

ning to apply to our States and cities the knowledge gained in preventing disease at Panama. The village in Kansas will be more sanitary for that knowledge.

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In some other matters we have "butted into" the temple of holy private enterprise by our Panama experiment—for it is an experiment, based on scientific calculations.

We have learned that *we* can run for ourselves a line of steamers; *we* are running a line between New York and Colon, making the run one day quicker than private enterprise is running its steamers, and last year *our* profit on *our* line was \$150,000. Yet—is this too "radical"?—wouldn't it be even more profitable to *us* if we ran the line at cost? And still more profitable if we ran it free, as "business men" run elevators in their office buildings, and *pay the cost out of our land values?*

Then, on the Isthmus are two little railroads, owned by "us." On the cars and locomotives is the legend "U. S.," and that spells *us*. Our railroads down there show gross earnings of a little more than \$6,000,000; and since passenger and freight cars that travel up and down in high buildings are run free of direct charges, the service being paid for in rentals, can't we do the same with our back-and-forth passenger and freight cars, and pay expenses of service out of our increased land values? Is a system that is conservative enough for conservative business men too "radical" for *us?*

We are doing still more down there at Panama.

The great and good government of the United States has actually burglarized the Socialist platform—*we* are the burglars, mind you—and is conducting at Panama and along the route of the canal, publicly owned, Common-Good hotels, laundries, machine shops, bakeries, boarding houses, stores, et-cet-e-ra! Lost our minds, haven't we? And the Supreme Court hasn't issued a single injunction against us, so what we are doing at Panama must be judicially reasonable, even if it be commercially wild-eyed.

And again, worse and more of it.

Those of *us* who are doing *our* work at Panama get the best food for themselves and their families at anti-race-suicide prices. At our experiment station down there we are showing that we can do our Common-Good housekeeping honestly and efficiently without skinning ourselves, or permitting some of *us* to skin the rest of *us* with the knife of "public enterprise for private profit."

It's quite a jump from Panama to Alaska, and there's some difference between digging a canal and digging coal. But we can make Alaska an experiment station, and "difference" is a big factor in scientific experimentation.

We have vast coal fields in Alaska; great coal fields owned by *us*. We are actually running a coal mine owned by *us*, and private enterprise has shown *us* how not to mine coal as well as how to mine it.

Any reason why we can't dig our own coal in Alaska, out of our own coal deposits? Any reason why we can't build and operate our own railroads in Alaska, running them into *our* coal fields and bringing *our* coal in *our* cars over *our* tracks to *our* shipping ports, there to be loaded into *our* ships, brought to *our* public docks on the Pacific and Atlantic coasts, and sell it to ourselves out of *our* coal bunkers?

Long ago Brutus said, "I pause for a reply." Well, that's what I'm doing.

This coming winter, and the next and the next, we shall need coal at reasonable prices more than we need the Panama Canal. We don't need a canal to furnish heat; we can't cook breakfast with a canal; and possibly that's the reason the Guggenmorgans permitted us to build our own canal.

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Then, we have a few water-power sites left unmorganheimed, and they mean heat, power and light. Can't we do something for ourselves with our water powers?

Crazy? Of course we are.

But having made a good beginning, and since we are getting a reputation for craziness, let's make a good job of it.

W. G. EGGLESTON.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

ELEMENTARY POLITICS IN FRANCE.

Paris.

France is an old nation; her literature has lived for eight centuries; her past, glorious as it may be, weighs her down. She has borne so long the monarchical yoke, that it may seem still an open question to know whether purely democratic institutions may now suit her. Experience has yet to give its verdict. But so far, after many changes in governmental sign-posts and labels, France has known nothing but the worst features of autocratic and really irresponsible government. The present day regime is no exception to the rule.

France is nominally a republic; but that republic is, in fact, nothing else but an autocracy of vested interests. Parliament is filled with defenders of

Privilege and hirelings of Monopoly. The nation at large has been embruted by a deeply calculated system of materialistic education; immorality of every kind has been, on purpose, cultivated as a fine art; the entire press is sold or to be sold; and every care is taken in order that no news as to the real progress of other nations may filter through the density of official teaching.

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Meanwhile, taxes grow incessantly, the needs of the state apparently going up with the financial difficulties; the process not being carried on without much rhetorical talk in the Chambers.

Practically everything is taxed, mainly the necessities of life. Salt is taxed up to 50 per cent of its value. Besides the customs at the boundaries, there are octrois at the entrance of every town. State monopolies (matches, tobacco, among other things), sell infamous goods at fancy prices. A fine is put upon attempts at hygienic improvements, in the shape of a tax on doors and windows. Another fine is placed upon attempts at enjoyment, in the shape of a tax of 10 per cent, topping the value of theater tickets. The antiquated poll-tax has not aged in France; it is still in the prime of vigor, and claims but 9 francs from every citizen per year. It must be added in fairness that this poll-tax is not levied with due respect to the praiseworthy principle of "Egalité."

The working population of Paris is not called upon to pay the poll-tax; it is surmised that there would be difficulties concerning that payment. But the peasants, even the poorest, being of an easy-going temper, have to submit. As a matter of fact, there is no equality in France so far as taxation is concerned. The customs tariffs recognize "zones." Besides, some parts of the country are favored at the expense of others: the Departments of the north are paying at least one-half of the share of those of the south, in excess of their own burden. To this, the island of Corsica proves an exception; she is overloaded with tariffs to such an extent that she has to send her products to France through Italy, in order to obtain better terms. The unfortunate island is threatening revolt.

Protectionism produces its baneful effects; unemployment is rife. The public debt increases; all told, it goes up to 50 milliards of francs; of course, the sinking fund has been sunk. The cost of living is rising, the population decreases, and poverty and corruption, under all their forms, gnaw at the heart of the nation. Everywhere there is decay, material and moral. It is utterly impossible for France to exist in 10 years from now, if she does not mend her ways.

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And this would mean practically an upheaval. The French, up to the neck in the slough of political imbecility, have not, as a rule, the slightest idea of a life different to theirs. They know that they suffer; but they do not even suppose that means have ever been discovered of allaying those sufferings.

As a matter of fact, the French, who boast of their having freed the world, do not suspect what sort of thing freedom may be; they understand it neither for their neighbors nor for themselves. Every man is begging for special rights, every class

clamoring for privileges. The dream of the average French citizen is to become a state official in order to make a show of authority, and to tie a ribbon at his button-hole in order to make a show of superiority.

As for women, they have no rights whatever. Girls without a dowry are practically debarred from marriage. Thrift, practiced as it is in the teeth of dire penury, has become a national calamity; enterprise at home finds no encouragement and no capital.

Law in its worst forms maps out beforehand the life of every Frenchman, and even at the point of death the unfortunate Gaul is not released from its grasp, for the code gives him strict orders about his will, and forbids him to dispose freely of his own.

It can be said that the average Frenchman has lost the sense of public and even of individual life. Protracted and made-up agitation about Anticlericalism has rendered him impervious to anything with a practical meaning. He has been artfully led to believe that "priest-eating" will, in some unexplained way, fill his hungry stomach; and, wonderful to relate, although starving he still believes it. His faith is unabated, too, in the "laïque" schools; establishments from which every reference to religion is carefully banished and which, nevertheless, turn out every year an ever-growing number of vicious and ignorant children.

French colonies are extensive, and many of them of great value. Still they cost much to the metropole, and give nothing in return—except to a gang of well-known speculators. It is that gang which has been sending France to the sly conquest of Morocco.

The governing bodies, wholly innocent of the most elementary knowledge in political and social economy, and deep in the pay of vested interests, have no remedies to offer, save worn-out shams, spurious panaceas which have been tried elsewhere long ago and found wanting.

For instance, discussions have dragged on for years, and are still dragging on now, in the political world, about the application to France of the income tax—which, as has been well said, makes but liars and thieves of people; and that Income Tax is considered, among French shining lights, as a great and striking novelty.

Practically the whole of taxation is indirect; which leads to sophistication on the one hand, and to official squandering of public money on the other. So-called social laws, continually enacted under the pretense of helping the poor—and which have no other effect than to augment the frightful number of Jacks-in-office—add to the financial entanglement.

To sum up, France suffers from Protectionism and from Indirect taxation because she suffers from Indirect government.

Centralization has been carried to its extreme length. Local government exists nowhere, even the smallest municipalities living under the club of the representative of the Central Power. The legislature is elected—in the most trumped-up fashion—every four years, and, with the exception of the fortnight during which the elections take place, the electorate is unable to utter a word; it has no control whatever upon the acts of its representatives. There is not even the shadow of Initiative and Referendum. Notice, it is the legislature which nominates the