

Promising Everything

THE hearings before the New York State Constitutional Convention indicate clearly that a master politician is impressing his personal views upon the members of the committee on proposed amendments which will advance his political hopes and ambitions.

He is clever, able, and his half-truth statements are making a tremendous effect upon his political opponents, whether they be Democrats, Republicans or Independents.

This political genius is Fiorello H. La Guardia, Mayor of the City of New York. Originally, a Republican, then joined the La Follette party, composed of independent Republicans, Democrats, and Socialists, elected Mayor the first term on a Republican and Fusion ticket and last year on a Coalition ticket, consisting of Republicans, Socialists, Communists, and a newly formed Labor Party. In 1936 he supported President Roosevelt and the Democratic candidate for Governor.

At the present time, he is enrolled as a member of the Labor party and using this new party in the State of New York by forcing Democrats and Republicans in the State Legislature to grant his demands. These two old political parties are also fishing for the labor vote, and, therefore, do not care to antagonize the new party too much.

Several years ago he showed much preference for the principle of the taxation of land values for governmental expense and exempting all improvements from taxation. This, however, is not politically popular.

Today he is the principle advocate of subsidized housing, playing up the needs of the low income groups, by promising them fine dwellings at a price way below the cost of construction and having the difference or subsidies met out of taxes he can impose on those who are fortunate to have a job with a fairly good income. At his urge the last legislature permitted the city to impose an occupancy tax on all businesses.

One of his stock statements why he is for subsidized housing is: "private capital will not build houses to rent at no more than \$5 a month a room, including elevators and all services," and adds, "when the bankers will assist in providing homes at this price, I will withdraw my demand for government housing." He does not, however, tell the same group that it is not done with mirrors nor through miracles, but by granting subsidies which must be raised by taxation. The latest records of subsidized housing in New York indicate that the cost and maintenance of an apartment of four rooms rented to a family for \$24 a month cost the government about \$76 a month.

A family earning \$24 a week can afford to pay \$24 a month. Should the income of the family, however, increase beyond that they would have to give up their apartment, and to get a similar one would cost them \$76.

Under the circumstances, the tenant would be foolish to ask his employer for an increased wage. In this instance, then, the employer is getting the benefit of the subsidy.

There is no doubt that His Honor understands this clearly, but he is not interested in reason or logic, but is desirous of the plaudits of the crowd and their votes. That La Guardia is honest, goes without saying, but he has permitted his political ambitions to run away with any economic views he ever had. Here we have an illustration of a political chameleon, a change of color when desirable. He never permits an opportunity to pass without taking advantage of it. He answers second alarm fires of which he is advised at all times by the chief of the Fire Department. He attends christenings and rushes to the scene of disasters, which will give him a front page story. He is courageous to a degree, fluent in speech, direct and exceedingly humorous. His talks are always telling, but his facts frequently are badly twisted. His audiences, however, appear to like it and some of the conservative papers have taken his statements seriously.

His attacks on the courts when they decide against him outdoes any attacks made by the two Roosevelts. He is strong for the Constitution when it favors his point of view. His definition of a constitutional lawyer, while advocating an amendment to the State Constitution is worth telling. A constitutional lawyer he said, "is one who wears spats, a frock coat, and speaks in a soft voice," and then added, "I can't qualify." His favorites he lauds to the skies, his opponents are viciously attacked. His own commissioners are not permitted to give out any statements in regards to their work. "All statements are issued by the Mayor."

His Honor has the faculty of knowing when and where to attack. When Stalin's plans fail, he begins a fight against the Trotskyite Revolutionists. Hitler always makes a hit with the German Bigots by another onslaught on the Jews. La Guardia also has his pet diversion when some of his plans go wrong. He tells about the rascality of Tammany Hall. This organization at present has as much life in it as a dying cat, but cats are said to have nine lives.

There is much poverty and distress in New York. 180,000 families are now on relief. At the instance of the Mayor, new taxes have been imposed upon people to meet the cost of providing for the poor families, and there is no end in sight.

There were great hopes that when La Guardia was elected Mayor, that he would, at least, point out the causes of poverty and apply the remedy which many throughout the country, believed he knew. Instead, he is cultivating the development and maintenance of poverty stricken group. He can always arouse sympathy for them. We thought we had an idol, now we discover he has feet of clay.—A STROLLING REPORTER.