

A Better San Francisco

So much has been done by the people of San Francisco to redeem their city from the disgrace of corrupt politics that the local press are now almost pointing with pride to the conditions which exist there. The conviction of Mayor Schmitz which was followed by a prison sentence of five years laid the way open for a new municipal régime. And while the convicted Mayor asserts that he is entitled to his authority during the pendency of his appeal, the "better element" have not been deterred thereby from appointing a successor to serve for the few remaining months of his term, and from accepting the Board of Supervisors appointed by the new Mayor to take the places of those who shared in the evil practises of Schmitz. In their assertion that while these new officers are in authority the city will make great advances in recovering the prestige it has lost, the papers of San Francisco appear to reflect the optimism of the people. Dr. Edward R. Taylor, who has been appointed temporary Mayor, receives encouraging support. And as for the new supervisors, *The Argonaut* declares that "nothing possible to be said in the way of approval and compliment would be too much." In the group, it continues, "there is not an unknown, an untried, or a questionable man." They are "men of character, individual competence, public and private responsibility." Dr. Taylor's choice of supervisors, adds *The Chronicle*, "will satisfy all honest men who regard public office as a public trust and not as a private snap, but it will not satisfy those who are accustomed either actually to corrupt public servants or to use a secret pull to obtain private and undue advantage." Of the many problems which face these men this paper enumerates the following:

"There is the great water question to be settled. There is immediate protection from fire. There are sewers to be built, the wrecks of public buildings to be cleared away, and whatever reconstruction is possible. There are the streets of almost the entire business section of the city to be made not merely passable,

but good. Not all these things can be done at once. No two of us would do them in the same order. It will be the duty of the Mayor and supervisors to settle all these and other matters upon their best judgment of what is best for the city, and it will be the duty of the rest of us to accept that judgment.

“Underlying all these material questions is the financial question. .How much money can we possibly raise without overburdening ourselves with taxation? Where can we get that money and at what price? Certainly there must be charter amendments before we can get any money except by direct taxation, and the budget for the year has been passed. And there are other charter amendments needed—the recall, for example.

“Of course, the laws and ordinances must be enforced, and if they are to be enforced, and if stealing right and left on a small scale is to be stopt, there must be changes in the control of the departments. Some of the unconfest and unconvicted must be got rid of. We can trust Mayor Taylor for that, and the super visors whom he has appointed will stand by him.”

The Call, likewise, speaks of the choice of supervisors as “wholly to be commended,” and predicts that “the nest of sordid grafters, boodlers, and bribe-takers that for nearly two years has disgraced the town and robbed the taxpayers will shortly be a thing of the past. With the chief boodler in jail and the others on the retiring list things begin to look better.” *The California News Letter* (San Francisco) thinks, however, that the people should not be satisfied with what has already been done. The present Mayor and Board of Supervisors serve only for a few months, until the fall elections, and at that time, it warns the pub lic, unless it is on its guard the labor-unions may return to their former authority. We read:

“*The News Letter* has sounded a note of warning before about the importance of the conservative forces in this city getting together and giving their united support to the cause of decency and good government at the next election. The action of the labor-unions in refusing to take any part in the present city government should arouse public sentiment to the danger which confronts this city. It is clear that the only motive for their refusal is their desire to be left

free to support a labor-union ticket of their own this fall. Can it be necessary to point out to the people of San Francisco what the election of such a ticket would mean? Is there a business man in the community that does not know that, if it be telegraphed to the country the day after next election in this municipality that it has again been handed over to the McCarthys, Corneliuses, and Caseys, every channel by which the money to rebuild flows into the city will at once be closed? Has not every resident of the town had an ocular demonstration what the continuation of the present boodling, labor-union régime means in the fact that, with the conviction of Schmitz, things at once began to revive, and with the appointment of Taylor they have almost begun to boom. The personality of the two men has in no wise produced these results. It is the causes they represent. One the side of disgrace, dishonesty, and irresponsible unionism; the other, good government, honesty, and conservativeness. That lesson should not be lost on the voters of San Francisco, who have homes and interests here. If the present régime continues after the next election, then work will stop, business will be depressed, labor idle, and the city retarded enormously in its growth. Every thoughtful man, be he laborer, mechanic, merchant, or professional, in the community, knows that we but foretell a certainty if another union-labor ticket is elected."

Outside of California, also, there is much favorable comment on the new order of affairs in San Francisco. Thus, Collier's Weekly (New York), declaring that for the city "the moment is critical and the opportunity rare," adds that if she does not at once take advantage of the reform era, "and the opportunity afforded by the demoralized state of her criminal enemies, to put her house in order, she will miss a chance that she has not had since the days of the vigilantes and may not get again in several generations." The Chicago Tribune, endorsing the Mayor's choice of supervisors, says of the board that "it has a fine opportunity to show what business men can do in managing public affairs which have usually been left to professional politicians." Mr. Albert Phenix, who has been sent by *The*

Manufacturers' Record (Baltimore) to study the commercial situation in San Francisco, writes to his magazine an enthusiastic account of what the city has accomplished since the earthquake in 1906. To the question, "What's the matter with San Francisco?" he replies: "While 'She's all right' is far from the proper answer, yet with all the desolation and disorder a true picture of the San Francisco of to-day must include the undaunted courage and the capacity for achievement that have marked the city from its very birth." With this desolation and disorder in mind he continues:

"That San Francisco is not paralyzed ; is hardly even disconcerted, is the wonder of the situation and possibly the promise that the problem will be solved. It might almost be said that San Francisco is serene, And what greater tribute to the courage of a virile, sentient people could be bestowed? Comes an earthquake with fire, driving 200,000 or 300,000 homeless people into the streets and causing anywhere this side of \$1,000,000,000 loss— no one ever has computed the exact cost or ever will--as soon as the first shock is over and before the fire has half burned out, with the family camping in the park and cooking in the street, the San Franciscan plans for temporary business headquarters and the business activities of the day and knows that his town will be rebuilt.

"Nor striking hordes, nor riotous fiends, nor boodling officials disturb his serenity and his faith. The strikers win—or lose—and the bank clearings increase. The rioters are indicted— or escape arrest—and the savings in the banks are greater than ever known. Insurance money comes in as a flood—\$180,000,000 or so of it. There are diamonds for the family, restaurant dinners as of yore, and business and rebuilding get a convenient share. The spring will not run dry. A boodling Mayor goes to jail; a splendid citizen finally takes his place. It is all in the day's work, for it isn't in the stars that San Francisco can lose."