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WE FIGHT THE BATTLE OF THE PLAIN PEOPLE

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EDITORIAL

BOOSTING PRICES

Every little while we hear that prices must go up on some particular article. The cost of living has gone up and the workers and proprietors interested in the production of some particular article must get more for their output in order to share in the general prosperity. Therefore the price of the article is raised and the purchasing power of the general public is lessened by the increased price they have to pay.

With advanced prices on some of the necessities of life the purchasers find they have to have bigger incomes to live. An agitation starts for higher wages and salaries. Those who can force their employers to pony up get an increased wage. Then the employers begin to boast about fair wages they pay and the comfort in which their workers live. But there is something that must be remedied if the good wages are to continue. The employers say that if they are to maintain a high standard of wages they must be given protection against the importation of foreign goods. Paying big wages the employers must be given a high tariff in order that they may get big prices for their products. This protection is usually granted and the workers find the purchasing power of their big wages as small if not smaller than the purchasing power of their small wages before the boosting of prices and the imposition of protective tariffs.

In the competitive system as modified by government interference by means of protective duties and bounties there is a mad race for wealth through consistent hypocrisy and boosted prices. Those who can get the protection or bounties, and use them for the acquisition of great wealth at the expense of the public.

FREE TRADE

The remedy proposed by many is free trade. The free trader is almost absolutely extinct in Canada although he still flourishes in Great Britain. The average Canadian sees how the American people have been laid under tribute to the trusts of that nation and he fears that, should free trade be brought about, we would simply be an added territory to be exploited for the benefit of a few American multimillionaires. He prefers to suffer at the hands of his own industrial captains of industry than to pay tribute to foreign industrial potentates.

According to the free trader, prices would tumble under free trade and the consumer could buy goods very cheaply. All the illegitimate profit would disappear from protected industries and the old competition would revive over the world. The free trader is trying to apply the theories of Adam Smith to modern conditions. Adam Smith's philosophy in some respects is as unsuitable to modern economic conditions as the theories set forth in Machiavelli's "Prince" is to modern politics.

While we believe that free trade will eventually conquer it will not come as long as the manufacturers are the ruling class in Canada nor as long as the Canadian people fear the inroads of more powerful capitalists who desire to capture the manufactures of Canada in order to derive profit from them to the detriment of Canadian commerce.

COMPETITION

Competition means economic war. When Adam Smith wrote, the vast aggregations of capital of the present day were undreamed of. Commerce was in the same state in Adam Smith's time as were the political organizations of the Germanic tribes during the days of Julius Caesar.

In primitive times the political organization is loose and varying. The tribe is the political unit. Each local tribe is at war with every other local tribe at times. Within the tribe itself feuds may be carried on between individual members and men take the punishment of wrongs into their own hands. In such an organization the weaklings go to the wall. Gradually the primitive tribes coal-

ese into larger political units. The tribes coalesce generally because some strong leader arises who defeats a neighboring tribe and adds the warriors to his own band. In time arise counts and dukes who were originally leaders of warrior bands who subdued the workers and set them to work to keep his armies going. In such times the count must be a great warrior and the warrior counts fight among themselves until one becomes supreme. In France the Count of the Isle of France finally became absolute ruler. He kept his armies to keep his kingdom in order, and he had absolute power, until the people rose and cut off the head of a degenerate ruler. In Germany no one prince became supreme over the whole country. Consequently we have today a lot of small kings and princes. Bavaria, Saxony, Wurtemberg, Baden, are some of the principalities with their separate courts.

THE INDUSTRIAL REALM

The same circle of events are taking place in the industrial realm. We have freedom of contract and our laws are based on the theory of competition. In former days we had guilds of independent workers. These have disappeared. We have passed through the stage of the small capitalist, and are coming into the era of the industrial prince. Canada is an economic territory to be exploited. Who is to get the benefit of the exploitation? Before France came under the personal rule of one man it was recognized as a separate entity and the counts within that territory would combine to keep out invading armies from the north and south. Today in Canada we have our big capitalists combining to put up a protective duty in order that invading manufacturers may be kept out.

In America a dozen men control the industrial life of the country. In Canada we are rapidly approaching the same state. The laborer, the storekeeper and the farmer all toil to pay tribute to the large multimillionaires who dominate our industry. And year by year the laborer, the storekeeper, and the farmer find it more and more difficult to live. By unseen methods the big capitalists are filching away the earnings of the small people. In France the political taxes became unbearable and the people rebelled. In Canada the exactions of the trusts are becoming heavier and heavier. Ask the merchant and the grain dealer how much he gets for selling grain? His profits are infinitesimal. In the Western States farmers pay three cents a hundred more for their bran than they get for their wheat. The day of the small dealer is doomed.

THE REMEDY

The remedy for the present condition of affairs is the education of the electors to a sense of their duty. Let the electors awake to the fact that good government means dollars and cents in their pockets. Let the electors study economic subjects and let them not be led by the nose by any individual party. Did the ordinary man know where his interests lay he would elect men who stood for right and right dealing and who stood for the principle of the greatest good to the greatest number. Our government, like all modern governments, is torn between its duty to stand by the common people and the pressure brought to bear by the special interests who can make millions by the enactment of one clause in a verbose law.

Let the electors become awakened to their own interests. Let them look not to the welfare of a few rich men and applaud when the government, whether it be Liberal or Conservative, gives the public territory to a group of gasping exploiters. Let the electors keep a close eye on their member and if he goes wrong let him feel the weight of the electors' indignation. If the people do not look after their own interests, their paid servants who sit at the Ottawa benches will assuredly not.

Hon. Wm. Puley, Minister of Public Works, has declared that he has abolished patronage lists in his department. The declaration is good. Now all Canadians have to do is to find if the declaration is based on facts.

THE RULE OF THE PEOPLE

The people think they rule. This is a mistake. The people do not rule. They obey their masters. Once every four or five years parliament is dissolved. Two or three candidates go before thirteen of fourteen thousand people of whom only three or four thousand have the right to vote and ask them to declare which of the candidates they desire to have over them for the next four years. And the electors gather in bunches to hear the candidates spout and swell with importance when one of the candidates comes around to ask the voters to send him to Ottawa.

The people think they rule because once in four years they say who shall go to Ottawa. As soon as the candidate is elected he has little to do with his voters as he possibly can. He goes to Ottawa and there he finds the real rulers.

The lobbyist hangs around the Parliament buildings and wants a charter for some monopoly. He wants a railroad franchise with a big bonus. He wants protection for what he or his employer produces. The member is safe in his seat and the electors are foolish folk who can be cajoled in another four years. There are land deals and railroad stocks to be had cheap and there are a lot of ways of making money if the lobbyist can only get what he wants.

The lobbyist gets his charter and makes millions. The elector is told how the lobbyist or his master is developing the country and is tickled to death to think how much his representative is doing for the country. The elector may get a job hauling gravel at three dollars per day and then he is sure the man he helped send to Parliament is about the whole show. Thus the people rule once in four years and the Ottawa chartermongers get the cream. The people are easily fooled.

OPPOSITION

The opposition of our party system of government see the evil of the government members and complain. The country is being robbed by a gang of rascals who really ought to be in the penitentiary. This is the burden of the cry of the opposition members as they look out from the opposition benches at the actions of the government by means of its party majority.

Now while the opposition members may think that the reason of their indignation is the wickedness of the government members this is a mistake. The real reason is because they are not sharing in all the fat titbits going. Were the opposition members in power there would be but very little difference after a time. Of course there would be a great pretence of cleaning up and made so called grafters would go. But the dismissals would be so much for the purpose of getting rid of the gentlemen who took a commission as to make room for the friends of the incoming government.

This state of affairs is not peculiar to Canadian politics. It is the rule also in the United States and in France. There is an element in the Conservative party that is fighting for righteousness, but were the Conservatives returned to power it would be extremely likely that a strong effect would be made to force the right thinking Conservative leaders from their places of eminence.

COMPETITION DOOMED

The day of industrial competition is gone. Competition is a wasteful method. Cooperation will beat competition every time. The American trusts used this argument very effectively at the time the great combinations of capital and industry were being brought about. But the trusts did not intimate to the American public that prices would not be reduced. They kept that fact to themselves. When the trusts were made, many factories were closed down, hundreds of employees were discharged, great economies were effected, and prices were not reduced. The gain in saved expenses went to pay dividends on watered stock most of which was held by a few big men.

The men discharged at that time have formed a body of unemployed who are a curse to the country. Had the

prices of goods been reduced these men could have obtained employment in other walks of life. But the prices of goods being maintained there was no money saved by purchasers upon the price of goods which could have gone to give work to the unemployed. As for competitive establishments to arise which will give these out-of-works employment and reduce prices this state of affairs is unthinkable.

LAW REFORM

Some of the Montreal papers are advocating law reform. At present the Quebec law works an injustice against the poor in the collection of small accounts. A poor man may be sued for a two dollar debt and may have thirty dollars law costs to pay. Judgements hold for thirty years and run with five per cent interest. When the day labourer, with a family to support, once becomes sued and has a bill of costs to pay he will probably be chained down and the lawyers will live off him for many years.

The lawyers have made the laws and the public can rest assured that the lawyers have not neglected their own interests. In looking out for their own interest so well, the lawyers have made the general public frightened of law, and the poor man is more afraid of the lawyer than he is even of the terrors of the unseen world.

In a new country like Canada, one working man is of more benefit than a dozen lawyers. Canada needs development and it is the worker not the lawyer who will turn the waste places into habitations for the people. It is estimated that every young Canadian twenty-one of age and healthy is worth five thousand dollars to the country. It is a disgrace to humanity and also bad for business that legal bills of costs can practically drive five thousand dollars worth of human energy out of the country.

There is a simple remedy to this state of affairs. Let a law be enacted exempting from seizure salaries under five hundred dollars a year and property to the value of one thousand dollars.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

A Winnipeg government official says he would like to raise some of the fashionable residences of Winnipeg where the ladies carry on gambling. Winnipeg was the place where they arrested all the Ministers for working on Sunday and who knows but that the brutal officials will break up quiet games of bridge where the members of the fair sex are busy fleecing each other.

A suffragette of London went uninvited to a reception given in honor of Asquith. She sought out the Prime Minister from the gay throng and, taking him gently by the hand, led him into the middle of the room and tenderly asked him when he was going to give votes to women. The ubiquitous suffragettes have taken to heart the parable of the unrighteous judge and the importunate woman.

Mr. Carnegie has written an article declaring that the steel trust does not need protection, and the steel manufacturers are annoyed. There is too much water in U. S. Steel stock upon which dividends must be paid for the manufacturers to view with equanimity any curtailment of their powers to charge the consumers high prices.

The Industrial Manufacturer's Union of Germany is now supporting the Kaiser against the Radical demands. The manufacturers prefer to accept the drawbacks of the Kaiser for the drawbacks, from their point of view, of a workingman's socialistic regime.

The Canadian Minister of Agriculture is in Naples and will probably visit the Pompeii. As he wanders around the ruins of that ancient city he will no doubt wonder how the deuce the inhabitants used to milk cows amid all those cinders.

EDITORIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

We have much pleasure in announcing that Mr. F. C. Mears has become a contributor to our editorial columns. Mr. Mears is one of the brightest minds among the younger journalists of Montreal, and has given deep thought to economic subjects viewed in the light of history and philosophy. He will give our readers some new view points on vexed questions. Among articles from the pen of Mr. Mears to be published concurrently during the next few weeks are: "Eliot and Education," "Emerson and Politics," "Hill and Reciprocity," and "Our Times."

CAPITAL AND PROGRESS

F. C. MEARS

Just as property is an intellectual production, just as riches are the result of the application of brains to circumstances, just as commerce is a game of skill, just in the same degree does wealth impose upon its possessors the responsibilities of intelligent stewardship. The acquisition of capital by those not already in possession of it does not necessarily involve the principle of the survival of the fittest, but it surely requires the presence and practice of intelligence. Emerson illustrates this fact by an observation that has now become self-evident, viz: Cultivated labor drives out brute labor. Without discussing the justice or injustice of the charges laid against capitalists in our day for the unscrupulous means they have adopted for the acquisition of their precious commodity we are constrained to accentuate the broad fact that without brains the acquisition of money is impossible.

Just as intelligence is necessary for the getting of money so it is essential that brains be applied to the spending and investing of money, if civilization is to be in any degree the gainer. Goethe, the eminent German writer, has truly said, "Nobody should be rich but those who understand it." More harm has been wrought to humanity by the indiscriminate disposition of wealth than can ever be measured; on the other hand, more enduring good has been done, a greater impetus has been administered to human progress by wise and studied investment than the race will ever know.

The higher opportunities of the wealthy are many and noble. They can immeasurably enhance the value of life for their less opulent brothers, if they will. President Charles W. Eliot, of Harvard University, whose words to the wise and the less wise time cannot erase, has enumerated these large opportunities. He says, "It is obvious that very rich men have power to render services to the public which it is impossible for poor men or men of moderate means to render. They can endow churches, schools, universities, libraries, hospitals, museums, gardens, and parks with sums large enough to give these institutions stability and continuous usefulness. They can also come to the aid of private individuals who have suffered through illness, premature death of friends, or other disasters which justify helplessness. They can help widows and children bereft of their natural protectors and bread-winners. They can help young men and women to an education which will raise for the persons helped the whole level of their subsequent lives."

Just as poverty frequently demoralizes so do endowment and beneficence often pauperize. Men now realize the un wisdom of allowing fast young men to come suddenly into the possession of an estate or fortune. They soon run through it and further degrade themselves. The governors of universities through unpleasant experience have learned that the endowments of millionaires not intimate with the actual needs of such institutions often leaves the university worse off than it formerly was. Capital in the hands of comparative ignorance has wrought harm to people and institutions that has required long years to eradicate; intelligent beneficence has proved itself one of the greatest auxiliaries to human progress. The interests of capital and humanity are closely married; let us see to it that lack of intelligence does not effect a disastrous divorce.

CONTRIBUTED

INDIVIDUAL THINKING

F. C. MEARS

History teaches us the stern and sinister lesson that those who have dared to form their own conclusions on high matters of public interest and to carry those conclusions into action have been the martyrs, both in religion and in politics. So tyrannous was sacerdotal dominion in medieval days that men dared not form individual convictions not in strict accordance with the tenets of the Church, let alone express them either in words or action. Individual thinking was stifled and suppressed and the cosmogony of the time was thereby stultified. Until the French Revolution there was, strictly speaking, no science of government, no politics, save the policy of the church, because the institutions of that long dark period hardly bore the stamp of individual thought and action.

But such conditions are now happily obsolete. Mr. John Morley writes: "The belief that heresy is the result of wilful depravity is fast dying out. People no longer seriously think that speculative error is bound up with moral iniquity, or that mistaken thinking is either the result or the cause of wicked living." Through the dominating spirit of our times is competitive, yet there are evidences, more or less pronounced, of a spirit that is disposed, if not to encourage, at least to tolerate, individuality of thought and action and sometimes, if we are to take the declarations of extremists seriously, it is disposed to connive at mild heresies. To the evolution of human thought nothing can be more injurious than the belief in certain provinces that absolute consistency must be striven for and adhered to at the sacrifice, even, of progress. This surely is a fatal error and its prevalence is most deplorable. If what is popularly known as consistency precludes or in the least retards the growth of elasticity and the spirit of tolerance in the opinions of men then it should be thrown aside unhesitatingly as an obsolete and, therefore dangerous ideal.

There is no royal road to the scrutability of God. There is no stern and omniscient tribunal before which we must stand for the views we hold concerning Christ and His divine mission. There are no rights reserved on the publication of opinions concerning the place of the Founder of Christianity in the universe. There never was a time when it was easier for men to hold opinions, however out of tune with the dominant modes of thought, than it is at the present. Up until a century ago one was conjured to respect the beliefs of others, but forbidden to claim the same respect for one's own. To-day men are actually obliged to think and speak for themselves if they wish to avert the ignominy of being cast into the depths of mediocrity and oblivion. Let us see to it that we encourage the formation of individual opinions and thereby keep the ideals of our age elastic and progressive.

Representative Champ Clark of Missouri has declared that the U. S. tariff was a universal game of grab. The big American fortunes are based on the system of grab and Clark by his denunciations is attacking the foundations of the present American social system.

Richmond is to vote on a bylaw guaranteeing a bonus-hunting concern's bonds to the tune of twenty-five thousand dollars. It is easy for a municipal corporation to put its nose into a bonus trap but it is mighty hard for it to get out again.

The Victoria Legislative Council has passed the bill empowering women to vote at state elections. This bill previously has been rejected several times. The women throughout Australia have now won the right of suffrage in both commonwealth and state elections.

Mr. Rockefeller says he belongs to the brotherhood of man. So does the hobo whom Rockefeller would not recognize as a blood relation.