

Platforms are framed with insufficient consideration of present social and economic facts. Jefferson and Jackson are cited not only to certify democracy's spirit and general aims, which is wise, but for methods and detailed aims. As well might the court physicians have searched Galen for recipes to cure Edward's perityphlitis.

Famous among the old democratic war-cries was *laissez faire*. That government is best which governs least. State surveillance over industry, state touch of men's business, is to be kept down to the strictest limits. The ideal function of the state, so the theory ran, is simply to protect life and property. If it ever needs do more than this the extra office must be regarded as temporary and relinquish at the earliest moment.

Command to the state not to meddle with private industry was based on the maxim—happening to be true and important a century ago—that such policy was best for human character and progress. Stupidly reasoning: Good once, good forever, most of us, bond-servants unto Shibboleth, continue insisting upon non-interference, even when industrial changes cause that policy to grind and enslave instead of helping. The great majority of democrats oppose all enlargement of state work as stubbornly as if the last ten decades of history were canceled. That times change and that society with its structure, business with its methods, changes with them, is not appreciated.

Men have found out that freedom and the absence (or the minimum) of legislation do not mean the same thing. Since society has become congested, economic forces do not evolve or even, as a rule,

tend to evolve fair play between man and man. Monopolized industry, for instance, the economic phenomenon of our time, many of whose forms hurt us, all admit, is the direct, the inevitable product of that *laissez faire* practice which Hunker democracy lauds as divine. Few, if any, of our monopolies owe to legislation their essential power as monopolies. The greatest owe it nothing. Combinations of capital are in substance a perfectly normal growth. You cannot kill them and you should not try. You can never legislate economic life back to old-fashioned competition any more than to stage coaches and canal boats. But normal growths usually need pruning. The liberalist spirit which, in Smith's time, ordered the state's hands off business that it might prosper, ought now, in many cases, to prompt the reverse commandment, favoring some sort of public regulation. You rip off the legislative shackle, formerly a mere uncomfortable collar about your neck, only to find that some great "combine," no creature of law at all, possible only because the legal path has been swept clear for it, has come forward to choke the life out of you. In such instances individual initiative, that priceless force for social uplift and advance, so far from being promoted by the absence of legislation, is painfully stifled.

Since we can never restore the old, go-as-you-please mode of industry, society's method of dealing with the economic sovereignties now threatening must be one of two—socialism or judicious regulation. But socialism the masses themselves do not want and will never tolerate. Careful legal regulation remains—not public owner-