

PURPOSE OF GOVERNMENT

Mr. Plain Charges "Loose Construction" With Harlotry—Strict Construction Means Liberty

Editor Independent: Some time ago you asked what the subscribers had to say about organized capital and organized labor; also, spoke about an organized people. Under the above caption, we will try and open up a line of thought which may give some light on the cause of so much erroneous doctrine about the rights of capital vs. labor. We may be a little tedious, but we will have only one thought in view; that will be, the purpose of governments. Governments that are for the good of all, must as far as possible dispense justice to all, privilege to none. What should be the great end of government, is not to foster special privileges, but to foster the principle that "all men are created equal." Any other interpretation of a constitutional government is not compatible with the doctrine, that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed."

The great aim and purpose of governments is not only to keep the rich from oppressing the poor, but, as far as possible, remove want and the fear of want. Its greatest powers should not be to foster what some may call class legislation, but to keep the channels of commerce open so that the proceeds of labor will flow through. If the sordidness of the human race was removed, there would be no such a thing as the shunting of the proceeds of labor into the hands of the ultra-opulent; wealth would not be always in the throes of corruption, nor would it accrue in the hands of the few, unless the few gave due compensation for such privileges; but on the other hand would be a blessing to all mankind; would in the way of comforts for all make us a happy and a contented people; for the ultra-distinction of wealth is the amount of happiness it dispenses, when it is equitably distributed. The general happiness of the community depends on the distribution of wealth. Wealth that flows through the channels of commerce, without any restrictions, and gives to the toiling millions in just the same proportion as they help to swell the channels of commerce with the products of labor, will bestow on the masses as much happiness as human institutions are capable of bestowing. Human institutions cannot be perfect; but the philosophy of justice and equity should be so prominent in the doctrines of government that the sincerity of liberty-loving citizens could easily be measured by principles which are within themselves immutable, indestructible and self-evident.

The first duty of government is to guarantee safety; without safety there is no peace; without peace there could be neither happiness nor liberty. The only peace is that which makes happiness the paramount and fundamental principle of progress; a happiness that is stultified by injustice, or which, in other words, warps the aim of government, is not compatible with the theory of liberty. No people can equitably adjust the workings of government, where the natural channels of commerce and social equity are clogged with illicit legislation; for the most exalted purpose of government is to keep intact those principles and theories that are the bulwark, over which the distribution of wealth can flow, so that the equitable proceeds naturally falls into those channels which allow the producers of wealth to gather, each and all alike, a just portion of wealth, as the fruits of his toil.

We have two forms of constitutional government: one which by a loose construction centralizes the power into the hands of the few; in other

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words, the principle of loose construction is in harmony with the "doctrine of thrones," and is more or less in accord with plutocracy, or is more or less the legitimate offspring of the aristocratic idea that kings have "divine rights."

Loose construction is the entering wedge of paternalism in governments. We might say paternalism, special privileges, or, in other words, discrimination is the harlot of loose construction. When government ceases to travel on the high plane of equity and justice, and becomes the prostitute of wealth, it ceases to be the implement of justice and becomes the instrument of extortion and legislative blackmail.

Governments that place on their statutes laws that discriminate against the many in favor of the few are not in the true sense liberal governments and are, therefore, to be placed in that category, where the rights of the many are subservient to the will of the few.

Governments so constructed that the will of a self-constituted authority, which is dominated by a lust for gain, can change the policy at the whim of every interest that fattens itself by such a change, are as much aristocratic governments as though formed and enforced by those who believe in the powers of a king.

The true test of a government is its power to keep open the natural avenues of social and political progress. No people trammelled with "legislative larceny" can reach the plane of civilization, which gives to each and every citizen an independence that is broad enough for the citizen to protect all of his rights; yet not so broad but every other citizen can enjoy the same liberty. The virtue of government depends on its strict interpretation of the rights of its constituency. A strict interpretation of constitutional government recognizes that every citizen has rights that are inalienable.

No government under which its citizens can discharge their whole duty can do any more than to bestow on each citizen rights that the citizen naturally gathers to himself. A government that is unbiased will defend those rights that are the chief cornerstone of freedom.

Governments are really what the people make them; governments will be just in proportion as the people feel and enforce justice. The workings of government must show the spirit of free institutions, if the people enjoy the fruits of freedom. Liberty may be partially felt and perhaps may be by the few enjoyed, but a liberty that throbs with justice and defends the field of opportunity, as the heritage of all men, cannot fail to bestow on the whole people the fruits of the most exalted civilization, and give each a just compensation, as the natural result of an equitable distribution of wealth.

While we have written quite extensively on the above heading, we have tried to make plain the purpose of governments; tried to impress the reader that it lies in the power of the people to say whether a small part of the citizens of this great commonwealth shall enjoy, as their special patrimony, the great resources of this country.

We wish to impress the great American people that they are the ones to blame; if the few wax rich, they, the people, are to blame. Governments are just as good as the people make them. All that is the matter with the people is they want the institutions of freedom, but don't want to bear the burdens that freedom costs.

We think that civic virtue would redeem much of the oppression under which the people groan. Many are crying that there is no chance for the people, when the men who are sent to represent them are so susceptible to the dollar. It is too true that political virtue is a thing of the past. But the time is coming when the people will come into their own.

To recapitulate: we will say that loose construction put on constitutional government is but the plutocratic theory applied to government; it is the power behind the throne, which says that all effort to equally distribute the wealth of the nation, originates in the heart of the low bred; hence, the only safety is for the superior few to make the science of wealth the groundwork of government.

In fact, the only political economy with the plutocrat is that which turns the whole wealth as a special privilege into the hands of the few. A citizen must discriminate between a doctrine which distributes the wealth of the whole people, so that each citizen gets as his share of the proceeds of labor, that portion that is justly due him, and a doctrine which robs the many for the few. PERRY D. PLAIN, Atwater, Ill.

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