

Land of the Noble Free

AMERICANS are all immigrants—all except the red Indians—and if the anthropologists be right, even they migrated from Asia. There is no American race; there is not even the established claim of centuries to plead the primary right of any one stock. Norsemen were the first whites to spy out our soil; an Italian, sailing under a Spanish flag, rediscovered the continent to which another Italian gave his name. Parts of our present coast-line were first settled by Spaniards, parts by Frenchmen, parts by Dutchmen, and parts by Englishmen; Germans and Scandinavians first developed great areas of the interior. Of all our State names only thirteen are of English origin; five are Spanish, three French, and the rest Indian. Whence comes this myth that our country is the private property of some one racial stock? Whence come the arrogant assumptions of those who, like the chairman of the House Committee on Immigration, want to preserve a "racial homogeneity" which has never existed? Some extraordinary figures recently presented to the House of Representatives by one of its ablest new members, Meyer Jacobstein of Rochester, N. Y., are worth quoting:

The percentage of foreign-born in the entire country today is exactly the same as it was in Lincoln's time. In 1860, the year Abraham Lincoln was elected, 47 per cent of the residents of New York City were foreign-born. Today only 36 per cent of that great city's population is foreign-born. When Lincoln took office 30 per cent of the residents of all American cities of 100,000 population and over were of alien birth; today only 24 per cent of the population of cities of 100,000 or over are not native-born. . . . You contend that the present foreign element is less desirable than that of forty, fifty, sixty years ago. I call your attention to a report made to the House by a select congressional committee in 1838. It charged that "the country is being flooded with the outcasts of the jails, almshouses, and slums of pauper-ridden Europe." It asserted that at the time the jails of the capital were filled with these foreign-born people. It described them as "the most idle and vicious classes, in personal appearance most offensive and loathsome." . . .

But who were these "offensive and loathsome paupers and criminals"? Why, they were the scrappy Irishmen and Germans and British whose children today fear the influx of new "foreign hordes."

The war roused nationalist passions and hates long forgotten in America. We had given up the unpleasant habit of denouncing all foreign stocks; we were too conscious that we were all foreigners a few generations back. We were proud of the welcoming gesture of the Statue of Liberty; we hailed the simile of the "melting-pot" and believed that out of the amalgam of the races and the cultures of the world we were building something new, something greater than any of the races or civilizations of Europe. Perhaps we may still win back to that traditional Americanism and away from the medieval exclusionism of the proposed immigration bill.

The old artificial difficulties in travel were rapidly vanishing before the war. One no longer had to procure a permit or pay a toll at every bridge or river-crossing, at every boundary-line and frontier. The amalgamating current of history and science—steamships and railroads, telegraph and telephone—seemed to be binding all the world together. In 1914 a man traveled without a passport from

Punta Arenas to the Russian border. Only a few of the most backward countries on earth retained that anachronistic requirement. Today restrictions on free movement are everywhere; we are back in the Middle Ages, and the United States is leading the backward movement.

It is a tragic thing that this country, built on the sweat and aspirations of immigrants, should so soon be fencing itself about with a wall. We are becoming the great example of national selfishness in all the world. While we bar human beings from our shores we bully weaker countries into granting American capital privileges alien to their national interests. We force Mexico to revise its oil laws, tell China how to use its customs, ask Russia to reconsider its view of private property, and everywhere proclaim the "open door"—for American capital—as an American policy. "Equal rights and opportunities, *for capital*, all over the world"—what a bitter slogan for America when a hungry peasant from South Italy, a persecuted Jew from Rumania, an Armenian whose home is a heap of ashes finds the door to America slammed in his face!

Two years ago we adopted an "emergency" percentage-restriction law, which allows the admission in any one year from any country of only 3 per cent of the number of persons born in that country who were present in the United States in 1910. That bill was frankly an attempt to discourage South and East European immigration while permitting the Northwestern stocks—British, German, Scandinavian—to enter. This year an even worse bill has passed the House. It would admit only 2 per cent of the number of foreign-born persons present here in 1890. That virtually bars Jewish, Italian, and Slavic immigration. It is a forthright attempt to establish racial exclusion. The Senate may make the quotas lower still. If Americans had still the national ideals of pre-war days, instead of a second-hand version of Old World nationalism, the Senate would demand a forward move to the census of 1920, and raise, instead of lowering, the present quotas.

Even the original purpose of percentage restriction is lost. We are today excluding not merely Italians and Syrians and East Europeans, but Germans, Englishmen, and Scandinavians. In the current year 1923-1924 all quotas except those for France, Iceland, and Esthonia have been exhausted—yet they talk of still further exclusion! The snobbish standards of a country club or of a New England private-preparatory school are being established as America's. More than that, the new bill makes unnecessary discriminations against the Japanese which can serve no purpose except to irritate that people.

Is it too late to recall the Farewell Address of our first President?

It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and at no distant period a great nation to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt but, in the course of time and things, the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages which might be lost by a steady adherence to it; can it be that Providence has not connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas, is it rendered impossible by its vices?

La Follette's "Revolution"

"**R**EVOLUTION" is the term applied to the Wisconsin La Follette platform by Cyrus Curtis's New York *Evening Post*, once the honest daily of Bryant, Bigelow, Schurz, and Godkin, now degraded to the lowest depths of stand-pattism. This platform, we are told, is "something more than populism; . . . it is reinforced with raw, red socialism, borrowed from the Red Dynasty of Sovietism." To Mr. Curtis's editorial hirelings this is "the way of the wild men who would pull down the heavens and upheave the earth and make for themselves a new heaven and a new earth."

Let us see just what this document really proposes in order to merit such a bitter outpouring by one of our richest men. It was adopted by the La Follette Republicans at their recent convention for presentation to the people of Wisconsin and also to the Republican National Convention, where it will doubtless be treated with the contumely which has invariably been bestowed upon similar suggestions from Wisconsin. It declares that the great issue of today is the control of government and industry by private monopoly—"big-business domination," Roosevelt and Wilson called it. "The equality of opportunity proclaimed by the Declaration of Independence and defended by Jefferson and Lincoln" it sees "displaced by special privilege for the few." That hardly sounds new or original or revolutionary, for every reformer since Grover Cleveland began attacking the tariff has used precisely this language.

There are twelve points in this platform—"twelve vials of radical wrath," the *Evening Post* calls them. The twelfth we give in full that all may see how abominable this particular vial is:

We favor a platform for the Republican Party embracing these principles and a candidate for President whose public record is a guaranty that he is in full accord therewith.

Equally radical and dangerous is number one:

We pledge a complete housecleaning in the Department of Justice, the Department of the Interior, and the other executive departments.

There you have it—the red hands of Trotzky and the late Lenin betray themselves at once. Who but sovietists could favor a housecleaning? The next vial pledges recovery of the illegally leased public domains, vigorous prosecution of the guilty, restoration of the national conservation policy, public ownership of the nation's water-power, a national superpower system, and permanent conservation of all the nation's resources, including coal, iron, and other ores, oil and timber lands, in the interest of the people. There you have it. If that does not lead directly to the nationalization of women, Mr. Curtis must be wondering what could? So, too, does the declaration for public ownership of railroads, "with definite safeguards against bureaucratic control." As if that were not red-revolutionary enough, the pacifist tendencies of La Folletteism are made plain by a demand for a reduction in the "eight hundred millions of dollars now annually expended in preparation for future wars."

What are we to think of the demand for drastic reduction of the protective tariff, prohibition of gambling in agricultural products, large inheritance taxes for such estates as Cyrus Curtis has piled up, and reconstruction of

the federal-reserve and federal farm-loan systems? Only that advocacy of the bonus, abolition of the right of injunction in labor disputes, the direct nomination and election of the President, the initiative and referendum in the field of federal legislation, and a popular referendum for or against war (except in cases of actual invasion) must seem to all of the faithful—like Mr. Curtis—to indicate a deliberate purpose to pull down every pillar of the temple of American liberty—liberty for great capitalists and the holders of special privilege.

To us, being in Mr. Curtis's eye of the unfaithful, the La Follette program seems an admirable document upon which the coming third party may well base itself. Not that we should agree to every plank; some things which *The Nation* has long opposed are on the list. But here is a progressive and constructive document which goes to the root of things economic. La Follette now sees that one of the first steps is to take control of our transportation lines. For this alone *The Nation* would give profound thanks; but when we read the planks which call for outlawry of war and revision of the Treaty of Versailles, which denounce "the mercenary system of foreign policy in the interest of financial imperialists, oil monopolists, and international bankers which has at times degraded our State Department . . . to a trading outpost," we want to stand up and cheer.

Yes, poor old prostituted *Evening Post*, it is revolution which La Follette preaches, revolution back to the old America, a revolution which proposes not to enslave but to cut loose American initiative, energy, and enterprise from the bonds now put upon them.

Lights On or Off?

THE mountain has at last labored. Mr. Coolidge's indignation has been stirred. The President, who accepted Mr. Denby's resignation "with regret," assuring him that he would go "with the knowledge that [his] honesty and integrity have not been impugned," who assured the infamous Daugherty, even when asking his resignation, that he was "not questioning" his "fairness or integrity," is angry. He is angry because a Senate committee insists upon investigating Secretary Mellon's conduct of his office.

Doubtless, as the New York *World* suggests, Mr. Coolidge's anger is heightened because he has been obliged to bottle up his wrath at the investigations conducted by Senators Walsh and Wheeler. One of those investigations has uncovered the fact that Secretary Fall secretly gave away the nation's oil wealth, and then accepted large sums of money from the gentlemen who got it. The other has exposed Mr. Daugherty's intimate associations with a group of crooks, bootleggers, fight promoters, and general low-livers. One forced Mr. Denby out of office; the other ousted Mr. Daugherty—both in the face of Mr. Coolidge's expressed reluctance. The committee investigating the administration of the Internal Revenue Bureau having made what might be called a misstep, Mr. Coolidge flares forth in bitter invective against all Senate investigations.

The immediate occasion of Mr. Coolidge's wrath was the appointment, by the Senate committee, of the very able Mr. Francis J. Heney to assist it in investigating Mr. Mellon's bureau. The committee appointed Mr. Heney without pay, it being understood that Senator Couzens would privately foot the bill. This was, to be sure, a dan-

gerous procedure; the proper method would have been to obtain the Senate's authority to hire counsel, and charge his fee to the Government. No private individual should be permitted to pay the Government's expenses, either in this form or in the classic manner of dollar-a-year men. But the President went too far in suggesting that this conflicted with Section 1764 of the Revised Statutes, which bars compensation by the Government for extra services unless authorized by law.

Mr. Coolidge went further; in fact, he ran wild:

Under a procedure of this kind [he says] the constitutional guaranty against unwarranted search and seizure breaks down, the department becomes the victim of vague, unformulated, and indefinite charges, and instead of a government of law we have a government of lawlessness.

One might, assuming that a President of the United States watches his words, believe that there was fire behind this smoke. In fact, as the pitiful debate between Mr. Coolidge's hot-headed defenders and the cooler senators showed, there had been nothing like "search and seizure." It had been charged that Mr. Mellon's department had favored certain companies in which he was interested. He had demanded that the "committee make an immediate investigation in order that you may thoroughly satisfy yourself and the public whether or not these companies have received any favor from the Government." The committee was investigating. The only documents which it had obtained had been obtained with Mr. Mellon's consent. Where is the "government of lawlessness" in that? What was wrong with the committee's desire to obtain expert help?

To judge by Senator Watson's defense of the President the worst aspect of Mr. Heney's appointment was the fact that Governor Pinchot had suggested it. We cannot discover the original sin in that. In fact, we like Governor Pinchot's explanation:

What I am after in this matter is to get the law enforced. . . . I have made no secret of what I think about the disgraceful breakdown of the enforcement service of the Treasury Department, of the debauchery, crime, suffering, and death it has brought to the people of my State and to many another. . . . I suggested, as others had done before, the name of Mr. Heney, a trusted friend of President Roosevelt, for whom he had conducted investigations, as that of a man whom Senator Couzens's committee would be fortunate to secure as counsel.

People are beginning to talk as if there were something wrong in investigating. They are using the phrase "muck-raking" as a term of opprobrium, and President Coolidge's message is plainly a part of that propaganda. But, as Senator Reed put it, "a muck-rake will not bring up any muck unless there is muck there. . . . The only man who fears investigation is a man who has done something he does not want the country to know about." In the words of that cautious old constitutional lawyer, Senator Walsh:

The President wants us to stop these investigations; and he ought to say so. He wants us to stop these investigations, and to take our chances as to the faithful discharge of the duties of every department and the officials in every department—the Veterans' Bureau, the Department of the Interior, the Department of Justice, and now the Department of the Treasury.

The President, if we are not mistaken, has provided the Democrats with a first-class campaign issue: Shall the light be turned on, or off? Shall scandal, when suspected, be investigated, or left to putrefy?

Are We Better than Starfish?

THE person who can keep his eyes fixed unwaveringly on the mechanical achievements of the age must get a dizzying sensation of speed in the progress of human affairs. Discoveries beget discoveries, and civilization, learning from its own inventions, progresses geometrically toward an almost discernible perfection, or, more alluring yet, toward an infinity of thrilling new horizons. To the person capable of this miracle of concentration the world, save for a few scandal-mongers and agitators, must offer a satisfactory, even an exciting, appearance. His eyes are on the future; he instals a radio in his sitting-room and begins to save up for a motorized lawn-mower.

And he is justified in his enthusiasms; for in science, if in no other field of thought or action, the world does move. The question is, can our wits be turned to other problems, or have the shaping of iron and steel, the delicate juggling with electrons and air waves, the patient fishing for bacilli, unfitted us for other sorts of work? Has our knowledge of the relations of matter made us unable to deal with the relations between human beings?

Of course, in spite of wars and the divorce rate life goes on. Yet life goes on, with more waste but less agony, among the starfish, and the biological ends of life are achieved with less interference and friction. We, with our customs and prejudices, our passions and our pains, have turned the simplest processes of living into vast complications of nervous uncertainties. Between individuals as between nations, we have reached a point where we can see and admit our difficulties; we are only beginning to understand or resolve them.

One reason for our situation is that until recently human relations, particularly personal relations, and most particularly the relations of the sexes, were under a rigid taboo. Science might not touch them; art could approach them only if it were equipped with pink glasses. Intelligence was commonly considered indecent. Especially in the United States religion and custom and William Jennings Bryan held the field. They still like to think they hold it, but the behavior of the world worries them more than they will admit. Women, for instance, do things and say things and think things that take little account of taboos. Writers of modern novels look love in the eye and find it, in all its various forms, strangely unlike the pictures drawn by the Ella Wheeler Wilcoxes of literature. Psychologists are making a mockery of the decent sentiments of decent men and women.

And so there has been a storm from the upholders of the old ways of moral locomotion against these new-fangled, un-Christian steam-engines of behavior. From pulpit and press we have warnings and angry outbursts and scorn for the fumbling efforts of the present generation to understand itself and its emotions. But if we are to find our way out of this dark age of human unhappiness and tension and misunderstanding we must watch the people who are trying the new paths. We must leave William Jennings Bryan with his tailless ancestors and his sexless morals, and listen to the prophets of a newer age. In a series of articles to begin in our next issue, *The Nation* will print the opinions of a few intelligent observers on the shifting moral standards of our day and on the difficult problems of modern sex relations.

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