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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

The president's message contains a number of encouraging recommendations. The most important in a political way is the recommendation of a law which will punish the giving and receiving of bribes and also provide "for the publication not only of the expenditures for nominations and elections of all candidates but also of all contributions received and expenditures made by political committees." In an editorial entitled the "Reforms Within Reach" an argument was presented in favor of just such a law. After the article was in type the president's message arrived and the editor of The Commoner was gratified to know that the president had cast the great influence of the executive on the side of such legislation. This ought to make certain the passage of the law immediately, and it will be a long step toward the purifying of elections and toward the reducing of the power that aggregated wealth now exerts over our federal elections. The law should provide for the publication of the contributors before the election.

The student of sociology will cordially approve of the president's recommendations in regard to the improvement of the industrial and sanitary conditions which surround the laboring classes. He suggests that Washington, the nation's capital, should be made an ideal city in this respect, an example to other cities. The spirit which pervades his discussion of this subject is presented in the following paragraph:

"No Christian and civilized community can afford to show a happy-go-lucky lack of concern for the youth of today; for, if so, the community will have to pay a terrible penalty of financial burden and social degradation in the tomorrow. There should be severe child-labor and factory-inspection laws. It is very desirable that married women should not work in factories. The prime duty of the man is to work, to be the breadwinner; the prime duty of the woman is to be the mother, the housewife. All questions of tariff and finance sink into utter insignificance when compared with the tremendous, the vital importance of trying to shape conditions so that these two duties of the man and of the woman can be fulfilled under reasonably favorable circumstances. If a race does not have plenty of children, or if the children do not grow up, or if when they grow up they are unhealthy in body and stunted or vicious in mind, then that race is decadent, and no heaping up of wealth, no splendor of momentary material prosperity, can avail in any degree as offsets."

Nothing that the president has said in his message will give more encouragement than the above sentiment to those who are anxious to lay broad and deep the foundations of our national greatness. His words are a rebuke to such as measure a nation by the wealth and refinement of the few rather than the health, strength, intelligence and virtue of the masses. If the president will only carry into all the work of the administration the same high motive that is manifested in the words above quoted he will leave a record which will do more to distinguish him than the large popular plurality which he received on election day.

In speaking of the labor question he has made some good suggestions and has clearly recognized the right of the laboring men to organize for their own protection. He has also correctly stated the limitations that should be placed upon their organized activity. No one can justify the use of force either by employer or employe, but the president does not point out the remedy. He does not advocate arbitration as a means of preventing increasing conflicts between labor and capital. He speaks of a "gradual growth of a feeling of responsibility and forbearance among capitalists and wage-workers alike; a feeling of respect on the part of each man for the rights of others;" but this is not sufficient. Even if the growth were more pronounced than it is, the organization re-

cently formed among employers for the express purpose of combatting the measures desired by the labor organizations is not an encouraging sign. Nothing will stimulate the growth of the feeling of forbearance more than the establishment of a board of arbitration before which either side of the controversy can bring the other when agreement can not be reached by personal conference. It is also to be regretted that the president does not recommend a restriction upon the employment of the writ of injunction—the writ upon which corporate employers now rely for the forcing of terms upon their employes.

He calls attention to the need of a stringent employer's liability law, and also suggests additional legislation for the protection of railroad men both as to their hours of work and as to the appliances for the protection of their lives.

In dealing with the trust question he does not hold out any promise of relief. He cautions congress against dealing with the subject "in an intemperate, destructive or demagogic spirit," and asks that the subject be met with the "quiet determination to proceed step by step, without halt and without hurry, in eliminating or at least minimizing whatever of mischief or of evil there is to interstate commerce in the conduct of great corporations." He says the beef industry will be investigated but he does not point out any specific remedy.

It is evident from a reading of this part of his message that he does not regard a private monopoly as wrong in itself, and it is quite certain that he does not view the trust as a great menace either to the prosperity of the nation or to the rights of the individual. He says:

"Great corporations are necessary and only men of singular mental power can manage such corporations successfully, and such men must have great rewards." The sentence which follows: "But these corporations should be managed with due regard to the interest of the public as a whole," is a very weak statement with which to offset such unstinted praise of the mental superiority of the monopolists. He does not admit that the contributions which the trusts made to his campaign funds will purchase them immunity, but there is nothing in his message to scare them or to make them regret the assistance which they gave to the president's campaign.

His recommendation in regard to bringing insurance companies under the supervision of the bureau of corporations is a wise one. While most of the states have enacted legislation for the protection of the policyholders within their borders, the work of investigating the methods and the standing of these great moneyed institutions is certainly within the scope of interstate commerce.

The president's recommendations in regard to the amendment of the interstate commerce law indicate that he has become somewhat alarmed at the growth of the sentiment in favor of the government ownership of national highways. He says:

"The government must in increasing degree supervise and regulate the workings of the railways engaged in interstate commerce; and such increased supervision is the only alternative to an increase of the present evils on the one hand or a still more radical policy on the other."

The "still more radical policy" is, of course, the taking of the railroads out of the hands of private corporations. The president is right in his conclusion that a failure of the government to protect the public against the evils of private ownership of railroads will make the people look in increasing numbers to government ownership. Remedies are always the outgrowth of abuses. The abuse brings public attention to the subject and the remedy follows as the result of intelligent investigation.

The president's request that additional author-

ity be given the interstate commerce commission is in the right direction; we shall now see whether the railroads, so ably represented in the United States senate, will heed the president's warning or by standing out against it contribute to the movement that is now going on in favor of a policy which will put the people themselves in control of these arteries of trade.

The work of the agricultural department is presented with some elaboration. While the amount appropriated for this department is insignificant when compared with the amount appropriated for preparations for war, its work is of inestimable value to the country. As the president says, "nearly half of the people of this country devote their energies to growing things from the soil." It is a reflection upon the administration that it recommends about six millions of dollars annually (that being the amount appropriated last year) to the carrying on of this work, and some two hundred millions of dollars for the army and the navy.

Considerable attention is given to the preservation of the forests and a less amount to irrigation, but what he says on both subjects will meet with general acceptance.

His discussion of the postal service is disappointing. He recommends the curtailing of the abuses of the second-class mailing privilege, but does not recommend a reduction in the amount paid to the railroads for the carrying of mails and he suggests no improvements in the rural service.

The currency question is dealt with briefly, but the language employed shows that he permits the financiers to do his thinking and direct his course upon this question. He says:

"The attention of the congress should be especially given to the currency question, and that the standing committees on the matter in the two houses charged with the duty, take up the matter of our currency and see whether it is not possible to secure an agreement in the business world for bettering the system; the committees should consider the question of the retirement of the greenbacks and the problem of securing in our currency such elasticity as is consistent with safety. Every silver dollar should be made by law redeemable in gold at the option of the holder."

The proposition to make the silver dollar redeemable in gold at the option of the holder is simply a proposition to establish a new "endless chain" for the drawing of gold out of the treasury and it is preliminary to the proposition which will follow, if this one is carried out—namely, to retire silver dollars in order to protect the treasury. It will be noted that he also recommends the retiring of the greenbacks and favors securing "in our currency such elasticity as is consistent with safety." This is a veiled recommendation of the asset currency. It will be remembered that the republican party did not in its platform demand a law making the silver dollar redeemable in gold; it did not promise an asset currency. Those who favor the financial measures recommended by the president never outline their plans in advance; they never take the public into their confidence. They always wait until the election is over and then they rush in and do things that they would not dare to do before an election. Those who think that the money question is dead will learn their error if they will just keep their eyes upon congress, for congress is always dealing with the money question and there are just two sides to it—the side of the financiers who desire to run the treasury department in their own interest and for their own profit, and the side of the people who want not only good money but enough of it to maintain the level of prices.

The president's caution against extravagance is a guarded one. He justifies large expenditures on the ground that the country is prosperous, and