

the Democrat's surmise, we doubt if there is as much as in another.

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American correspondents abroad would probably load down their dispatches with news of this Budget fight and its deep significance, even as the English papers are loaded down with it, if they and their managing editors at home regarded it as "news." The influences which draw forth the Democrat's question are probably due less to any news monopoly scheme for suppressing "political dynamite" than to journalistic incompetency. Not incompetency with reference to "enterprise." American newspaper men are enterprising enough. But incompetency with reference to the direction of their enterprise.

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As the net result of more than two generations of newspaper training since the Civil War, the newspaper men of the United States, considered as a class, are controlled by perverted notions of what constitutes news for civilized newspaper constituencies. If they report a court trial, it is the little sensational incidents, and not the real news of the trial—the merits of the case—that find interesting expression. If they report a speech, they exhaust twice as much space as would be necessary for a readable summary of its points, in exploiting the mere quips and quirks of the speaker or of some interrupter, making persons who heard the speech wonder what speech they are reading about, and leaving those who didn't hear it in utter ignorance of its purport or else deceived about it. And so all along the line. In the mind of the trained newspaper man "news" is not information. "News," in his mind—of course there are exceptions, but they are usually men who have risen out of the cult—"news" is gossip; sensation; comical episodes; Paul Pry disclosures of private affairs; the comings and goings of celebrities; and above all, scandal. There is singular significance in the American newspaper man's characterization of his ideal newspaper man, as a man who "has a nose for news." For most of what is esteemed as "news" by the American newspaper is distinguishable more by its odor than by any other quality, and of course it needs a nose to find it.

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That is the principal reason, we should say, why the last-ditch struggle of feudalism in England gets scant attention in the American press. Blood is not flowing, nor likely to flow; it is too intense a controversy to supply much frivolous gossip, and too serious for elaborate comicalities; it has few

elements of secluded private life above stairs which the enterprise of impudence might reveal to a snobbish constituency of curious readers; and it is so free from scandal that there is not the slightest whiff of an odor to catch the attention of American newspaper men with "a nose for news." Not being "news," this final chapter in the history of British feudalism is naturally enough neglected by the American press. What else could the Johnstown Democrat have expected? Its editorial describes the struggle as a news feature of "unusual importance"; but that does not make it "news." Quite the contrary. In the American newspaper sense, it is not the news features of unusual importance that make "news," but those of unusual unimportance.

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Free Trade in Labor, Restricted Trade in Property

One would not like to say that President Taft really believes in the restriction of competition for goods and free trade in labor, but Mr. Taft himself comes very near to saying it.

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In his speech at Winona, where he defended the Aldrich tariff bill, he accused the free trader of opposing tariff protection because "he thinks that our manufacturers," etc., "ought to withstand the competition of foreign manufacturers," etc., "or else go out of business and find something else more profitable to do." The accusatory manner in which this statement was made, as well as his comment and his record as a Protectionist, shows that in Mr. Taft's belief manufacturers in this country ought not to be subject to the competition of importers. Certainly it is no misinterpretation to assert that he believes that importers of foreign goods should be prevented (within limits, of course) from seeking such buyers and at such prices as they will. This is a fair statement of the Protection idea in its relation to the buying and selling of goods, or we have never seen one. If Mr. Taft does not believe that importers should be restrained from freely importing and selling foreign goods, sufficiently to enable home manufacturers, etc., to get remunerative prices for their products, it is high time for him to explain away his professed Protectionism.

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But how does Mr. Taft apply his principle of restricted bargaining, to contracts for labor? See what he said on that point at Chicago only the day before he spoke at Winona. Alluding to non-union workingmen, he used this language: "Their

right to labor for such wages as they choose to accept is sacred, and any lawless invasion of that right cannot be too severely condemned. All the advantages of trades unionism, great as they are, cannot weigh a feather in the scale against the right of any man lawfully seeking employment, to work for whom and at what price he will." Does that declaration square with Mr. Taft's Protectionism? Or does he distinguish between freedom of contract for goods, and freedom of contract for labor? If he does distinguish, upon what principle does he insist that the right to work for any one and at any price is sacred, while contending that the right to buy of any one and at any price is not sacred? How does it happen that he puts on protection spectacles when he thinks business profits are at stake, and free trade spectacles when the stake is living wages?

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There seems to be no explanation of this inconsistency, unless Mr. Taft's apologists fall back upon a "weasel word" in his Chicago speech. It will be observed that he injects the idea of "law." Giving force to his reference to the law, we find his *sacred* rights dwindling to a mere *legal* right. According to Mr. Taft in that interpretation it is not invasions of the sacred right, but "lawless" invasions, which cannot be too severely condemned; and not the right of any man seeking employment at what price he will that weighs so much, but his seeking the employment "lawfully." Now, we admit that if Mr. Taft did intend this interpretation, he was not inconsistent, verbally. There is no verbal inconsistency in saying, on the one hand, that importers must not compete freely because there is a law against it, and, on the other, that laborers must compete freely because there is no law against it. Those statements are quite consistent verbally, even if crooked ethically. But what then? Does Mr. Taft believe that the law which protects our manufacturers from competition for the sake of profits should stand, and yet that there should be no law to protect our workmen from competition for the sake of a wholesome human life? No man could pronounce severer condemnation upon himself.

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When Mr. Taft says that the right to make labor contracts freely is a sacred right, he touches rock bottom. But is it less sacred with reference to contracts for buying goods than to contracts for the labor that makes goods? And with reference to contracts for labor, does not freedom of contract imply equality of contractual condition?

With a labor market glutted to the point at which competition forces wages for work below the decent-living line, the man who sells his labor is a beggar, not a contractor. So far from offering a free contract, he has to plead for a job. Mr. Taft's words about the sacred right to labor for any wages one chooses to accept, are born either of ignorance of economic conditions or of an effort to be amiably euphemistic. Men who have to beg for work, take the wages, not that they choose as an equivalent for their service, but that they have to take or starve.

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This condition raises alternative questions for Mr. Taft with reference to his idea of "reasonable" protection for business men, and unmodified free trade for workingmen. He can either throw his influence into the scale of opening up opportunities freely for all—freedom of production and freedom of trade—or he can throw it into the scale of modifying free trade in labor by law as free trade in goods is modified by law. Such men as he plead that the former is not practicable at this time. That isn't true, but with them it is "good enough Morgan" until the deluge, so let it go. What, then, has he to say of the modifications? If he stands for laws checking free trade in goods, will he stand out against laws checking free trade in labor? Will he as a protectionist be hostile or quiescent on child labor laws, woman's labor laws, hours of employment laws, minimum wages laws, and the rest which are necessitated by denial of equality of economic opportunity? Here is Mr. Taft's choice. He must lead the way to protection from labor competition as well as goods competition, or else to free trade in the fullest sense in both. To do neither—to stand for protection for Business and unchecked competition for Labor, is to expose himself as a special pleader for a parasitic class; and this is a role in which we should be sorry to see him appear unless it truly represents him.

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The Church and the World.

Many church dignitaries exhibit a disposition regarding social questions which meets this just rebuke in the correspondent's column of a Buffalo paper of recent date. The correspondent cuts to the bone in his criticism of the moral police force which the ecclesiasticism of today, like that of two thousand years ago, is endeavoring to set up for the protection of unearned property. "The church sometimes makes itself conspicuous," says this writer, "in its opposition to proposed reforms such