

President Wilson's "New Freedom"

Declaration of war on privilege and vested interests, the emancipation of the consumer oppressed by high tariffs and uncompetitive prices, and of the small employer crushed out of existence by organized under-cutting of the trusts and restriction of access to credit, was the keynote of almost every speech he (President Wilson) delivered in the campaign of 1912. *President Wilson: His Problems and His Policy.* By H. WILSON HARRIS. (p.96).



NOT long ago President Woodrow Wilson was being confidently regarded in certain Socialist circles in this country and abroad as the fore-ordained Saviour of Mankind, the Sir Galahad of Pacifism and a veritable Prophet of rejuvenated Liberalism. To others of us it seemed unreasonable to expect that the good intentions of this amiable Democratic professor would enable him to hold in check the relentless forces which the development of American capitalism had unloosed, or that Trans-Atlantic Liberalism would survive the International hurricane which had swept down upon its European counterpart. We had always looked upon the United States as the home of bourgeois ideas and institutions and the one nation in all the world which had passed most completely under the sway of capitalist industry. The North American Continent was discovered, explored, colonised and developed by the stalwarts of the West European bourgeoisie, and the whole history of the United States is a shopkeeper's diary. Hence, when the European War broke out and took upon itself the guise of the last struggle of the Liberal Powers against the stubborn remnants of Feudal Autocracy, we realised how easy it would be for the great moneyed interests of the United States to enlist the sympathies of American citizens on behalf of small Nationalities and the Cause of Freedom and Justice. These cultural ideas which have swept the Radicals and a large section of the Socialists of the Allied Nations off their feet have a peculiar power of attraction for a people cradled in what may fairly be described as "the spiritual home" of capitalism. The inter-related sentiments of Liberalism and Nationalism, and the traditions of the French Revolution as well as the memories of '48, find natural lodgement in the bosom of the greatest of all political democracies.

The American people, moreover, have been sighing for a renewal of that freedom which they have been rapidly losing as a result of the almost unhindered economic progress of capitalism; and have, latterly, given their support to Wilson because in the man

and his gospel they thought they had found the soul of the America that can, of course, be no more. They have, like the peoples of all capitalist democracies, been seeking to escape from the subtle bondage into which they have fallen, and have been looking for salvation to the prophets of the New Freedom, of a revised version of Liberalism. When this kind of unrest takes hold of a people there is always a great danger of them finding a revolutionary means of effecting the overthrow of their oppressors. To obviate such a calamity their generous enthusiasm must be deflected whilst there is yet time and must be directed against some foreign tyranny. That is what the American capitalist class has done with the American Democracy. President Wilson and his "New Freedom" have been used, as we Marxians saw they would be used, to make more certain and more complete the enslavement of the American working class. Some time ago a dreadful rumour got abroad in America. The German submarines might stop their exports reaching the stricken fighters for Freedom, and prevent money and mortgages making the passage westwards. On its heels came another rumour, that the Allies might want no more American manufactures in any case. That was equally painful news.

Then American capitalism discovered that it could lift the War to "the high plane" by opposing "construction" to Germany's "destruction" of property. Wilson spoke out in a way that the President of the Steel Corporation described as

explicit, strong, vigorous, comprehensive, and exactly right; the finest address he has ever made.

Whereupon we found that—

Old Glory is flying over virtually every blast furnace and steel works in the Pittsburgh district. *Iron Trades Review*. 5/4/17.

and that—

INDUSTRY SPRINGS TO NATION'S AID—
PATRIOTISM SWEEPS OVER INDUSTRY.

At the same time—

Steel Makers rising to highest duty of co-operation and unified effort on behalf of Nation—

denied that they had wanted war or stood to profit by it; showed that they had lowered their prices and saved the nation at least 18,000,000 dollars, immediately after E. W. Bliss Co., who made a net income of 836% out of the Allies in 1916, had been threatened with commandeering unless they reduced their prices for torpedoes to the Navy Board; assured the authorities that "unless the industries are prosperous there will be nothing to tax, for obviously the Government cannot support a war by confiscatory methods that must speedily bring about widespread ruin"; and shouted at the top of their voices that "no coercion is necessary."

At the same time, as earnest that his "New Freedom" had at last been initiated, the President announced :—

"The industrial forces of the country, men and women alike, will be a great national, a great international service army—a notable and honoured host engaged in the service of the nation and the world, the efficient friends and saviours of freemen everywhere. Thousands nay, hundreds of thousands, of men, otherwise liable to military service, will of right and necessity be excused from that service and assigned to the fundamental sustaining work of the fields and factories and mines, and they will be as much a part of the great patriotic forces of the nation as the men under fire.

This "great international service army"—fore-runners of the wage slaves of a capitalist League of Nations—are, according to the Committee on industrial preparedness—

to work under any private employer engaged on Government contracts, or on farms, and to supply the army and navy.

This Committee on Industrial Preparedness has been at work for considerably over a year, under the direct patronage and official support of President Wilson, who himself wrote to the heads of five national technical organizations, asking them to co-operate with the Naval Consulting Board. It took an inventory of 30,000 industrial concerns and had behind it "the weight of the Chambers of Commerce."

One of its aims was that "of bringing to the American labouring man the realization that he has some further obligation to the Government than he has felt that he has had to date." Its attitude to the State munitions factories was, as follows :—

Even though we have them to act as educational institutions and as clearing houses for specifications and blue prints, in any future war in which this country is engaged, it is going to be the privately-owned manufacturing plants which must feed the guns that will save the Nation. If we can have Government-owned plants, they will come in as assembling plants and as clearing houses for specifications, tools, and skilled munition-workers.—Chairman of the Committee on Industrial Preparedness (*World's Work*, New York, May 1916).

I have known of all this for the last nine months, and, strange to say, I have been sceptical of Dr. Wilson and his procrastinating diplomacy. Here, oh idolators, is another example of the "New Freedom," in the form of a pledge issued for signature to the workers at the Union Ironworks, San Francisco :—

I do solemnly swear that I will bear true faith and allegiance to the United States of America . . . and that (I will obey the orders of the President of the United States and the orders of the officers appointed over me. I do also solemnly swear that I will serve honestly and faithfully the Union Iron Works Company and will allow no person to cause any loss or damage . . . to the property or interests of the Union Iron Works Company and I do take these obligations freely without any mental or other reservation ; so help me God !

(The owners of the company being the Bethlehem Steel Works the oath is most appropriate.)

As for "the officers appointed over me," observe that the President of the Steel Corporation remarks :—

There is a disposition on the part of Government Officials to co-operate with the business men in promoting the welfare of the country. That is what all of us have desired and advocated and now we will probably have as much opportunity in this direction as we have ever desired.

The *Iron Trades Review* reports :—

The business man and the Government are really co-operating. Each is becoming better acquainted with the other. This delightful metamorphosis in the life of the Government and that of business really is worth watching. (We agree.) The cause for it all is the program of national defence. It came into effect when the Government found itself compelled to beckon to the business man for his aid. . . Happily, a path is being beaten between the office of the business man and that of the Government at Washington. Once it is cleared perfectly, let it remain so.

Again, the same oracle :—

The action of the U. S. Supreme Court in ordering re-argument of the various Trust cases, including the Steel Corporation suit, and deferring a decision for perhaps a year, is significant. A new appreciation of the power and effectiveness of real team-play between Government and business is spreading broadly.

So the Americans are all brothers now. The employers are distributing tracts on the community of interests between them and their workers in the pay envelopes ; Pittsburgh varieties of John Hodge are stating that they are loyal to the nation and "equally loyal to the interests of the Steel Corporation," and that body is subscribing 50,000 dollars to the Y.M.C.A. to assist in the Americanisation of employes of foreign birth. The dawn of the "New Freedom"!

J. T. WALTON NEWBOLD, M.A.

THE PAMPHLET.

Our new pamphlet, **WHAT DOES 'EDUCATION' MEAN TO THE WORKERS ?**, is now ready. See p. 2 of cover for terms. We want a record sale, and if we go on as we have begun we shall get one. Edinburgh No. 1 Branch, N.U.R., has ordered 1,000 copies. Manchester District Council, N.U.R., (as we reported last month) has ordered the same number. Now then, you **LIVE Trade Unionists**—let us have your orders. We have made preliminary arrangements for a second edition, which will be put in hand (and supplied) **AT ONCE** if you demand it. This pamphlet is **THE goods!**