

PRESIDENT WILSON'S RECORD

SUMMARISED IN TWO ARTICLES IN "THE PUBLIC," CHICAGO
(OCTOBER 20TH AND 27TH), BY LOUIS F. POST,
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President Wilson's administration is the first to make substantial headway against the "invisible government" which for nearly forty years has been thrusting people's government aside.

For a background, recall that period following our Civil War when the slavocracy that plunged us into it had disappeared in the perspective of the past and the plutocracy that menaces us now had begun to loom out of the fog of the future.

This menace was seen first by the Greenbackers, who described it as "the money power." After them came the Populists with a somewhat more comprehensive vision. However wrong or right the remedial demands of either were, each of those movements was essentially a revolt against plutocracy.

True also is this of the democratised Democratic party of 1896, which was led by Bryan the democrat and defeated by Hanna the plutocrat. Its slogan was "free silver," which is no longer an issue; but its objective was destruction of plutocracy, which is the burning issue still. For though this revolt, too, was beaten back, its spirit, which had then been gathering force for twenty years, was not subdued.

Hanna put plutocracy firmly in the saddle, and it rode boldly on. It rode on to enormous profits from naval expenditures, to the creation of plundering trusts, to words of love for the working man and thoughts and deeds which relegated him to the category of the servant with a master. It rode on to deceptive tariff laws which had no other purpose or effect than to rob the masses for the enrichment of plunderbunds. It rode on to privileges ahead and to privileges by the way.

It got bold enough to ride ruthlessly through long-cherished democratic traditions by making foreign conquests, and turning conquered places into what subservient officials called "colonies," and conquered peoples into what they called "subjects."

So intimately had plutocracy encircled Senator Hanna's remodelled Republican party, that a distinguished Republican unconsciously described the plight of his party when he pictured President Taft, to whose lost leadership Judge Hughes has succeeded, as "an amiable gentleman completely surrounded by interests that know exactly what they want."

This was the kind of government which Woodrow Wilson's election displaced, and which the American people are importuned to reinstate by defeating President Wilson for re-election.

Domestic Policy

Upon Mr. Wilson's election four years ago the power of plutocracy had already grown so great that his official future was anxiously questioned.

Though the Republican party had been defeated at the polls, would the long-fostered privileges of plutocracy suffer any curtailment? Might not this new President lose himself in the midst of "interests that know exactly what they want"? His predecessors had so lost themselves—even his only Democratic predecessor. What certainty was there that the "invisible government" would not "get Wilson too"?

To be sure, his gubernatorial administration in New Jersey offered hopeful guarantees. And back of that were the circumstances of his campaign for Governor; back of which again was his fight at Princeton for democracy in education. But anybody can strike a democratic note once in a while; it takes a genuine democrat to carry the

tune. And were those democratic notes really a tune? or did they show ability to carry a tune? or were Princeton and Trenton at all comparable to Washington as halls for democratic music?

The disturbing question still remained. Would Mr. Wilson turn out to be our democratic leader against plutocracy, as Lincoln has been against its predecessor in pernicious power? Would he be genuine in spirit and also astute in action, progressive in purpose and prudent in method, true to democracy and wise in leading it forward? All that is what Lincoln was, and that is why he won the fight of his time for democracy. Would Wilson be the same for the democracy of our time?

We now know that thus far President Wilson has stood the test. The large facts of his administration proclaim it and prove it.

Throughout the era of "invisible government," complete monopolistic power over the volume of the currency was conserved under plutocratic control. Every move regarding it was framed in the interests of the banking monopoly that centred in Wall Street; and when the Wilson administration attacked this castle of plutocratic privilege, every interest now opposing his re-election came to its defence.

But in spite of those interests the Federal Reserve system of banking was established by the Wilson administration.

As a consequence, the currency of the United States is now elastic for the first time since the outbreak of the Civil War—elastic and safe. Governmental guarantees make it safe; its elasticity depends upon no one's mere say so, but upon the volume of commercial credits.

Corners in currency are no longer possible.

While the "invisible government" ruled, as it did down to the inauguration of President Wilson, the farmers of the country had no borrowing facilities except upon mortgages of a burdensome kind.

Efforts were made during the era of "invisible government" to accommodate farmers in that respect, but plutocracy would listen to no plans unless they conserved the interests of bankers first. The interests of farmers were a secondary consideration, if they were considered at all.

But by the farmers' loan measure of the Wilson administration, the borrowing wants of farmers are now provided for by means of long mortgages payable in instalments at reasonable interest and through co-operative agencies supervised by the government.

Income taxes are at last established as part of the Federal system under a Constitutional amendment which Governor Hughes advised the Legislature of New York to reject. These are the only direct taxes on a large scale that the Federal government imposes—taxes, that is, which are borne by the taxpayer. Most of our Federal taxes are borne by the taxpayer's customers and serve as a means of extra profit for him.

To be sure, the income tax is not an ideal system of taxation; but it is nearer to the ideal than any kind of Federal taxation now Constitutional, and in large measure it falls upon the incomes of the privileged. The present tendency is to make it fall there in still greater degree. What direction this tendency would take if the "invisible government" were to defeat Wilson at the coming election would not be hard to guess.

Although the protective tariff has not been abolished, a feat that no statesman could accomplish in so short a time under existing conditions, it has been turned back upon its course. Its direction now is away from the deceptive system which the "Old Guard" that Judge Hughes is leading has so long maintained.

One of the demands of the "Old Guard" at this election is for re-establishment of that self-same deceptive kind of protection under which privilege has flourished and all other interests have suffered. Shall Wilson's failure thus

far to pull up this system by the roots be to any one who wants it pulled up a reason for voting for the candidate who frankly promises its restoration if Wilson is defeated?

The Wilson administration was responsible for the Industrial Relations Commission. Under the lead of its faithful and able chairman revelations of plutocratic dominion were made which are of the utmost value to the democratic crusade against plutocracy. Moving pictures of the "invisible government" became distinctly visible on Chairman Walsh's screen.

The meshes of the old anti-trust law, intended to check plutocratic combinations, had been perverted to the obstruction of wage-earning organisations. Treating labour as a commodity—an industrial principle, let it be observed, that was distinctive of the old slavocracy and its Dred Scott decision—some of the courts had placed labour organisations in the same category with criminal trusts.

But by the Clayton anti-trust law of Wilson's administration, labour is distinctly declared not to be a commodity. Labour organisations are therefore by this law of Wilson's administration rightly taken out of the criminal category in which plutocratic trusts rightly belong.

The interstate child labour law for the protection of young children from unwholesome drudgery was passed upon President Wilson's express insistence.

This measure has been denounced by Judge Hughes's Campaign manager, his personal lieutenant, as containing a "joker" making the law ineffective. But Senator Cummins of Iowa and the philanthropic society from which the bill had come would have been responsible for the "joker" if there had been one in the bill. Both admit the responsibility and both denounce the imputation.

For many years our sailors had been trying to free themselves from the feudalism of the sea, which made the sailor a serf to his vessel not only while it battles with the waves but also while it is safe in port. To desert a vessel was like deserting the army. Our government was compelled to arrest deserting seamen and to return them to their vessels whether their vessels were domestic or foreign. Nor was that all. Provisions for safety at sea were utterly inadequate. Yet the "invisible government" secretly fought the passage of this relief measure; and when it did pass, under La Follette's leadership, the "invisible government" secured its "pocket" veto by a Republican President.

But upon the re-passage of this law it came before President Wilson for approval. Again the influences of the "invisible government" were felt from ocean to ocean. But this time they failed to defeat the remedial measure. President Wilson signed the Seamen's bill.

In consequence of that act of his all seamen are free now to leave their vessels when in American ports—as free as any other workman is to leave his place of employment. With this law in operation, the condition of seamen has been improved, safety at sea has been advanced, and in consequence of their greater freedom as working men sailors have found their wages rising.

Nobody suffers from this law except shipping monopolists who wish to fatten their own purses at the expense of the men who work for them and at the life-risk of passengers who travel upon their ships.

President Wilson had the appointment, thanks to a Democratic Congress, of the first incumbent of the Secretaryship of Labour.

For fifty years the labour organisations of the United States had appealed to Congress for a Department of Labour. On the very day of President Wilson's inauguration this department was created, and he had to choose a Secretary. Some corporation lawyer would have been an ideal incumbent from the plutocratic point of view. In plutocratic quarters, therefore, there was naturally much disgust when President Wilson's choice was made.

He selected a man who had been a wage worker from boyhood, and a labour unionist all his working life; who had been a blacklisted miner; who had been an officer of high rank in a place of financial trust in his international organisation; and who had rounded off his labour unionist experience with experience as a publicist through six years of service in Congress, where he was Chairman of the House Committee on Labour. This appointment was ideal, but not by the idealism of plutocracy.

Foreign Policy

The Mexican situation might have been considered in connection with domestic problems. It involves, as they do, the question of whether a plutocratic few or the democratic many shall rule.

Intervention in Mexico, which President Wilson has set himself against, and his plutocratic adversaries are in effect demanding, would mean validation by the United States of the Mexican land grants of a few American plutocrats at the cost of the blood of an army of American youth.

It would mean to the south of us such a hell on earth as has broken loose in Europe.

But Mexican problems are only one of a series of war problems that have confronted President Wilson during his administration. The President had been able to make only a beginning in his work of cleaning out domestic evils and clearing up the Mexican situation, when the European war burst upon the world, bringing to him a host of new and perplexing problems.

Can any of us forget the thrill with which the whole country welcomed the President's proclamation of neutrality? No one at that time condemned it. Everybody praised it. It was alive with common sense and it rang with a note of sincerity as from a whole people. No document from any book of forms or bundle of precedents was that proclamation, which phrased a nation's purpose to be neutral not only in act and word but in thought.

Has, then, the nation under President Wilson's leadership been true to that proclamation? So far as he could influence a people's thoughts and words and acts, it uncontestedly has been. What better evidence of this need there be than that the unreasoning partisans of both sides have condemned the President's neutral policies.

Is not this one of the tests of all genuine neutrality? Is it not one of the embarrassments that neutrals must be prepared to face?

No idle saying is it that "Wilson has kept us out of war." He has done it in very truth.

With national honour, too.

With a kind of national honour, to be sure, which swash-buckling patriots can no more appreciate than the bully with a chip on his shoulder can appreciate the honourable self-restraint of the man who won't knock it off.

But to Americans who love their country for the ideals to which it is dedicated, and their flag for what it symbolises, the President has kept us out of war to the true honour of the country and the great glory of its flag.

We now know that if unhappily we should become involved in war under an administration of his, it would not be a "war at the drop of a hat," it would not be a war of our seeking, it would not be a war that we could avoid. If war should come under him, it would be truly a war of defence which no responsible statesmanship on a President's part could avert.

It is said, however, that President Wilson has belied his peace professions by warlike policies. How would that dispose of the fact that nevertheless he has kept us out of war?

A militarist in the White House would have had us in war waist deep long ago. It is at least doubtful if a consistently strict pacifist there could have kept us out.

He would probably have been run over and trampled upon by the stampede which his absolute peace attitude would have been used to stimulate, at a time when militarists had almost everything their own way—from newspapers and magazines to moving picture shows and pulpits.

But Wilson has honourably kept us out of war.

The blessings of a peace-loving people should be his reward; their prayers for his further success in this humanising policy should encourage him.

Is "preparedness" legislation counted among President Wilson's warlike acts? Read, then, its provisions toward taking out of private hands the manufacture of munitions of war. These are a long step toward removing one of the impelling causes of war—the influence of interests which find their profits in wars and rumours of war.

Read also this saving clause in the naval appropriation bill, a clause which gives us the key to President Wilson's "preparedness" policy:—

"If at any time before the construction authorised by this Act shall have been contracted for there shall have been established, with the co-operation of the United States of America, an international tribunal or tribunals competent to secure peaceful determinations of all international disputes, and which shall render unnecessary the maintenance of competitive armaments, then and in that case such naval expenditures as may be inconsistent with the engagements made in the establishment of such tribunal or tribunals may be suspended, when so ordered by the President of the United States."

A vote against the re-election of President Wilson would be a vote for giving a free hand to plutocracy; a vote for President Wilson's re-election will be a vote of confidence in him, in his foreign and domestic policies, in democracy. The record plainly shows that his re-election would mean progress toward democratic ideals. To achieve these in their fullness is only a matter of keeping on in the direction toward which the policies of his administration are turned,

LOUIS F. POST.

PRESIDENT WILSON'S IDEALISM

("S. C." in the PUBLIC, Chicago, October 27th.)

It is ever the lot of the idealist to be misunderstood by the materialist. The materialist interprets life in concrete terms; riches are measured only in dollars; politics, in offices; religion, in numbers; statecraft, in power; government, in force. The idealist sees in life, influences, tendencies, and aspirations; riches are the acquirements that enable man to live a fuller life; politics enables him to unite with his fellows in the use of social forces; religion gives play to his spiritual being; statecraft permits the adjustment of national and international interests; and government is the outward manifestation of the inward conception of social order. The idealist appeals to the conscience of his fellows; the materialist relies upon his physical strength and intellectual cunning.

President Wilson exposed the heart of materialism when he said in his address to women at the Chicago Auditorium:—

"Some of the difficulties in our foreign relations in the last two years have been due to the fact that it was not comprehensible to some foreign statesmen that the United States was really disinterested. They had never heard of such a thing. And in proportion as the United States demonstrates to the world that its influence in the family of nations is disinterested it will have that part of power which does not come from arms, but comes from the great invisible powers that well up in the human heart."

He might truthfully have included many American publicists with the foreign statesmen who cannot comprehend the idea of disinterestedness. It is indeed due to this handicap

of the materialists at home that we have made no more impression abroad.

These two forces, idealism and materialism, have from the beginning struggled for the control of this country. Sometimes one, and then the other, has prevailed. In the earliest days of the Republic the passion for liberty was uppermost; and America, young and weak as she was, stood as an inspiration to the struggling peoples of all lands. France, Greece, the South American countries, all received the hand of fellowship when they rose against their oppressors. But a time came when Americans forgot their own ideals. They made war upon Mexico, and seized her territory; they engaged in internecine strife over slavery—slavery in a land boasting that all men were created equal. Then followed a period in which bold and masterful men effected a combination between government power and private business that amassed great fortunes, and corrupted men's consciences. Liberty was not dead in America, but it was the weaker force, and had often to yield to the stronger power of might. In the war with Spain mean and exalted motives mingled. We freed Cuba, but we held the Philippines. And because we held the Philippines we dared not extend the hand of fellowship to the Boer Republics, when the British Tories made war upon them, as we had welcomed all other nations fighting for freedom. The theft of Panama from Colombia was in keeping with this doctrine of might.

But the tide has turned. Idealism is asserting itself. The spiritual is challenging the material. The line is not clearly drawn. It cannot be said that all of one party is spiritual, and that all of another party is material; but the line is there, and the predominating force that finds expression in President Wilson springs from idealism; while the force back of Mr. Hughes is based upon materialism. The one stands for the rights of man, the other for the rights of property; which in concrete terms means that the President stands for the rights of all, while his opponent stands for the rights of the few. In a word, one represents democracy, and the other plutocracy. This is not a sharply-defined division, but it is so plain that none can mistake it unless he wishes deliberately to deceive himself. Not all democrats are supporting President Wilson, nor are all plutocrats behind Mr. Hughes, but this is the division of the controlling forces. The men who make things, who produce wealth, like Mr. Edison and Mr. Ford, have aligned themselves with the President. The men whose chief financial interests are in some form of legal privilege, who levy toll upon the people, like Rockefeller and the Guggenheims, are supporting Mr. Hughes. Surely, none save the self-deceived can fail to choose aright in this election.

The settlement of Western Canada proceeds apace. During the month of September 1,035 free homesteads of 160 acres each were taken up. Of these 215 were in the Province of Manitoba, 397 in Saskatchewan, 384 in Alberta, and 39 in British Columbia. The total acreage thus given away by the Canadian Lands Department was 165,600—an area considerably larger than the county of Flint. Of the settlers taking up this free land 155 were from the United States and 220 from the British Isles. Others originally came from countries as far apart as the West Indies, Greece and Roumania. During the nine months ended September 30th there were 10,149 free land grants of 160 acres each thus taken up, the area representing a total of 1,623,840 acres, or equivalent to nearly one-third the area of Wales. These figures are the more remarkable when considered in conjunction with the fact that at the present time Canada has under arms nearly 400,000 men, largely recruited from the class who under normal conditions would become "home-steaders."—CANADIAN NEWS ITEMS, issued by the Canadian Emigration Office.