

crease, possibly more, according to circumstances then existing, and he may be elected. But with any other kind of platform or candidate, it is hard to conceive how, with the most efficient organization imaginable, and any amount of money contributed by special interests concerned, one-third of the honest Democrats of the country could be brought to the polls. Such an experiment would make a wreck only, less complete and contemptible than that of the shameless Republican side show—the Indianapolis sham gold “Democratic” affair of 1896. And that is precisely the result the “reorganizers” propose to themselves and are expected by the Republican managers to accomplish.

A row in Republican politics in New York State, between “Boss” Platt and Gov. Odell, gives occasion for the announcement of the Democratic candidacy of David B. Hill. It is argued that he could carry New York and would therefore win. But what if he did win? So long as he sits comfortably in the hands of the trusts, a Democratic victory would be a plutocratic triumph if he were the candidate.

The Supreme Court of Indiana has nullified an act of the legislature intended for the protection of workingmen with reference to their wages. What makes this decision especially noteworthy is its incompatibility with court decisions common everywhere which sustain other statutes that are as plainly open to the same objections.

The Indiana statute requires employers to pay wages weekly, and the Indiana court decides that this requirement is destructive of the laborer’s freedom of contract. In the course of the opinion the court says:

The statute places the wage-earners of the State under quasi guardianship. It classes them with minors and other persons under legal disability by making their contracts void at the pleasure of a public officer. It tends to degrade them as citizens by impeaching their ability to take care of themselves. It is paternalism, pure and simple, and in violent conflict with the liberty and equality theory of our

institutions. Labor is property; it is exchangeable for food and raiment and some comforts, and may be bought and sold, and contracts made in relation thereto, the same as concerning any other property. The contract prohibited affects employer and employe alike. If the master can employ only upon terms of weekly payment, the workingman can find employment on no other terms.

All that has a fine sound, and would be perfectly just if laborers were left really free by our laws and institutions to contract upon equal terms. But when all necessary opportunities for the laborer are monopolized by law, it is the veriest pretense and twaddle to nullify statutes intended for his protection, on the ground that they interfere with his freedom of contract. Especially is this so when the same courts uphold usury laws, which are as clearly obnoxious to the objection of paternalism. Don’t they place borrowers “under quasi-guardianship?” Don’t they class borrowers with “minors and other persons under legal disability by making their contracts void at the pleasure of a public officer?” Don’t they tend to degrade borrowers as citizens “by impeaching their ability to take care of themselves?” Yet usury statutes are held valid; while statutes to protect workingmen (whom the laws first cripple in their contracting power) from having their pitiful wages withheld for two weeks and even a month, are invalidated. What makes these labor-statute decisions peculiarly contemptible is the hypocritical complacency judges assume—and Indiana judges are not alone in this guilt—that the statutes are prejudicial to the laborer, when the obvious purpose and effect of the decision is to protect the freedom not of the helpless laborer to contract but of greedy employers to oppress.

Flossie—Mamma, didn’t the preacher say something last Sunday about not caring what we eat or drink, or what kind of clothes we wear?

Mamma—Did he? Perhaps I wasn’t paying attention to him.

Flossie—Well, I don’t suppose anybody’d pay much attention to him when he says things like that!—Puck.

THE NEGRO PROBLEM IN THE SOUTH.

In a previous editorial bearing upon this subject (p. 21) we led up to the conclusion that the American Negro problem can be permanently solved (except by the extinction of one race or the other) in but one way: by effective recognition of equal legal rights, regardless of race and irrespective of color. It is only in this democratic fashion that the race war which now threatens can be made to give way to race peace, the race antagonism to race friendship, the race hostility to mutuality of interests between the races.

Not alone is this the only way in which the problem can be solved, but it is the just way of solving it. Let one call his favorite philosophy utilitarian or idealistic, let it be empirical or transcendental, yet is he forced all the same to this conclusion. With reference to the Negro problem, all philosophic roads lead to this Rome.

But we are not insensible of the difficulties which individuals in the Southern states would encounter in insisting upon so radical a solution. We have a keen appreciation of the tremendous obstacles that stand in their way. Nor do we refer to obstacles affecting their pecuniary interests and personal comfort merely. Brave men never allow such considerations to control them. What we refer to is the fact that a public opinion holds sway over the whites of the South, which individual Southerners cannot instantly overcome. Like public opinion everywhere, upon any subject, and at all times, it cannot be altered by fiat. It cannot be altered by the peremptory demand of anyone. It cannot be altered by argument. It is proof even against superior intelligence. Nothing can alter it but a change of heart in the social consciousness of the white inhabitants.

Those Southerners, therefore, who believe in the democratic solution of the Negro problem are at a great disadvantage. Living in a community where public opinion is extremely hostile to it, they are democrats where democracy suffers from blight. We have much sympathy

for them. Between their democratic convictions and the manifest necessity for compromises in practice, their opinions are in a continuous swirl; and fortunate, indeed, are they if they save their convictions from wreck. The necessity for compromise in action is all too apt to tempt them into compromises of conviction.

It is very hard for men who have that pride of opinion which we all know as "consistency," to compromise in practice while remaining firm in principle. Some stick by principle to the extent of rejecting compromises in practice. These are cranks. Some, on the other hand, modify their principles to conform to their practical compromises. These are "trimmers" in the bad sense of that sometimes abused term.

Temptations to become that kind of trimmer are very insistent among even real democrats at the South, in connection with the Negro problem. Recognizing in the baffling circumstances the necessity for compromising their democracy in practice, yet disturbed by fears of being inconsistent, they are sorely tempted to compromise also their democracy in principle, by grasping at some gauzy distinction between legal rights for Negroes and legal rights for white men.

Some find this all the easier because it is a fact, as they vigorously assure you (though not without indications of a guilty conscience), that Negroes are far from being angelic. That being obvious, they have only to assume, without mentioning it—it would be too comical if it were mentioned—that white men are angelic, and there you have the necessary distinction. Ergo, the democratic principle does not apply to Negroes, and their rights should be distinguished in law!

But there is neither necessity nor excuse for such absurd, not to say contemptible, stultification.

The democratic principle is one thing; opportunity for its application is another. The principle is universal and invariable; but opportunities for its application vary with time, place and circumstances. No one is

inconsistent, therefore, who clings uncompromisingly to his democracy in principle though submitting gracefully by way of compromise to all manner of autocratic practice in public affairs if he cannot get better terms. Though compromise is a vicious regulator of convictions, it is in the social world a wise rule of action. Let the democratic Democrats and democratic Republicans of the Southern States bear that in mind, and much of the Negro problem will cease to be a problem to them.

In practice it may be excusable for individuals in dealing with the Negro problem at the South to agree by way of compromise to much that is inconsistent with democratic principle. Not because the problem itself requires it, but because public opinion necessitates it. Where this necessity exists, there is no condemnation of any white man of the South who makes the compromise. He may do it and yet be a genuine democrat and good citizen. But he can be neither democrat nor good citizen if he compromises for any other reason than the pressure of necessity. At any rate he can be neither if he justifies discriminations against Negroes regarding legal rights, on principle. Something can be said even for the miner who joined the gang of Rocky Mountain lynchers, shouting: "Hang him! Hang him!" louder than any of the rest, yet hoping all the time that by seeming to fall in with the wicked humor of the gang he might gain a hearing and induce them to release their victim before a tree for the hanging could be found. But nothing can be said for those of the lynching gang who tried to convince themselves that lynching is right. So, while a democrat may compromise in practice as the best way of ultimately realizing his ideals or as the only way of getting along at all under the circumstances, no man is a democrat who denies the universality of the principle of equal legal rights of all, as a principle and a workable principle. It is his duty to stand for equality before the law as a principle, no matter to what extent he may be compelled by the backwardness of public opinion in

his community to assent to its denial in practice.

The principle of democracy demands that legal rights shall be equal, without regard to race, sex or social condition. This is the ideal toward which all true democrats and all good citizens must look. This is the principle that cannot be compromised without stultification. To compromise between this principle and its opposite is to befuddle the intellect and trifle with the conscience, which is destructive to both. The only admissible compromises are those practical social adjustments which conflict of opinion between men of diverse views necessitates, and which tend under all the circumstances to promote the steadiest progress toward the immutable ideal. No member of any community can force it to live upon a plane higher than the plane of its dominant ideals. But everyone with an ideal higher than that of his community can exert an awakening influence upon his community and thereby help to elevate its standards. This he is in conscience bound to do.

To the extent, then, that Southern white men in dealing with the Negro problem violate democratic principles confessedly against conviction but solely from necessity real or apparent, to that extent they may properly plead the embarrassment of their situation, may even urge the baffling character of their problem. But when they appeal to principle, insisting that the principle of democracy offers rights to white men which it withholds from Negroes, their plea must be tried, not by the difficulties of their situation, but by the democratic principle which they invoke.

Tried by that principle, the ordinary Southern attitude toward the Negro is condemned. For the essential principle of democracy is "equal rights for all and special privileges to none." And he is no democrat, let him label himself as he may, who would place any check upon the full realization of this principle in practice.

England is an aristocracy supported by plunder.—Schoolmaster.