

Colonel Roosevelt's Page

IN the new Congress, which will be controlled by the Republicans, there is very much to do. A large proportion of the work will have to take the shape of unravelling the twisted confusion into which the Wilson Administration has thrown almost every important feature of governmental policy. But the Congress must not permit itself only to do this work. It must itself keep its eyes on the future and begin to build for the future. The great war has put us in a new world. In this new world we must resolutely cling to the old things that were good, but we must also fearlessly adopt the new expedients imperative to bring justice under the new conditions.

THE farmer, the working man and the business man are, of course, the three people upon whose welfare the welfare of all the rest of us and of the country depends.

With the farmers what is especially needed is that we shall accept their own best leadership and best thought about telling us what we are to do. Men like Henry C. Wallace of Iowa and Senator-Elect Capper of Kansas, and many others whom I could name, thoroughly understand the farmer; are farmers themselves; speak the farmer's language and know his needs. What we need is to have men of this stamp set forth the farmers' viewpoint; and the rest of us must intelligently appreciate this viewpoint, and so far as possible embody in legislation what men of this stamp regard as the salient needs. It is very earnestly to be hoped that a determined effort will be made to send to both houses of Congress men who are farmers and who out of their own experience can speak of the farmers' need. There is much that should be done by government, and by preference by the national government, to prevent hold-up actions at the expense of the farmer in marketing his produce. But even more can be done by co-operation among the farmers themselves. The extraordinary success of the Illinois farmers in acquiring, owning and operating the grain elevators is a lesson of the utmost importance to all our people; the present head of the State Agricultural Department of Illinois was a leader in the work of bringing it about. Experience in the past has taught us to look with grave suspicion upon the entry into politics of such a farmers' association. The Non-Partisan League received much of its support because of the fact that there were serious grievances of which the farmer had a right to complain and with which the old parties had failed adequately to deal. The bulk of the leadership of the association, however, speedily took a position that rendered it impossible for self-respecting Americans to support them, as they verged dangerously near downright disloyalty in international relations, and in home affairs sought to establish close relations with the I. W. W., and preached a malicious class hatred of the exact type which has brought Russia to ruin. It cannot too often be said that the man who seeks to arouse malignant class hatred in this country is exactly as dangerous a character as the man who tries to subject us to a foreign power. He is guilty of moral treason to the Republic. The farmer is emphatically the producer. He has not had a square deal. He has not been put in the position to which he is entitled. If he is not given the right kind of leadership he will follow the wrong kind of leadership, and therefore it behoves the Republican party in Congress to get men competent to speak for the farmer, and to make an earnest affirmative effort to start this nation on a course of policy which will put the farmers of this nation on a level never elsewhere attained.

OF equal importance with the farm situation is the labor situation. We must never again permit the wage-worker to be looked upon primarily as a mere cog in the industrial machine. He must be looked upon as a citizen; given every chance possible to do the best that he can do, and held to a strict accountability if he refuses to do it. Of course, labor must have the right to collective bargaining. Moreover, we should endeavor cautiously to introduce a system of representation on the directorates, so that labor shall have its voice just as much as those who furnish the capital and those who furnish the management. I am, of course, entirely aware that this process can only succeed to the degree in which the workers themselves prove their ability to select and reward the right type of leadership and to combine full consideration for the rights of others with insistence on their own rights. Most emphatically every effort should be made to keep up the wages of labor and, above all, not to let them be thrust down faster than the prices of things which labor needs and has to pay for. The eight-hour day should become the standard industrial day in all lines of work; there must be certain exceptions, but these should be treated as exceptions. There should be some federal control of itinerant and seasonal labor under a federal employment bureau. This is the type of labor which is in least satisfactory condition and which makes the I. W. W. possible. It should be carefully studied and action taken toward the end that we finally eliminate this type of labor altogether by rearranging our agricultural and industrial status so as to absorb this labor all the year round. Of course, it would need a number of years to accomplish



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this purpose. We should spend hundreds of millions of dollars reclaiming land for the returning soldier and arranging labor bureaus so that he may be certain to have every chance to work. The man who has gone into the army should be given in peculiar fashion the best chance that this country affords to become a farmer, or to work at his trade or profession. If possible he should be encouraged to become a farmer, in accordance with some such plan as that proposed by Secretary Lane. Old-age pensions and accident and involuntary unemployment insurance should, of course, become part of our settled policy. The industrious and thrifty worker should be guaranteed the self-respect of honorable independence and of an assured future.

THE immigration policy cannot be considered apart from the labor policy. We should have an infinitely more drastic method of exclusion of undesirable immigrants, and we should begin an active course of education and distribution among the immigrants that are admitted. The most rigid steps should be taken to prevent any people of the Bolshevik type from coming here. They are not in the least grateful for being allowed to come. They add to the sum of misery, discontent and anarchy, and they do no good to themselves or to any one else. Our prime purpose should be to maintain the living and working standards of the American working people. No immigrant should be admitted here who would lower those standards, and this is especially true of the next few years, when we wish to see our working men retain what they have gotten, and our returned soldiers taken care of.

Business and labor cannot be considered separately. It is quite impossible permanently to elevate labor if business does not pay, and if the payment the business gets is not equitably divided with labor there is no use whatever of having it. We ought to set our faces against any restriction of production, or any requirement that the good and skilful workman be kept down to the level of the incompetent or the lazy. But we ought also to insist, and wherever necessary to guarantee by government action, that an equitable share of the increased work done by the skilful man go to that man himself. To secure justice along these and many other lines there must be government control; but government control cannot accomplish anything if it disregards the axioms of industrial production and success. The first essential for successful government control is care for the thing controlled. Our recent experience with the railroads is enough to show us this. Fifteen and twenty years ago there was a riot of uncontrolled and greedy individualism in the railway business in this country. It had to be stopped, and was stopped. Then, as so often happens, in a reaction against bad conduct there was refusal to do justice. There was refusal to allow the railroads to make the profit necessary if the needed amount of money was to be invested, and to make the combinations necessary if their work was to be done efficiently. The war came—the railroads were taken over. An immense increase of rates was at once made, and, of course, combinations were encouraged in every way. Wages were raised with great rapidity. But the net result has been utterly bewildering to everybody; the original situation was bad; some of the experimentation has been equally bad; and the President himself, after one and one-half years' experience, says he does not know what to suggest, and throws the problem back on Congress. Of course, and properly, the workers wish at least to retain wages at their present standard. They can only do it if they give very efficient service, and, furthermore, if the business conditions are such as to make the railways prosper. If they don't prosper, then neither government ownership nor individual ownership will result in benefit to the working man. My own preference is for a unified system of transportation under about as close government supervision as that exercised over the Federal National Banks under the Federal Reserve Banking Act. But the government cannot fix rates unless it makes full allowance for, and if necessary takes part in, fixing the costs. I earnestly hope that wages can be kept up for every man who has done his full duty during the last year and a half in whatever his work was—railroading, shipyards, munition plants. If he was foreman of a gang of riveters and has driven more rivets than ever before, I should regard it as a calamity to have his wages reduced; but if he has driven only half the number of rivets for an increased wage, or worked only four hours a day, or only three days a week, then I am utterly indifferent as to his wages being reduced.

IT is impossible in an article like this even to touch on most of the questions ahead of us. Take the merchant marine, for instance. We should provide for it in permanent fashion, and the government should control it rigidly and be able when necessity arises to dictate the character of tonnage and the destination of the ships quickly and without question; of course, personally I should prefer that this be done under private ownership. And there should be no further delay in giving the women the right to vote by federal amendment. It is an absurdity longer to higgie about the matter.