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POLITICS IN NEW ZEALAND

(A REVIEW OF DR. TAYLOR'S LATEST BOOK)

No man in the United States has done more than Dr. Charles F. Taylor of Philadelphia in the way of educating the people to a better understanding of their rights and the possibilities of progressive government. Other men have made more noise than he—have been advertised more—have claimed more; but none has done more unselfish, quiet, effective work.

Dr. Taylor is editor and publisher of the Medical World, a monthly journal of great value to the medical fraternity and enjoying a wide circulation. For years the editor has had a department entitled "Our Monthly Talk," in which he has something to say each month on matters of legislation and administration which will make for progress—for a more equitable distribution of wealth. When one reads that the physician's profession gives him, better than any other, a chance of knowing how the people live—and that this, nine times out of ten, tends to make him a radical or progressive—the value of Dr. Taylor's "Monthly Talk" is at once apparent.

But that is only a part of Dr. Taylor's work. In September, 1898, he began the "Equity Series," a quarterly publication "devoted to advanced and progressive presentation of public questions," the first number being entitled "Rational Money." Other valuable numbers followed, for a time the crowning feature being Prof. Frank Parsons' "City for the People." But Dr. Taylor was not content. He must give the people concrete examples of applied populism—for, although the doctor is not a partisan in any sense, yet he has been a member of the national executive committee of the people's party, and an active worker for the party. Nowhere on earth has populism been applied more thoroughly than in New Zealand—and the upshot of it all was that Dr. Taylor secured the services of Prof. Parsons to write the facts about that progressive country. "The Story of New Zealand"—a beautifully illustrated volume of 860 pages, the crowning glory of the "Equity Series," was given to the public last year—the combined work of Prof. Parsons as author and Dr. Taylor as editor and publisher. Heretofore The Independent has given some space in calling its readers' attention to this monumental work. It must be seen and read to be properly appreciated. No review can do it justice.

Dr. Taylor, realizing that "The Story of New Zealand," a large and heavy book, selling at \$3, would never reach the masses of our people, later determined to make selections from it, covering the political facts and omitting the descriptive and historical data, and issue it in form for extensive popular distribution. "Politics in New Zealand," is the outcome of this determination, a paper covered book of 108 pages, selling for 25 cents. Address "Equity Series," 1520 Chestnut street, Philadelphia, Pa.

New Zealand! What quips and turns the punster and the puzzler could make with the name. "New Zealand" gives new zeal and new courage to reformers. A land where the people have gone through the alphabet of reform until it is now Z land.

A four year-old lad of Lincoln not long since was left at home with his grandmother while his mother went shopping. He committed some childish misdemeanor. "What would mamma say, if she knew that?" queried his grandmother. "I'd say I didn't do it," was the prompt response. "But that would be a lie," persisted his grandmother. "I know it," was the retort. "But don't you know it's wicked to tell a lie?" asked grandmother. "Oh, with a childish shrug, "I've had enough of the Bible."

He had been taken regularly to Sunday school for some months. Possibly some reformers may shrug their shoulders and exclaim, "I've had enough of New Zealand." But just the same, Dr. Taylor's big volume and the smaller one are the Bible and prayer book of real democracy—because they give an accurate history of how real reform was accomplished in a new country

cursed with monopoly, and how genuine democracy was enthroned.

The three islands (North, Middle and South) constituting New Zealand are a little larger than England, Scotland and Wales—nearly twice as large as our New England States. North Island is a little larger than Ohio, and Middle Island a little larger than Illinois. They were discovered by Captain Cook in 1769; missionaries arrived in 1814; settlement began in 1825, but did not get under headway till 1840. Gold discoveries caused an influx of population in 1861.

The Torrens system of land title registration was enacted in 1860. National public ownership of telegraphs began in 1865 and was broadened to include telephones in 1884. The New Zealand postoffice savings bank act was passed in 1865. The province of Canterbury built the first railway and opened it for traffic December 1, 1863—but, previous to 1870 there were few telegraphs and scarcely any railroads.

In 1870 New Zealand had quarter of a million inhabitants. That year Sir Julius Vogel, treasurer of the colony, proposed to devote nearly \$50,000,000 during the next ten years to railroads, roads, telegraphs, water works (to supply the gold fields), land purchase, and the encouragement of immigration and settlement on the public lands. Vogel asked for power to levy a special tax on persons specially benefitted by the construction of railroads, but this and the land reservation plan met with so much opposition that they were abandoned in order to save the measure. However, the principle of national construction of railroads, telegraphs, etc., was heartily endorsed on all sides and the bill passed. From 1870 to April, 1902, loans aggregating \$163,000,000 have been spent in carrying out the public works policy, besides land grants and expenditures from the public revenue, running up the grand total to more than two hundred millions.

Failure to enact part of Vogel's measure left the colony subject to land monopolization, which evil grew with astonishing rapidity until the political revolution of 1890, since which time it has been corrected by radical taxation.

The Australian ballot and government life insurance were adopted in 1870. The pronounced success of the latter is best told by this fact: The Equitable Life and the New York Life, have been in the colony fifteen and thirteen years, respectively, and have now 717 and 139 policies as against 42,570 government policies. The government loans money on its policies at 6 per cent below \$500 and 5 per cent beyond that sum.

The public trust office was established in 1872—another of Vogel's institutions. This has no counterpart in America, the nearest approach to it being in Colorado. The public trustee serves at cost as executor, administrator, trustee, agent or attorney in the settlement and management of estates of decedents or others, who, for any reason are unable or unwilling to care for it themselves.

The provinces were abolished by act of 1875, taking effect on 1876. A national system of education—a free, secular, compulsory system—was established in 1877. And in 1879 manhood suffrage was granted—"one-man-one-vote." Village settlements were tried in 1885 and 1886, to ameliorate the conditions caused by the rapidly growing land monopoly, and in 1885 the forest act provided for the reservation of state forests and their control and management by the government.

In 1886 New Zealand adopted the principle of conditional probation for first offenders, instead of the irrational iron-clad system of sending all convicted offenders to prison.

The elections act of September, 1890, provides for direct nominations, and voting by mail (for benefit of seamen, sheep shearers and commercial travelers).

By 1890 the concentration of land ownership had reached the astonishing pass that more than 30 per cent of the

people had no land—only 14 per cent of the white population were landholders, and less than 3 per cent of the landholders or 1-3 of one per cent of the people owned over half of the areas and values in the hands of the people.

Besides the land monopoly, there were developed a money ring, timber ring, shipping trust and other combines, which, with the help of years of falling prices, crushed the wealth-producers of New Zealand and made them in a mood for the political revolution of 1890.

The history of this is one of the most interesting chapters in the "Politics of New Zealand." The farmers and the organized laborers joined forces at the ballot box and swept the conservatives from power and ever since, at each triennial election, the liberals have enjoyed an overwhelming victory. It was a victory of "class conscious proletarians" or "real anarchistic voluntarians"—simply the joining forces at the polls of men who worked; men who worked at wages like others and those who worked for themselves on their own or leased lands. It is such a victory as the populists dreamed about at Omana in 1892—but failed to realize because nearly all the wageworkers and the vast majority of the farmers allowed partisan insanity to possess them. It was not a victory for Karl Marx socialism or Henry George individualism—but a victory for the plain people, the men who toiled; and they made the best of it and have kept in power ever since, not by measuring their legislation according to the principles of equity and justice enunciated so well by Henry George, or by the "surplus value" yard-stick of Karl Marx, but rather by enacting legislation which would benefit themselves.

The wage-workers indulged in no dreams about a co-operative commonwealth, with "collective ownership of all the means of production and distribution, with democratic management of each industry by those engaged therein." They were willing to accept good wages under "state capitalism." They were not worried about the "surplus value" the "boss" got. With cheap transfers of land title, free education, postoffice savings banks, government life insurance, and manhood suffrage, they were not afraid of the "reactionary" measures their agricultural allies proposed. They were quite willing to assist in killing off the "vacant lot industry" even if the proposed tax failed, to meet the ethical requirements of "equity and justice." They were looking for relief and were more concerned in securing it than in splitting hairs over what sanction the tax would have. They were quite willing to tax "according to ability to pay," even if metaphysicians can prove that such is rank robbery. They were quite willing that the tax should be laid so as "to free the small man"—and said so in their Land and Income Assessment Act (1891) with brutal frankness. In fact, scarcely anything in the way of legislation by the liberals since 1890 will stand the tests of theoreticians of either the school of George or Marx; but it has produced results. Not always as beneficent as the legislators hoped—for man is not omniscient; but with the net effect of keeping the people ever alert for anything new which will help them.

The wealth producers' victory in New Zealand—wage-workers and farmers—forebadows what is likely to happen in the United States before many years. But the liberal victory here was not accomplished until ruin, soup houses, strikers and monopoly had made both farmers and wage-workers amenable to reason. And a populist victory here will not be possible while corn is 34 cents and the wage-worker has even a partly "full dinner pail." The farmer may know that even at 34 cents for corn, he is being robbed by the railroads and grain trust. The wageworker may know that he is entitled to something more than a tin bucketful of food each day—but Mark Hanna was a shrewder judge of hu-

man nature than most men when he coined—or adopted—that sentence, "Let well enough alone," for a campaign slogan.

There are three prominent features in New Zealand's fiscal policy: (a) The land tax on the "unimproved" value of the land, with an exemption of \$2,500 where the net value of the estate does not exceed \$7,500, so graduated that the exemption vanishes when the estate reaches \$12,500 in value. (b) Graded land tax for wealthy landlords and absentees, which makes them pay 16 to 18 times as high as the man of moderate means. And (c) the income tax, with an exemption of \$1,500 (except in case of absentees, and companies whether absentees or not) and a further optional exemption up to \$250 a year for life insurance if the citizen wishes to spend his money that way.

A farmer who derives all his income from land pays no income tax. Neither does a lawyer, doctor, teacher, artisan or any other person who makes no more than \$1,500 a year. The total number of income taxpayers is only about 5,000. (There are 16,000 land taxpayers out of a total of 110,000 land owners.) Working people, small tradesmen, and farmers with less than \$2,500 of land value above improvements, pay neither land nor income taxes. But but it must not be imagined that they escape taxation entirely, for the bulk (about 75 per cent) of New Zealand's net revenue is raised by the tariff, and the citizen is set to pay taxes whenever he eats, or wears clothes, or buys a bicycle or a pair of shoes. Moreover, every property-holder large or small must pay municipal or local taxes.

The total revenue of New Zealand is about \$40 per head of white population, half of it raised by taxation, with the direct taxes all on the well-to-do and largely on the rich.

The people like these taxes, and there is a growing sentiment in favor of lowering the tariff and increasing the land and income taxes—less taxation on life and more taxation of natural resources and monopoly. The new taxes do not discourage industry, nor put a premium on idle land and speculative holdings. They fall only where the burden can easily be borne. No merchant pays when business is bad and he makes nothing. And no farmer finds his taxes trebled and quadrupled because he improves his land. The taxation of monopoly has increased the prosperity of the country and helped to break up big estates and secure a wider distribution of land.

It is not intended that this shall relieve independent readers of the necessity of procuring and studying Dr. Taylor's little book—but rather that they may see the wisdom of buying a copy. It ought to be in the hands of every populist, so that he could answer the doctrinaires by pointing out concrete examples of applied populism. Populism is "eclectic" but not "scientific." It will not spurn a good thing because it fails to measure up to the requirements of some new theory in world-building. The average populist can not defend public ownership of railroads and government operation thereof, against the onslaughts of the metaphysician who, talks learnedly about the "true" functions of government. He can not defend it against the collectivist who refuses to see any difference between the ownership of a railroad and the ownership of a peanut stand. Yet, for all that, the populist has faith in the practical, good, hard, common sense of the proposition to do away with private ownership of some forms of property, and continue it as to others. New Zealand is a veritable nightmare to extremists of all kinds. Her laws are "reactionary" and "unscientific," viewed from the collectivistic standpoint, and they violate the maxims of "equity and justice" and overstep the "true functions of government" when seen from the individualistic viewpoint. Yet, they have been of great benefit to the people of New Zealand and appeal to the common sense of men who have no time