

The Public

**A National Journal of Fundamental Democracy &
A Weekly Narrative of History in the Making**

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Vol. XI

CHICAGO, FRIDAY, MAY 29, 1908.

No. 530

Published by Louis F. Post
Ellsworth Building, 357 Dearborn Street, Chicago.

Single Copy, Five Cents Yearly Subscription Dollar
Entered as Second-Class Matter April 16, 1898, at the Post Office at
Chicago, Illinois, under Act of March 3, 1879.

EDITORIAL

Interests, Not Classes.

Of all the good work that Lincoln Steffens has done, the very best is his "apology for graft," in the June American. It would seem almost hopeless to indicate in fewer words or with truer insight the real socialistic evolution that is rising up out of the muck and mire of our decaying capitalism. For the real socialistic evolution gives little promise, and let us be thankful for that, of a struggle of personal classes. It is prophetic of no struggle between master class and servant class, nor between labor class and business class, nor even between labor class and privileged class. The real socialistic struggle will be between the principle of Labor and the principle of Privilege, with combatants aligned not by their class interests but by their apprehensions of public righteousness. And Steffens's "apology for graft" is one of the most pronounced indications of a quickening perception in the common mind of this social evolution.



Mr. Steffens had seen vulgar police graft in Minneapolis and denounced the police. He had seen politicians' graft in St. Louis and denounced the politicians. He had perceived business graft back of both everywhere, and denounced business men. But he now sees that, special privileges "are temptations too great for human nature to resist," and "that the desire for them is the source of our political corruption." So

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he turns from denouncing the men of any class, and calls for readjustments of conditions. His "apology for graft" is "an attempt to do justice, and therefore an appeal for mercy upon men, all men." We quote the appeal with which Mr. Steffens's most deeply interesting story of San Francisco, in support of his appeal, begins:

We Americans have been out on a man-hunt. Some of us still are at it. We are crying to have somebody put into jail; to make some individual suffer; and we may, mob-like, catch some victim some day and we may wreak upon him our hate. I hate this hate and this hunt. I have bayed my bay in it, and I am sick of it. I am convinced that if I should follow far enough the human trail I was on, I should catch myself. For I have gone far enough already to see where I am to blame; how I have done or neglected to do things which have contributed to the guilt of the most intelligent rascal in the United States. And, if I have not done wrongs as great as his, I wish never again to forget that I have lacked his ability and his temptation. Happening into a cleaner business, the only temptations I have fallen before are those of my business. But the whole hunt, the hate and the spirit of vengeance upon men, whether of the law or of the mob, is wrong. It is things, not men, that hurt us; it is bad conditions, not ill-will, that make men do wrong.

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The expression of faith with which Mr. Steffens closes, shows his faith to be of the kind that in reality does move mountains. It is not the faith of the Christian pharisee, nor the optimism of the Fourth of July patriot; it is the faith of the Christian spirit, and the sane confidence of a broad patriotism. "Man has only to tackle a problem to solve it somehow," he writes; "and it is enough, for the present, that we are realizing that it is indeed things, not alone men, that we have to deal with; that it is conditions, not solely the devil in us, that makes bad men bad." We are coming to see, that is, that however good may be the purposes of men, their actions will be determined largely by social environments, and therefore that the work for all of us to do is to create social environments that will make it easier for every one to act right than for any one to act wrong.

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Essence of the Negro Problem.

It is a singular coincidence that Lincoln Steffens's higher note in the social anthem should be sounded in the same issue of the same magazine along with one exactly like it from Ray Stannard Baker. Mr. Baker, who is drawing conclusions from his investigations into the Negro problem as is Mr. Steffens from his exposures of graft, accounts for that problem, with absolute pre-

cision, simply as one of the problems of the world-old conflict between aristocracy and democracy. "The chief object of any aristocracy," writes Mr. Baker, "the reason why it wishes to monopolize government and learning, is because it wishes to supervise the division of labor and the products of labor. That is the bottom fact." Here we see more of the indications of class division than in the facts from which Mr. Steffens makes his conclusions. The white man draws himself apart from the Negro. He makes two classes of the two races, pretty much as the Normans did with their Saxon serfs. But even if aristocracy does fortify itself behind class lines, democracy fights in the open field. Its only class is the man class. Only as democracy ceases to be democratic, do class lines develop in democracies; and as it revives, these are cast off. Even race conflicts are not really determined by class interests. They, (too, grow out of special privileges; and special privileges of all kinds tend on the whole to divide men less along the lines of personal or class interests than along the lines of their perceptions of public righteousness. If it were not so, the privileged classes would always conquer; for in a class environment they would be the fittest to survive. But in fact social progress is a succession of triumphs of justice over privilege. There must be a reason for this; and what other efficient reason can there be, than that on the whole moral principles are more potent than class interests?

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Negro Voting and Southern Apportionment.

Although the Crumpacker amendment was attached by the House to the elections publicity bill as one of the tricks of peanut politics, for the purpose of unfairly defeating the bill, yet in itself it is a good measure. Southern members who insist upon disfranchising Negroes at the polls, ought not to expect them to be counted in apportioning representation. This is too much like the antebellum method of treating Negroes as three-fifths human for purposes of Congressional apportionment, and five-fifths cattle for property purposes. There is no rational escape from the accusation that the basis of Congressional apportionment at the South is a fraud, lawless and shameless, not only upon the disfranchised Negroes but also upon the people of the rest of the country whose representation in Congress is thereby unbalanced. The one plausible response is, that the rest of the States also disfranchise large elements of the population that are counted in Congressional apportionment—aliens, paupers, the illiterate in