

# THE COMMERCIAL

Marshall & Baird, Union City, Tenn.

Entered at the post office, Union City, Tennessee, as second-class mail matter.

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 1921.

## Governor Lowden's Speech.

Former Gov. Frank O. Lowden, of Illinois, made a speech in Nashville last week, interpreting the political and industrial conditions and problems in a way that impressed the people there as nothing has done for many a day.

Governor Lowden makes a general statement, in striking contrast to the policies of the present Republican administration, as follows:

"I fear in the reaction against a close association of nations, in which we might lose something of our sovereignty, we are likely to go too far to the other extreme. Eminent authorities are declaring that our foreign commerce is but a bagatelle compared with our domestic commerce and that, therefore, we need feel but little concern about our foreign trade. This is always a popular appeal—America sufficient unto herself alone. But is it sound? We always have been producers of great surplus of raw material such as cotton. Our prosperity in the past has depended upon our finding a market for such raw materials. We cannot, therefore, ignore our foreign trade and continue to thrive. We may be independent of all the world politically, but commercially our future is inextricably interwoven with that of the rest of the world."

This, of course, touches our foreign policy. But here is another fact which is completely and studiously ignored by every administration as far back as Grover Cleveland:

"Let the proportion of public employees continue to increase as rapidly as they have in late years, and we will within a reasonable time witness this phenomenon: Our population divided into two classes, those holding public office, still a minority it is true, and all others working to support the minority in office. From that condition to the soviet form of government it is but a single step."

One of the campaign pledges made by President Harding was that one of his first acts would be to order a general reduction in the number of government employees at Washington.

Not only has he failed in this completely, but he has abused the confidence of his people by actually endorsing the recommendations made for the Shipping Board on the grounds that the high salaried men of the board had accepted this service at a sacrifice of their own private business.

Nice, indeed, this attitude, after parading his virtues before Congress in an appeal to drop the soldiers' bonus.

The speech is teeming from beginning to end with undisputable facts, one of which is that the commercial and industrial world is waging an unequal battle with agriculture.

Both the foreign and domestic markets are practically closed to the farmer. On the other hand the State and Federal governments are demanding an enormous tribute in taxes, so heavy in many cases that the land is confiscated.

In England this condition has gone so far that some of the ancient and titled estates are being sold for the purpose of escaping tax burden and foreclosure.

While this condition exists we see our Government, warned by Secretary Mellon that expenses must be reduced, ignoring this warning and proceeding in the wildest and most reckless extravagance.

Fabulous sums, the like of which have never before appeared in the wildest dreams of mankind, are being appropriated for army and navy preparations and incidentally increasing the wealth of the steel and structural corporations with immense government subsidies.

So high handed is this practice and so bold in its operation that these big interests and the government behind them are riding rough shod and unconcerned over the prostrate body of the agricultural classes.

The farmer has no market for his produce. He cannot make another crop because the prices of machinery and supplies are prohibitive. He is practically bankrupt.

It is inconceivable that agriculture can move under this strain. The prosperity of the nation depends upon the farming industry. That being so, how can conditions be improved while these inconsistencies exist.

Governor Lowden's diagnosis of the agricultural situation is given in the following language:

"It is perfectly obvious that the several industries cannot keep step

unless some sort of just relation is maintained between the prices they receive for their several commodities and services. No industry is so powerful that it can live unto itself alone. All in the end must draw their sustenance from the same source. Agriculture at the present time furnishes the most glaring instance of which I know of low prices as compared with the prices which other great industries receive for their goods and services.

"The cost of transportation for farm products is practically double what it was before the war; while such products, according to the Government tables, are now upon a level slightly above pre-war prices. A chart recently published shows the relative prices of more than three hundred commodities, according to the latest Government tables, as compared with the 1913 price level. Farm products were, as I have said, but slightly above that level, while all other commodities showed an increase of from 40 to 175 per cent. Clearly, agriculture has suffered most. Some sort of proper relation must be restored between agriculture and other industries before we can hope for a permanent improvement in business conditions.

"Agriculture is still our great basic industry. A third of our population derives its living direct from the soil. The increase in freight rates has practically deprived the producers of many farm commodities of their best markets. Under the low freight rates which formerly prevailed, the farmers of the country were the best patrons of the railway. They shipped to the remotest markets. They had gotten away from the practice of the pioneers, by which the farmer produced nearly everything upon the farm which he and his family consumed. They sold and shipped almost their entire product, buying other articles of merchandise in return. This was doubtless to the economic advantage of the country as a whole, for each territory could produce the articles it was best fitted to produce, exchanging for other articles they needed and which were produced elsewhere. The farmer had become a merchant as well as a farmer. And now he is driven back in large measure to the more primitive practices of his pioneer forebears.

"Instead of producing the one thing, or the two things, or the three things that he is best suited to produce, he is compelled to produce everything upon his land, whether advantageously or not, which is necessary to the living of his family. The alfalfa growers of the far West will no longer grow alfalfa for the farmers of Iowa and Illinois. The latter will be compelled, therefore, to devote a smaller part of their acreage to the cereals and to raise roughage for themselves.

"The farmer will no longer continue to ship all of his live stock to the great centers, buying his own supplies of bacon and ham and beef from the butcher and the merchant, but will revive the old smoke house of his fathers and prepare his own meats. A community flouring mill may again return. Possibly even the spinning wheel and the loom will find their old place in the farmer's home, and necessary clothing may be manufactured upon the farm. I am not at all sure that some benefit might not come from this return to primitive times, but I am sure that it will enormously reduce the volume of freight carried over the railroads of the land.

"I am sure too that the total products of the farms of America will be largely reduced when this necessity comes. I do not mean to say that there are not other causes operating to reduce the price of farm products below the cost of production, such as want of purchasing power abroad, but I do mean to say that the first step toward stabilizing farm production is to bring transportation charges down to a point where the farmer can regain the American market which he has lost."

Dr. F. M. McRee has returned from his European trip, arriving home Sunday. Dr. McRee spent twenty-three days traveling in England, France, Belgium, Switzerland, and visited the battlefields of France. He says that the English and French people have gone to work in earnest and that they have bumper crops in France and Belgium. There are no finer people than the Belgians and they are rapidly rebuilding. The greatest trouble is in finding the correct value of damages. The battlefields of Verdun and others are barren, still covered with tangled wire and torn with ditches. It will take years to reclaim these lands. The Doctor looks fine. He says there are no women in Europe who are as good to look upon as our own.

Now let some genius give us a new song entitled, "I Didn't Raise My Boy to Be a Taxpayer."

## Political Moths.

Col. Jeter, over at Murfreesboro, is urging a return to the old-time Democratic State and county conventions. He intimates that the rank and file of Tennessee Democrats are tired of primaries and ready to welcome the convention. The subject, as far as we know, has not been discussed at all lately in the press and no one has mentioned it in this neck of the woods. Then, we would like to know, how he came to the conclusion that Democrats are tired of primaries.

The fact is that this is one of the political snares by which the triumvirate—the political machine—is undertaking to strengthen its organization.

Already this organization, with its school and State fair lobbies, and other promotion schemes, has disorganized State government and finances. With a very high tax assessment Tennessee is running into debt at the rate of three millions of dollars a year and paying impossible rates of interest. Now, to fasten this plunder irrevocably upon the State it is desired to hoodwink the people into a return to the highhanded and wholly unscrupulous methods of the State and county convention.

Every man who can call back twenty years knows what a political convention is. The primary is not a perfect institution, but compared to a convention it is a haven of political idealism. The convention is a hot-house of bribery, brigandage and corruption. It is a place where men divest themselves of every honest impulse, every patriotic motive, everything that is ordinarily governed by a sense of equity and honor, and plunge into a saturnalia of political crime. It is hell.

And this is the kind of thing the triumvirate wants with which to fasten its fangs into the throats of Tennessee Democrats.

We are waiting, patiently waiting, for some man to make a counter call to the Democratic hosts to arms. Whether the candidates for the next gubernatorial nomination will have the courage to make this call remains to be seen. The people are slow, very slow to take up the fight for political reform. But if they ever do, and get started right, there will be a mighty scattering of the political money changers in Tennessee.

## IN MEMORIAM.

Edward C. Ownby.

Your soul has answered the Master's call,

The end of your life's trail is reached;

To-day you sit in the marble hall  
And play while divine mass is preached.

No one of the many you left behind  
But what shall feel their loss and grief,

Yet your deeds of kindness will always remind  
Us to pray for your soul's relief.

The cross you bore was too much for you—  
Though you staggered bravely on till the end,

Believing and trusting He would pass you through  
The gate where love's rainbow shall blend!

I feel as I kneel before the crucifix there  
That my suppliant prayer will be answered.

And the soul of the man who left me here  
Will find peace when the verdict is rendered.

Out there alone under a flowered mound  
We leave you alone in the last long sleep;

Where the silence of the tomb knows no sound  
I stand by your cross and weep!

## FARMS FOR SALE.

218 acres, 12 miles out on Bankhead Highway. Six-room residence, good barn and fences; 170 acres level, second bottom land. School on adjoining land, church one mile. Nice going farm, good neighborhood, 45 minutes by auto to the university town of Oxford. \$10,000, half cash, balance five annual payments at 6 per cent.

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