by the fact that the word "society" in science, applied to the sum of those facts of human life which spring from association and companionship, misused to denote only the joint efforts of the frivolous to waste their time. No wonder that many of the idle rich, those who have active minds and sane tastes, turn again to business out of sheer despair.

How many of the idle rich, while hard at work playing, or playing at work, have paused to ask the question: Why are we not at work like other people? Why are there so many of us? Why are we the lucky possessors of such colossal fortunes? All facts have causes. Surely the causes of such distinctly marked phenomena can not be far to seek. And yet, judging from the conversation of the people one meets, these interesting bits of information do not seem to be very widely diffused.

For an explanation of social facts, we must go to social history, and social history is, at its foundations, industrial history. The cause of the existence of the idle rich class of today is fully explained by the history

of industrial America during the past generation.

Great wealth is always gathered by the few from the many who create it. In the south, before the civil war, the owner of a large plantation took the wealth produced by the labor of slaves by what we may call direct exploitation. The whole product of a plantation was seized by the owner. Food and clothing, of a kind, was returned to the slave, the remainder being kept to enrich the master. Of course, great fortunes were accumulated.

When the workers become "free" the process is somewhat different, but the result is the same. Let us say that a hundred men are employed in a factory. They work for wages. The employer takes the whole product. He returns to the worker his wages, which, in the long run, always amount to just enough to support him in a condition fit for his work. The remainder of the proceeds of the industry, after the wages are paid, is kept as profits. The workers remain poor. The employer waxes rich.

In the region which Abraham Lincoln knew as a boy and as a young man, there were neither plantations nor factories. The bulk of the population lived on small farms, toiled with their own tools and remained in possession of their own product. Some few possessed and personally attended to small stores or factories. These could not grow rich. Great riches must be derived from the labor of the many.

The rich of the eastern states fifty years ago were the owners of banks, large importing houses, railroads and factories. But these industries, being comparatively small, gave rise to what now would seem only small fortunes. There were riches but not great riches. Then there came over the industrial life of America a change, and such a change! Nothing comparable to it could have been known in former centuries.

Let us reflect, for a moment, upon present day events. A great industrial corporation forbids its employes to organize a union. The employes strike in defense of their almost universally acknowledged right to organize. The company refuses to arbitrate the strike. Thereupon, other unions strike in sympathy with their brethren and join in a war upon their employers. Property is destroyed. Men, women and children are shot dead in the streets. A hundred thousand join in the struggle of the workers against the capitalists. Still there is a refusal of the employers to arbitrate. What unmitigated folly have we here? Are not these employers of labor aware of even the simplest facts of history? "Whom the Gods would destroy, they first make mad." Better still, let us say, "Whom history would destroy it first puffs up with vanity and makes to gloat with power." Is much intelligence required to comprehend that a few idle rich can not make war upon the toiling many, and live?

The future tactics of organized labor are perfectly evident. It will see that a hundred thousand organized, borne down by three hundred thousand unorganized, can not succeed. It will organize the unorganized, solidify its ranks, and consolidate its power. This will be conducted upon a tremendous and hitherto unknown scale throughout the nation. Some day there will be a strike which the idle rich will be only too glad to arbitrate. But the time for arbitration will be gone.

Aristocracy in industry must give way to industrial democracy. The rule of the few in industry is bound to make way for the rule of the many—the rule of all for all. Society is growing into this new condition. Shall the ripe fruit of the future civilization, like the "full juiced

apple, sweetened with the summer light, and waxing over-mellow, drop in the silent autumn night," or shall it come in the time which the more modern poet prophesies, when "whirl winds of rebellion shake the world?"

I have faith strong enough to believe that we will decide for the best. If there were any questions as to which side the victory might lay, I would think my own present effort utopian. But there is no question as to the "Passing of the Idle Rich." The only question is, shall it pass from the stage of history as befits a class which has "endured and done in days of yore," or shall it, in ignorance and folly, hasten its own death by forcing the issue.

Whenever a ruling class degenerates because it has no longer any social service to perform, it plays havoc with the public weal. Then, ignorant pessimism cries out that the world is coming to an end. But, intelligence no longer shrinks at the thought of profound social change.

It sees in every successive social revolution the growth of a new and better order. The atrophied organs of society drop away. New powers are generated and new political systems arise. The creation of new economic relationships is now causing the evolution of new social and political relationships. Following knight and monarch and merchant and plutocrat, the place of power is at last to be filled by the most ordinary individual, the common man. From work shop and mine he comes to rule the state; and he must build this new industrial democracy in his own image. Not in anger and hatred, but with profound respect for the achievements of the past, and with sound knowledge of the forces which have guided its progress, comes this modern lord.

The idle rich can not chain democracy. It has grown too great. Regularly at intervals of about fifteen years, it breaks its bounds. The question is not, what are we going to do about the great problems of industrial society, but, rather, what is industrial society doing with us?

The modern machine process is abolishing waste, in production, and the idle rich are a form of social waste. Hence the passing of the idle rich from the stage of history. During the last five centuries the progress of our race has been marked by revolution after revolution. These revolutions have constantly enlarged the fields of liberty. The renaissance, springing largely from the printing press and the developing commerce of the time, broke the authority of the intellectual aristocracy. It gave to great masses of people freedom to know and to think for themselves.

The protestant reformation started by breaking the power of the church over wealth. It ended by breaking the power of church over mind. A hundred religious denominations and sects expressed a hundred different views of life and of the after life. Complete freedom of religious belief and popular government of the church was its final goal.

The political revolutions of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries broke the power of kingly authority and established the great fundamental political rights of our own time. However limited these rights may be, they mark a wonderful advance over the tyrannies which preceded them.

Modern civilization, by giving humanity the material equipment to control and use the forces of nature, has given the world this larger freedom—freedom from the restrictions which its primitive life required.

This magnificent sweep of history forward to the superman, or free man, has just begun. Of course the ignorant in every age have conceived that the world began and ended with them; that in their own lives perfec-

tion was realized. And the pessimist, out of his own diseased imagination formulating laws of "civilization and decay," is prepared with proof that a miserable world is about to collapse. But the stupid are growing fewer, and the pessimist almost extinct. What will our age contribute to democracy—to the rights, to the power, to the opportunities, to the growth of mankind?

To intellectual freedom, religious freedom and political freedom, will be added a new freedom. This new freedom will be based upon the right of the individual to labor, and the right of the workers as a community to the full product of their labor.

The centuries of struggle for popular control of the church and popular control of the state, are now being followed by a struggle for the popular control of industry. When American industries were in a primitive stage, when the tools of production were small, political liberty was liberty indeed. But as the simple tools of production developed into great machines; as the small business became the gigantic industrial corporation, political liberty was no longer possible. And if it were possible to cling to political rights, while industrial rights were being lost, they would have but little significance. Tell the unemployed and starving laborer that he has a right to vote on election day, and he will reply that he will sell his vote for bread. Facts multiply to show that our political government is subservient to our industrial government.

The new struggle for democracy is the struggle for popular government of our industrial system. It is a principle of political democracy that those who are governed by the state should have a part in such government. The future will evolve an industrial democracy in which he who works, he who is employed in the nation's organized industries, will have a part in the government of those industries. If the executives and legislatures of political government must be responsible to the people, so must also the executives and legislatures of industrial governments. Thus the ownership and control of the nation's means of life will be assumed by the people who labor.

"Let the people rule" has been the message of generation after generation of American democrats—of Jefferson and Jackson, of Abraham Lincoln and of William Jennings Bryan. Very well. So let it be "LET THE PEOPLE RULE"—INDUSTRY. If the officials of political government are rightly elected by and responsible to the whole people, why should not the officials of industrial government be similarly elected and similarly responsible?

The history of the modern world is assuredly the history of the evolution of the power of mankind over the physical universe. Those who can so largely control the forces of nature, can control themselves.

Freedom of men and women to labor, to live, and to grow—such is the message of democracy in the twentieth century.

The world has already realized so much which was thought vain hope and pious wish in the days gone by, that the prophet of change is no longer viewed as an enemy of society. In fact, a more or less clearly discerned vision of the future is absolutely necessary to him who seriously considers the problems of the present. We are bold to assert that the world is on the eve of attaining much of which the ages past have dared to dream, but not to hope for. Our vision does not picture the future as coming to pass in some far tropic isle, nor in the "City of the Sun." It sees it taking form all about us. It is tomorrow's results of the labors of today.

In that future all will work and all