

## TYRANNY AS EVER

## The United States Deportations of 1920

Nineteen hundred and twenty was a year of delirious panic in the United States of America. Louis F. Post's narrative\* is a record of events which took place in that year and in the one that followed. It is also a record of his personal connection with these events in his capacity, first, as Assistant Secretary of Labour and, later, as Acting Solicitor of the Department of Labour under the Government of President Wilson. In the performance of his duties it devolved on him to review all warrants handed to him for confirmation by the Ministry of Justice for the deportation of resident aliens. He therefore writes with all the authority of first hand knowledge. He writes well, clearly and convincingly into the bargain, sustaining the reader's interest from start to finish.

We in Britain can ill afford to pose as critics of events in other countries. Our frequent lapses from the straight path forbid. But a perusal of Mr. Post's story does suggest the question whether, four years ago, the people of America really did believe in the principles of their own Constitution and their own Declaration of Independence. The amazing events here recorded would suggest the doubt and should serve as a warning to all peoples to be on the alert for the protection of their liberties. Lawless arrests and illegal prosecutions of aliens, though only symptoms of popular frenzy, might, if unresisted, very easily lead on to Governmental tyrannies against full citizens in whose veins runs 100 per cent. of American or British blood. Not one of us can afford to ignore the admonition that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," and this, we are sure, is one of the lessons Mr. Post would wish his narrative to convey.

A portentous fragment of American history is vividly dealt with in this personal record of a peculiar official experience. War upsets the mental balance of the best of us, and following on the close of the Great War a popular delirium spread over the United States. It expressed itself in frenzied demands for deportations of alien residents and derived its distinctive characteristics from reports of mysterious crimes attributed to aliens. With nerves unstrung, the public saw the anarchist behind every hedge-row. The discovery of bombs and a number of explosions which gave vivid colour to their fears were very substantial facts, though to this day the origin of these crimes has never been traced to any source, anarchist or other. But they were at once set down to anarchists, and wholesale alien deportations were demanded by any means which would serve the end, whether legal or not. Mr. Post shows these means were often in flagrant violation of liberties secured under the American Constitution:—

"No person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." "Excessive bail shall not be required." "Congress shall make no law abridging freedom of speech or of the Press or the right of the people peacefully to assemble." "The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers and effects against unreasonable searches and seizures shall not be violated."

In the hue and cry after deportation warrants any means seem to have served the authorities so long as they attained the end. One and all of these safeguards of personal liberty were contemptuously brushed aside. But by good fortune, in the midst of this welter of illegality, stood the sturdy, liberty-loving figure of Louis F. Post, for on him devolved the duty of reviewing warrants issued by the Department of Justice. All who were privileged to know Mr. Post can easily guess the lines on which he acted. Those who know his outlook on life and his blend of philosophy with practical good sense will guess

\* "The Deportations Delirium of 1920," by Louis F. Post. Price \$1.50. Charles H. Kerr & Co., Chicago, U.S.A.

how he dealt with those department warrants in which he found the slightest taint of lawlessness.

Post's story is mainly a record of personal resistance to the persecution by Government of men found innocent of wrong. We may well surmise the enemies who would array themselves against him. Warrant after warrant he refused to endorse on the ground that they were illegal. They violated the Constitutional guarantee that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty or property without due process of law." He believes in the equal right of *all* to think what they like and say what they think, and he had to deal with hundreds of warrants whose only ground of issue was membership of an anarchist or communist society, perfectly legal for the ordinary American citizen. To be convicted of "anarchist" opinion was fatal to the alien resident. No definition of such opinion was ever forthcoming from start to finish of the delirium, and had any been attempted the teachings of such thinkers as Henry George, Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry James and Tolstoy would have been branded as illegal, and had these men been alien residents their deportation would have followed. For anarchism covers two schools—one which advocates violence, and the other passive resistance—and in the eyes of this emergency law, both were equally fatal to an alien.

Because of his attitude to these deportation warrants, and for his cancellation of many, a resolution was moved and carried in Congress that Post be examined before a Congressional Committee with a view to his impeachment by the Senate. The chapters dealing with these proceedings are not only of absorbing interest on political grounds but make reading of first-rate quality. Post completely turned the tables on his tormentors and in the end became the hunter instead of the hunted. Not only did the case against Post utterly collapse but the action of the Department of Justice in arresting, searching and imprisoning resident aliens was shown to be illegal. From the ordeal, Post emerged triumphant.

When the impeachment drama had been carried to its anti-climax "The American Legion" set on foot a movement to appeal to President Wilson for the dismissal of Post from office. The reply is instructive. In it Post is described as "one of the truest Americans I have ever come in contact with": one who has "a profound belief in and reverence for the Constitution of the United States and who has faithfully carried out instructions concerning deportation cases and one who ranks amongst the ablest and best administrative officers in the Government service." Dismissal was refused.

For those who have not met the author since his visit to this side during the land campaign of 1910, an impression of his bearing and personality during the impeachment proceedings, as made on a Press by no means friendly, will, I am certain, prove of interest. Here are some extracts:—

"Post hurls broadside at foes in self-defence—Wins round one—Lands terrific wallop on critics of his policy of deporting Reds—Is 71 and full of fight—Flays Attorney-General's work of persecuting men innocent of wrong."

"Louis F. Post, 71, mentally supple, quick witted, before the House Rules Committee was a living exhibit of vigorous and sustained power. Despite his 71 years he seemed 25. He pounced upon Attorney-General Palmer one minute, then hurled a charge of non-lawful performances at the Commissioner-General of Immigration and landed a terrific wallop here and there to the House Immigration Committee. The impression created by Mr. Post was altogether favourable."

"At the head of the table sits the gentleman from Kansas, Mr. Campbell . . . there stands opposite the gentleman from Kansas the short, shaggy figure of the accused. But hardly half a score of questions had been given before it thrilled electrically through

the hearing-hearers that the accused was of a new and different variety. He anticipated attack, he welcomed it, he ran to meet it with every weapon of fact, of humour, of legitimate pride."

Every friend of Louis Post is delighted to hear it and will congratulate him. In acting as he did and now in telling his story to the world he has not only confounded the ignorant critics who, in times of great national excitement, abound in all countries, but he has done a great service to all of us, which will not be forgotten. The extraordinary chapter in history here related will shake the faith of many of us in the ways of Governments. We can be grateful to Mr. Post for this telling exposure.

W. R. LESTER.

### ROBERT C. ORR

We deeply regret to announce the passing away of Robert C. Orr, who died at Woking on 11th May in his 52nd year. He had been troubled with some internal disorder but, unfortunately, did not allow it to worry him until it suddenly became so serious that an immediate operation had to be undergone, alas, without success. He must have suffered for some time previously, but the end came peacefully and without complaint.

In his going we have lost one who has been a devoted adherent of the movement for many years, from the time when as a young man he interested himself in the work of the Scottish League. He came in a spirit ready to give all the service he could and his enthusiasm never flagged. Business took him to London when the land campaign following the 1909 Budget was at its height, and later, for a brief period, he joined the staff of the United Committee, rendering valuable assistance that required just the talents he possessed to gain the willing co-operation of workers belonging to the rank and file of the political Parties. As an advance agent of the Committee he took part in organizing conferences, demonstrations and propaganda work at Parliamentary and Municipal Elections. A keen politician himself, he delighted in helping in the distribution of the Committee's leaflets on a grand scale. It was no light task for Mr. Orr and his colleagues, and the achievement is on record. The success attending a good part of that effort was due in great measure to his quiet perseverance and to his tactful handling of the voluntary helpers who had to be enrolled in every district. In the result, 50,000,000 leaflets made up into 2,200,000 books were distributed from house to house in 234 Parliamentary constituencies.

Then came the six months' strenuous campaign in all the divisions of Wiltshire, the feature of which was the securing of 12,000 signatures to a petition to Parliament urging the Taxation of Land Values in the interests of the farmer and the agricultural labourer. What was done in these months makes a long and interesting story, in which Mr. Orr played an important part, busy all the time on cycle or on foot canvassing every corner of the countryside and organizing the meetings addressed by his co-workers and himself.

Mr. Orr was trained in farming and found an opportunity to return to that occupation before the war by renting a farm at Hitchin, and only recently he moved to Woking. In these latter years his visits to the office were less frequent, but we have still fresh recollections of his comradeship when the work of the movement engaged his special attention at Tothill Street. It was a pleasure to see him at the International Conference in Oxford last year where he rejoiced to be among the hosts of co-workers whom he had not met for a long period. With a lovable disposition he had an obliging and homely nature whose peculiar faculty is to have no acquaintances except friends. We convey our sincere condolences to his sister, Mrs. John Paul, to his brothers and to the family circle in their sad bereavement.

A. W. M.

## ABOLISH RATES AND POVERTY!

By T. ATHOLL ROBERTSON, M.P.

(From an article in JOHN BULL, 17th May. The Editor in a foreword says: "The reorganization of the Land Valuation Department, announced in the Budget, foreshadows the reopening of the vital principle of Taxation of Land Values. This reform would, in the opinion of the writer, relieve unemployment, reduce rates and taxation and solve the housing problem.")

Land value, or economic rent, is an expression in terms of money, of the natural differences existing, or which are socially produced between one bit of land and another. The difference in fertility between an acre of light, sandy land in Norfolk, and an acre of heavy clay land which grows magnificent wheat crops in the case of Gowrie is a difference due to Nature. Each represents what may be called a "natural opportunity," but they are of different values for purposes of cultivation.

Slate quarries in North Wales and deposits of earth for brick-making around Peterborough are useless for cultivation, but they have an ascertainable value all the time. These and many others are Nature's gifts to mankind, and there is no semblance of justice upon which we can justify their monopoly by some, to the exclusion of all.

We cannot all live in a double-fronted house facing Hampstead Heath, or secure business premises in Bond Street, or plough the best loam in Hampshire, so "economic rent" comes into play as an equalist, operating by means of competition, and fixing the price to be paid by those who enjoy the greatest advantage.

A large percentage of the total land value of Scotland is situated on the foreshore of the River Clyde, a value contributed to by the whole of the people of Scotland. It is the same with the values of the City of London. A Colonial merchant rents an office in the City to market the produce of the wheat lands of the Far West of Canada. A Yorkshire or Lancashire spinner seeks a warehouse to handle the output of piece goods from his Northern looms. The china-clay merchant from Cornwall looks for a counting house.

The City of London is the hub of the commercial world. Every town and shire contributes something to its value. The miner, the engineer, the ploughman, the workers by hand and brain in all sorts of remote parts of the country, have made the value of the City. What a competition for room and for the opportunity to use land!

A grass park bordering a large city is let to a local butcher for a few pounds per annum as accommodation land, while a huge board announces the fact that this land is to let, or sell for building purposes.

If this land was rated and taxed on its true economic value, what would happen? The landlord would not go on paying rates indefinitely on something that did not yield a proper return; he would be compelled to let or sell the land to someone who would put it to its best use, or use it so himself. This would mean employment, houses and factories would spring up, roads, drainage and lighting must be done, there would be jobs for men.

The value created by this development on the undeveloped land around would accrue to the people themselves. The tax on wages would go, and the attraction of 160 acres of land in Canada would be small compared with the attraction of developing our own resources in the old country in the interests of us all.

The monopoly value of land would be squeezed out, and instead of sites being held up, and users begging the landlords for the opportunity to use land, the landlords would be searching round for users.

The gold-mine we want to work is on the surface of these islands. It is the thousands of undeveloped and underdeveloped acres of this old country of ours.

Under a uniform and universal tax on land values, the