

induced the rank and file of the party to discipline for corruption and treachery, are working like nailers, with Republican campaign funds, to defeat the Democratic party at its own convention. When Johnson said, after two years' experience at fighting plutocracy in politics, that no one need expect the plutocrats to "lie down" until they are "whipped to a finish," he said something worth remembering. The war upon plutocracy is neither child's play nor fool's play.

While the working people are wondering where all that prosperity is which they are gravely assured that they are enjoying, but of which they see but little except in the prosperity-boasting newspapers, the Cincinnati Evening Post comes forward to prove with figures that they are prosperous with at least a figurable prosperity. It gets its figures from the report of the comptroller of the treasury upon the condition of savings banks. According to this report, says the jubilant Evening Post—

There are in the United States 6,666,672 individual depositors, with an aggregate accumulation of \$2,750,177,000 on deposit. Taking the year 1896 as a point of comparison, it appears that since that time there has been an increase in the number of depositors of 1,601,672, and an increase in the total deposits of \$843,177,000. This exhibit shows the remarkable increase in seven years of 30 per cent. in depositors and 40 per cent. in total deposits. There is no dream about all these cold millions in the banks, mostly placed there by and belonging to the working people. The total deposits in all the banks amount to about \$5,000,000,000, of which the savings funds, the money of the common people, make \$2,750,000,000—more than half. Clearly, not all the money in the country is owned by the great financiers. This showing of money saved by the working people of the country becomes all the more remarkable when we take into consideration the prevailing high prices. Wages have not gone up in proportion to the universal increase in prices. With only a little more money to buy with, labor pays far more for all the comforts of life. Yet the savings report shows that their share in the benefits of prosperity is no small one.

There is something suspicious about that last observation. It seems like a suggestion that read-

ers must beware of placing too much confidence in what has preceded. Well may the writer have wondered, well may workingmen wonder, well may we all wonder, how laborers could have only a little more to buy with, could pay much more for the comforts of life, and yet could largely increase their savings.

Only one of two explanations of that riddle is possible. Either laborers have lowered their scale of living or they have not increased their savings. Both explanations are probably true to some extent. At any rate the savings banks reports, with their averages of depositors and deposits, prove nothing. Workingmen should be as cautious of "averages" as Sam Weller was advised to be of "vidders." The story is told of a traveler who, coming to a stream he desired to cross, but not knowing its depth, asked a wise man, who informed him that the average depth was three feet, whereupon the traveler started to wade across and was drowned. Savings bank averages are as dangerous in another way. If 200 people had savings bank deposits amounting to \$2,000, the report would show for them an average deposit of \$10 apiece; although 199 of them might have a deposit of less than \$6 while one had over \$1,000. This trick of savings bank averages becomes very deceptive when the well-to-do and even the rich use savings banks for their uninvested surpluses. One person, being allowed only \$1,000 in each bank, might deposit that much in each of several banks. Suppose he distributed \$5,000 among six banks. Then he would count for six individuals in the averaging process. If for example, he were one of 200 with \$6,000 amongst them, the reports would show 205 depositors with an average deposit of nearly \$30 each. Yet in fact there would be only 200 depositors, one of whom would have deposits amounting to \$5,000, while the other 199 would have an average of less than \$5.03.

That savings bank averages are distorted in this way, so as falsely to show a great increase of the average wealth of working men, is an actual fact. It has been several times exposed. The Massachusetts statistics have exposed it, and so, more recently, have those of Connecticut. Upon the Connecticut exposure, the Pittsburgh (Pa.) Post of December 31, 1901, had this to say:

The savings banks reports are deceptive in that they are being used for investment purposes by rich people, rather than by the wageworkers. The Connecticut savings banks increased their deposits the past year by \$9,500,000, bringing the total up to \$193,000,000 in round numbers. But of this sum only \$76,000,000 belongs to depositors who have less than \$1,000 each to their credit. One bank reports an individual account of \$60,000, to which was added \$4,850 during the year, although the law forbids any bank receiving more than \$1,000 from any depositor during the year.

In the instance mentioned the limitation law of Connecticut seems to have been violated openly. That such laws are extensively and systematically evaded is evident from the following extract from a circular letter from the City Trust Co., of 36 Wall street, New York, seeking to draw away from savings banks some of the patronage of their rich clients:

Savings banks' depositors will find this company's facilities in many ways of greater advantage than the savings bank. This is especially true of those who are now using savings banks as a species of investment, and who are compelled to arrange their deposits so that the lawful maximum amount which is permitted to an individual account shall not be exceeded, and to accomplish which it is necessary to use different titles and patronize different banks.

A little intelligent reflection upon this aspect of the matter may explain to the jubilant though somewhat mystified editor of the Cincinnati Evening Post, why workingmen whose living expenses are much increased without a corresponding increase in their wages, nevertheless appear to have "salted away" a much larger "average" of savings bank deposits than ever before.

When the Tory government of Great Britain was prosecuting its