

The Charlotte News

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SATURDAY, JUNE 25, 1921.

THE SIMPLICITY OF GOVERNMENT

Mr. Harding remarked during his campaign that "government is a very simple thing after all," which it seems entirely to be so far as he is concerned and his party. It is the simple proposition of much promise and little performance.

It was one of the promises of Mr. Harding that taxes must be reduced. My, but how that caught the fellows who had been making their barrels of profits and who were forced to take the bung out for the revenue collectors!

Well, so far taxes haven't been reduced so anybody can tell. In truth, they have been increased if present appropriation bills are carried through. These bills carry \$6,000,000,000 for this year and the same for 1922 which means that the administration will spend three times as much on the army, for instance, as was spent in 1916 and more than three times as much on the navy as was spent in 1916 when nearly all of Europe was at war.

Well, there were other things, too, that made government very simple. It was a simple matter, we were told, to bring the soldiers home from the Rhine. They had no business over there, the spell-binders said, and they ought to be returned to their native heath instead of being imprisoned in their duties on the Rhine.

Government was simple, also, in the formulation of a peace program. An association of nations was all necessary to meet the emergency and that would be easy, as simple as falling off a log. But the months are trooping by and objectionist Senators are daring the President to make a move in this direction while the President himself lingers and languishes in the valley of indecision.

How indefinitely might such instances be multiplied, instances indicating that government is not as simple as the American people had been led to believe!

COUNTY FAIRS

Premier lists of the Mecklenburg county fairs and home-coming events which have come to hand show versatility of gifts awaiting those who propose to have exhibits at these townships fairs and remind us, in the meantime, that these events have developed extensively and are now rated as feature attractions of the fall months in parts of the county where they are held.

THE SITUATION AMONG THE MILLS AND THEIR PEOPLE. III.

Appearing in The News this afternoon is a communication from a mill worker. Mr. C. P. Lockey, a weaver in one of the North Charlotte mills, a native North Carolinian and an experienced man at his job, which gives an intimate glimpse of the state of mind prevailing among the average mill workers in this community, and, for that matter, throughout the South very probably.

Mr. Lockey's communication may be regarded as containing typical evidences of this state of mind. Speaking for himself and others who think the same thoughts with him, he indicates a critical attitude toward the cotton manufacturers, and directly charges that they are not as approachable as they might be, not as much concerned about the wellbeing of their employes as circumstances would demand and that they are disposed to return to conditions prevailing before the war in cotton mill communities.

Mr. Lockey is very much in earnest in his contentions, but with his sentiments we can not bring ourselves into agreement. It would be suicidal to the cotton mill employes to attempt to enforce conditions prevailing in 1914. It is a new world that has been made since then. Every condition has undergone an upheaval. Social, industrial, economic conditions are all changed and modern methods can not, therefore, be gauged by the methods obtaining so far back as 1914.

We can neither conceive that the mill owners are as indifferent to the welfare of their workers as Mr. Lockey thinks, even though he is one of these workers himself and has been for many years. There are evidences which indicate definitely that the manufacturers have realized the tremendous importance of creating a higher tone of citizenship among their employes and helping to make them satisfied and contented in their labors.

Nevertheless, it is obvious that the feeling prevails among the workmen that the manufacturers are complacent and unconcerned about their wellbeing and this being the case, the big task ahead of the manufacturers is to eliminate this feeling and to change this attitude.

Until that has been accomplished, there is no such thing as permanent amity in the relations between the mill owners and the mill workers. They might get together today on a pay basis which would be eminently satisfactory to both, but tomorrow's changing fortunes might bring about a renewal of the same differences of opinion and the same clash of interests.

No employe can possibly live a satisfied life and do an efficient job so long as he harbors the idea that the man he is working for is a heartless baron of wealth, merciless in his methods, and slave-driving in his industrial policies. Neither will it be possible for any employe to be satisfied with his labor if he is of a notion that such labor is more concerned about the size of its pay envelope than about the efficiency of the job at hand.

Mutual confidence and respect is primal in the relationships which must obtain between him who hires and him who is hired, otherwise it makes no difference how capable a workman or how generous the employer, maximum efficiency will never be consummated.

THE MERCHANTS

The merchants of North Carolina concluded during the week their annual convention and Charlotte has been especially honored by the organization for the election of one of its foremost citizens, Mr. B. F. Roark to its presidency. Mr. Roark is not merely one of the prominent merchants of Charlotte, but the zeal he has always taken in the State organization and his popularity among the merchants generally in North Carolina paved the way for his selection to this high and honored post.

The annual convention of the merchants seems to have been somewhat epochal in the character of program presented and in the number of delegates on hand. The citizenship of the State may well rejoice with them that they had such an important and forward-looking meeting, for the merchants of North Carolina are among the State's most progressive citizens and the people have every right to be proud of them. They are a bunch of men who believe in merchandising ethics and whose business conduct entitles them to popular applause.

One of the most pertinent and sensible tributes to the merchants that has fallen under our observation appeared editorially in The Greensboro News upon the occasion of the late convention and an officer of the National association was so impressed with it that he proposes to have it put in pamphlet form and sent generally over the country. The editorial in question presents an incisive analysis of the merchant, his standing in the community, the community's claims upon him his response to the needs that are constantly arising—his community value, in a word and in part, it follows:

"The merchants are the picked men of large capacity for work, of large courage, of peculiar business equipment, in their various communities. In ordinary times, one year with another, the percentage of failures in mercantile life is so great as to be appalling, to the faint-hearted. The survival of the fittest in a constant process there. Until a year ago there had been a brief period in which anybody could sell goods, profitably; a rising market on which one could not lose, a public clamorous for goods and indifferent as to price. It was such an experience as no merchant had ever gone through before. It was demoralizing. The temptation to unwise expenditure sought out the merchant as it did everyone else. Salesmanship became a superfluity. The sales force lost its skill; the merchant's own art by which he had lived was unused, and languished.

"They are the survivors of trying conditions. To this one the long training of caution whispered that fair wealth might not endure forever. That one awakened in the nick of time and trimmed his sails. If the prudent among them seized the opportunity to fortify themselves to the utmost during the days of easy profits, so that they have been enabled to keep things on an even keel for the past year, it was the first time such an opportunity ever presented, and in all probability the last time, in the lives of the merchants of today, that it will present.

"The merchant is on the commercial firing line. He looks out for his own interests, or they are not looked after. He is expected to answer every civic

COMMUNICATIONS

WHAT MILL WORKERS ASK.

Editor of The News: There has been appearing in the papers considerable criticism of the international officers of the Textile Workers of America in their relation to the strike of the cotton mill employes here and elsewhere which seems to me to be unfair and uncalled for. The fact is that the mill people, after having been reduced time after time in their wages, appealed to these officers of the union to come down here and do something to relieve the situation which was fast becoming critical.

The reason we had to call upon this outside aid was that we were being continually reduced in our wages to such a point that living was becoming a problem. We have been getting starvation wages, wages as low as prevailed before the war and we were unable to take this reduced wage and buy those things which are necessary for everyday existence.

It was this condition in which the mill workers found themselves and from which they sought escape. We feel that while reductions in wages are necessary, it is indefensible for the cotton manufacturers to try to drive their labor back to a condition of servitude. Cotton mill people want a decent living and they want to provide their children with some opportunities to better themselves. The average cotton mill laborer is not as he is pictured by some, of a low degree, a bunch of illiterates with ambition and with no interest in public affairs.

Under conditions which have existed in the past and which were relieved only for a short while during the prosperous times of a year ago, we have not been able to earn enough to care for our families as we should. There are men working in the mills of Charlotte who have been forced to take their wives away from young children to work at the looms and spindles in order to help make enough to buy bread and meat and pay for their houses.

A year ago cotton mill wages went high when the American Congress said to the manufacturers that their profits were excessive and that the government would take all they made over a certain percentage. Then the mill men became very kind and considerate toward their labor and cotton mill wages went up. Is it not a fact that the men working in the mills of Charlotte past lined themselves up against any legislation that was designed to make the working conditions more lucrative, such as shortening hours of tedious and menial work in great shops, or the child labor legislation, the weekly pay bills and the income and inheritance taxation measures for the benefit of the widows and orphans pension funds, and so on, they would designate those protesting as fanatics or agitators or otherwise undesirable.

The feeling, therefore, that has been put into the hearts of the working people in the mills is that the manufacturers are not interested in their wellbeing and are not sympathetic with their efforts to get something out of life in addition to long hours of work and meager wages. The cotton mill laborer of this community and of the South is not a foreigner, without ambition, without interest in his community, without a sense of obligation to society. He wants not only to enjoy life, but he wants to give his children an opportunity to get enough education to make them skilled and useful citizens and not have them grinding away in competition with illiterate foreign labor.

The laborers in the mills would like for the public to know the facts and to appreciate the circumstances in which mill operatives find themselves at this time. They are not demanding more than their share of anything when they demand a decent wage and the opportunity to live a decent, constructive life for themselves and for their children. They feel that the manufacturers ought not merely to deal more generously with them in the matter of wages, but that they should take an interest in their social and physical and educational wellbeing and show themselves to be interested in the better development of their workmen.

I am a North Carolinian by birth, born in New Hanover county and I have lived 40 years in this Southland and for 16 years have been a weaver in the mills. I want to say that the working people of the South, those who take the raw material and convert it into the finished products for the markets, are not now and have never been satisfied with conditions under which they have been forced to live. And their object in promoting a union organization was merely for the righteous purpose of bettering their condition. That was all. The employers of labor band themselves together, condescend to themselves the right to organize and to bargain collectively and yet when the workers follow their example, they refuse to deal with them at all and it is only after a severe struggle against them that we are able to set up our organizations.

The purpose we have in mind, though these organizations, is to promote our wellbeing and gain for ourselves all the privileges of citizenship and we contend that we are certainly entitled to these rights as human beings. C. P. LOCKEY, JR., Belmont Avenue.

F. D. A.

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