

The Party of Discontent

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for Christensen for the same reasons, persuading himself perhaps that he is doing it because of the Irish plank. Other Irishmen will vote for Cox or Harding—for Cox if the drays continue to assail him, for there are few Irishmen who favor the Volstead act. The Irish plank will not attract many Irishmen, because the Irish, who are highly practical when it comes to politics and not in the least sentimental in that regard, know that they stand a better chance of getting something from the old parties than they do of getting the realization of all their desires at once from the Farmer-Labor Party.

There have been moments when the question of seriously damaging the old parties was touch-and-go. It is just as well to be candid about Robert M. La Follette. If he had been nominated he would have made the old parties sit up and take notice, and there were times when it looked as if he would be nominated. He wanted the nomination badly, there is no question of that, and he could have had it; but he wanted it as in spirit a Forty-eighter, he was one with Amos Pinchot in feeling and he would not stand on a United Mine Workers' platform.

With La Follette in the field, every malcontent in the United States would have known exactly where to go. They would have gone to him with enthusiasm, most of them. Even those who are malcontents over other things than the alleged wrongs of labor, or the social system would have found nothing difficult to stomach in his nomination. For what they want is a kicker, and La Follette fills the bill. They want a fighter, and he is that. Christensen may be better than La Follette in all that endears a candidate to the protester, but nobody knows him and he will have to spend from now until Election Day in getting acquainted.

No, doubt the La Follette delega-

tion from Wisconsin left Chicago with their minds bent on the third party. Throughout the Republican Convention they had held themselves aloof with a peculiar disdain, casting their votes for a man who had not been placed in nomination and could not be nominated, presenting impossible minority reports on the platform, challenging the convention and almost begging it to hoot their speakers down, refusing to make the nomination unanimous and acting in general like men who had gone to the convention merely to deride it. They doubtless figured then on La Follette as the candidate of the third party. But they thought, as he did, that the third party would be a radical party, not merely the United Mine Workers in action, and that consumers would have a place in it. The grievances of the consumer are felt in Milwaukee as well as elsewhere.

It is a curious thing that Debs, too, refused to be a candidate, despite the work that had been done by his supporters to get the new party to endorse or nominate him. There is nothing intricate or crafty about Debs. He is a sincere believer in Socialist doctrines and is so clear that the sun shines through him. It was from no motive of cunning politics, no weighing of this and that probability of party advantage that Debs accepts a nomination or declines one. He, like La Follette, simply could not run on the Farmer-Labor platform. Strange as it may seem, it may have been for the same reason, for Debs, Socialist as he is, does not leave the consumer out in his dream of what he would call a better and the rest of us would call a wilder world. He is in favor of Bolshevism in Russia, but his support of it comes from his intellect and not his heart; it is a Socialist Government in his eyes, even if Maria Spiridonova and Alexander Kerensky do not think so, and he

has not yet been convinced that the consumer suffers under its rule. If he thought so he might like it as little as Emma Goldman does.

At any rate, here was a platform which seemed socialistic to every eye but the eye of Debs, and all the good work of his supporters at Chicago went for nothing before that fact. The platform was the stumbling block to both the candidates who might have lent some personal strength to the ticket; La Follette most certainly would have. Of all the men of national prominence there was left only Henry Ford—the talk of Bryan was madhouse talk, for no sane man could have imagined that Bryan would run on any such platform, or even have left the Democratic Party to run on any platform—and Ford wanted it. He wanted it so badly as to set up headquarters in Chicago to get it for him; and that sheds a more revealing light on Ford than even the trial of The Chicago Tribune libel suit. But the delegates, hard up as they were for a candidate of national prominence, would have none of Ford. They preferred to give up their dream of a "national man" and nominate one who, before this convention met, had never been heard of outside of Utah and perhaps some I. W. W. circles in other States.

The joke on the Forty-eighters has been sufficiently expanded upon—how they started a movement that was to be national, called a convention, and found it taken out of their hands and themselves invited to go to climates as warm as Chicago but without an ameliorating lake. It is regrettable that there were not forty-seven or fifty of them, for the words "Forty-eighter" and "Fortyniner" have already a historical meaning that has endeared them to many. The "Forty-eighter" has always meant a member of that illustrious body of rebels who raised the

standard of fair and reasonable reform in Germany in 1848 and came within an ace of overthrowing Hohenzollernism—a type manifested in our American vision by Carl Schurz; the kind of men of whom Gerald Massey wrote his unforgettable poem, "The Men of Forty-eight." But the original meaning of "Forty-eighter" has been too deeply scarred on the mind of man for this ephemeral organization of well-meaning parlor radicals to take it away for long.

What must they think of themselves now? They were the men whom Colonel Roosevelt had in mind when he said, "Every reform has its lunatic fringe." He had his own Progressive Party in mind, and the men he was thinking of were precisely that Amos Pinchot and that J. A. H. Hopkins who went to Chicago to redeem the world by amalgamating all the irreconcilable inhabitants who had been drawn together by accident in the Cave of Adullam. They went there, and they found themselves looking at a lunatic fringe more lunatic than they. Or rather they found themselves, in another historic phrase, "surrounded by men who know exactly what they want." To Colonel Roosevelt they probably would have appeared as Jacobins, but at Chicago they appeared as Girondins surrounded by Hebertists.

As for the Single Taxers, they fought a good fight, and having lost it they proceeded with a heroic despair to nominate two unknowns and go gallantly into a fight where they cannot win a spear, or, putting it practically, into an election where they will get no votes except those of Single Taxers. It is not, perhaps, wise for Single Taxers to stand up and be counted, nor is it their usual practice. They generally bore from within. There are a good many of them, but not enough to stand the test of a count.