

IN THE INTEREST OF A SQUARE  
DEAL FOR THE FARMERS

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## Comment by the Editor on Current Events

**O**N THE whole, the publicity which Mr. Townley got as a result of his going to jail, was not unfavorable. The war is over—also most of the hate, bitterness and hysteria of war times. It looked at best rather silly to send a man to jail for 90 days for "disloyalty." Mr. Townley some time ago said that 90 days was the ordinary sentence for a chicken thief in North Dakota.

### Townley Jailing a Help

Real disloyalty is a serious crime. Treason is punishable by death. Sedition or disloyalty, the next stage of crime lower in the same classification, was generally punished during the war by sentences of 10 to 20 years at hard labor. Mr. Townley got only 90 days in jail. It therefore couldn't really have been disloyalty that sent him to jail. Probably most people who read the newspaper account of his jailing saw that point.

The newspapers made a great fuss over it. They sent correspondents and photographers—even moving picture outfits—to Jackson to get pictures and reports of Mr. Townley going to jail. Long published accounts in the press described minutely Townley's dress, expression, chance words, gestures. His probable life in jail was described in much detail. We saw paragraphs in some reports describing the books he took to jail to read and the socks he wore. If he had scratched a mosquito bite on his nose as he walked up the jail steps, the reporters would have recorded it.

In fact, Marshall Foch of France, who came for the disarmament conference and visited the Legion convention at Kansas City, got little if any more space in that week's news than the president of the Nonpartisan league. The press, with its worship for great men, unconsciously made a great man of Mr. Townley. No, the publicity in its effect was not bad.

Only a few newspapers resorted to the old, downright misrepresentations. One said that Mr. Townley was "convicted of urging the government not to carry on the war, and urging the people not to buy Liberty bonds, because the government was bankrupt and the bonds a poor investment." Even if Mr. Townley had said anything like that, he ought not to have been jailed at this late day. For we know now that the war brought us little but debts and some thousands of new millionaires. We know too that Liberty bonds did not prove the best of investments. Millions of poor people who bought them had to sell at a 10 to 15 per cent discount, and even now Liberty bonds are scarcely worth 92 cents on the dollar in the market.

But Townley said nothing of the kind. He was convicted of "discouraging enlistments" because he demanded action against war profiteers and the conscription of wealth to pay for the war. He was convicted of "discouraging the sale of bonds" because he said that more money should be taken from excess profits to pay war costs. That was what "disloyalty" in Jackson county meant during the war. Jackson county was 1,000 per cent.

The formal jailing of Mr. Townley has caused attention to be centered on his case. More people than ever now understand the real facts. Mr. Townley simply has had to move his office to the Jackson county jail for a few weeks. An example of the denial of free speech has been called to the attention of the public. The great farmers' political movement goes on.

**B**OTH houses of congress have passed the new tax bill. The most important change made by the bill is the repeal of the excess profits tax. The profiteers have won a great victory. An excess profits tax is purely and simply a tax on profiteering. It does not tax normal profits. It does not tax reasonable or fair profits. The tax is applied only to profits which are EXCESSIVE.

### Excess Profits Tax Repealed

But big business persuaded congress that no penalty should be put on profiteering. The senate was given the opportunity, by amendments to the bill, to continue the excess profits tax in various forms. Some of these amendments proposed a lower excess profits tax than now prevails. Some amendments proposed a tax that would affect only such yearly profits as exceeded half of the amount of money invested in the business—in other words, tax only profits of 50 per cent a year or more. But all these plans were voted down. Congress wanted no tax on profiteering at all—not even on the most extreme and conscienceless kind of profiteering.

But the attitude of mind of the senate was made even more plain on another amendment. A group of senators proposed to continue the excess profits tax, and to devote all its returns to paying a

federal bonus to returned soldiers. That put it up to the senate to decide flat-footedly between the profiteers and the ex-service men.

To vote "yes" meant to take a part of the unholy profits of big business, and to use the money to compensate soldiers for their sacrifice of time, health and blood in defending the Republic in war. Hundreds of thousands of these soldiers, who went gallantly to war amid the cheers of everybody, including "100 per centers" and profiteers, are now unemployed. Poverty and suffering is extensive among them.

To vote "no" meant refusing to take unholy profits, mostly growing out of the war, to aid these soldiers.

The senate voted "no."

The issue was clear, clean-cut. The profiteers won.

**T**HERE was no railroad strike—this time. But the issue which caused the threat of a strike is only temporarily settled. Other problems concerning the railroads are rapidly reaching a crisis—rates and service, for instance, and government guarantee of profits to railroad owners. Don't go to bed and dream that the railroad problem is solved. There will be more trouble.

### Strike Off, but Problem Not Solved

The transportation problem must be solved RIGHT before it is solved finally, and before there will be peace.

Because you ought to know something about railroads and railroading, so you can use your influence intelligently and effectively, we started in the last issue a series of two articles on railroad questions. There is much propaganda, abroad, but farmers must know the truth. What Henry Ford is doing in railroading is ONE of the things you should know. That was covered in the article in the last issue. In this issue Wall street control is discussed.

The railroad strike was settled because of the statesmanlike attitude taken by the railroad labor board. That body was created by the transportation act to handle the railroad labor problem. The board said that freight and passenger rates should come down in accordance with the railroad wage cut made by the board LAST JULY. This should be done, the board said, before the railroads are given further wage cuts. It was the move of the railways to cut wages 10 per cent, in ADDITION to last July's 12 per cent cut, that caused the strike threat. The board said logically that the workers and the public ought to see some concrete result in lower rates, as a result of the July wage cut, before the roads were given anything else. That is sound sense.

In the matter of working rules and conditions the board also played fair. The railroads have been grossly violating the decisions of the labor board in these things. The matter of these violations is pending before the board. The board assured the men that these questions would be decided before the board would consider any petition by the railroads for a further wage reduction. It will therefore be late next summer before the board can take up the railroad petition for further wage reductions. So the men called the strike off. It was a victory for them and for the public. The labor board deserves thanks.

In the meantime we must have that railroad rate cut—as soon as possible! The railroads can not expect their business to pick up without it. Before further cutting wages of railroad workers, the roads must be forced to try what REDUCING RATES will do to INCREASE traffic. More traffic will increase railroad profits and make further wage cuts unnecessary.

**M**R. NESTOS, who takes office as governor of North Dakota within a week or so, made a speech recently. He said that one of the first things he would try to do would be to cancel the recent sale to an eastern bond house of North Dakota bonds. He said the terms of the sale are not advantageous to the state. The state ought to get a better deal on its bonds, he said.

The people of North Dakota elected Mr. Nestos by a very small majority at the recent recall election. At the same time, by a MUCH LARGER majority, the people decided that the Nonpartisan league program should be carried out. Now it is first of all necessary to sell state bonds, if the farmers' program is to be fully realized.

Governor Frazier's administration was up against a nationwide boycott of financiers. Frazier's administration sold the bonds only with the greatest difficulty, and only after two years of fighting against the boycott. Probably Frazier's administration did not