

[*La Dépêche de Toulouse* (Conservative Socialist Daily), January 3, 1920]

## AMERICA CAUTIONS FRANCE

ONCE previously America gave us to understand that its aid would be conditional upon our mending our ways.

In the midst of the war, when these good Yankees, with their religious-minded fervor, were depriving themselves of white bread in order to send us wheat, their soldiers discovered with profound surprise that we were not rationing ourselves. Our bakeries and cake shops were packed with customers, and our light-hearted French had adopted the paradox of eating cakes when bread was scarce — for our war bread was execrable because so much wheat flour was used for pastries. It required the insistence of America to force the government to issue bread cards.

This lesson has not taught us wisdom. As soon as the worst crisis was over, we reopened our cake shops. Naturally, the quality of our bread at once deteriorated, and uncertainty immediately arose as to whether we should have flour enough to last until the next harvest. We elect, in other words, to eat our crops before they are ripe.

We have had plenty of warning. We know that we cannot count too much upon America. Moreover, exchange is so low that we shall buy of that country at ruinous rates, provided it will supply us at any price.

The government, persistently improvident, in place of renewing the bread cards, stopping the waste of flour, and preventing the peasants from feeding our precious wheat to their animals — now that it is costing them less than oats — is counting upon the increase of prices to restrict consumption. Naturally, such a policy has its

effect among the poor. But the rich continue to batten in plenty.

There is not enough milk for infants and invalids, but there are plenty of portly and well-conditioned people who gorge themselves with cream. That young lady needs it to preserve her complexion, and so she wastes for vanity what might preserve the lives of the ill-nourished children of the slums. In order to supply fat veal for gourmands, calves are still raised on milk.

We are told that coal is not to be had. One might question the truth of this at Paris, where the theatres and ball rooms and the drawing rooms of the wealthier quarters are brilliantly lighted. Meantime, the trams cease running because electric power companies have not coal to heat their boilers. Workingmen, forced to cover long distances on foot, receive at least this compensation, that in the drinking places along the way there is no lack either of light or of alcohol.

The trouble is, the government does not dare trespass upon private privilege; and it is a private privilege to waste coal and bread and milk. It cannot bring itself to impose restrictions of any kind, least of all, upon consumption.

We find everywhere this devotion to *laissez-faire*. The authorities proceed upon the principle that the free play of supply and demand will regulate our economic life so as to produce the greatest good for the greatest number. But what rational man to-day will accept as valid the assumption upon which this policy is based — that is, that unregulated commerce inevitably produces the best results for society?

But it is not this improvidence alone that America employs to justify refusing us assistance. Undoubtedly, our manner of living is confirming among our friends — and possibly among our

enemies also — the accepted opinion that we are frivolous. We pass for a nation of juveniles who must be placated like babies, to whom their elders offer bonbons when they are in ill humor.

This time, the crisis is more serious. Everyone knows that our money continues to fall in value in spite of the satisfactory outcome of the election. Beyond question there are other reasons for our low exchange than the fact that we import more than we export — for our franc is worth only forty centimes in Switzerland, although we sell that country more than we buy from it.

The truth is that we have too many bank notes in circulation and that the government is unwilling to have them flow back into the coffers of the bank of France, which would destroy them. Our friends give us very explicit advice. We shall have no more credit until we rally enough courage to do what our allies have done — tax heavily war profits, and, if necessary, capital.

It is too obvious to require discussion, that these bank notes, issued in such profusion during the war, which other countries do not want, ought to return to the government. The government should get them where they have

accumulated in largest quantities, that is to say, from the people who profited by the war.

But the government turns a deaf ear to this advice. In reply to these appeals and cautions it declares that it is going to emit a great loan — with the certain result of adding to our already overwhelming burden of debt and thereby lowering our credit with lenders. And lest that be not enough, new taxes on consumption are proposed — five sous upon letters, for instance, as if increasing postage was not itself a check upon business.

However, we are dealing with a nation even more obstinate than we are, and America, apparently, is resolved to teach us common sense. Its Puritan zeal inspires it to give us a moral lesson. Apparently, its aid will only be forthcoming when we destroy the bank notes with which we have gorged the pockets of a few public malefactors. Let there be no mistake. The last elections have been in a sense a Godsend to these latter good apostles.

I am curious to see how the government is going to get out of the dilemma and satisfy its creditors abroad at the same time that it satisfies the people who have just put it in power.

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**WHY THE LABOR PARTY GROWS**

BY SIR LYNDEN MACASSEY

To study the workings and machinations of the public mind is a matter of absorbing interest and of prime importance in the modern democratically-organized community. The trained observer can without much difficulty detect their inner meaning; they are invariably symptomatic of the well-being, contentment, and progress of the people. When tiny straws can show you which way the wind is blowing, it is surely an unstatesmanlike proceeding to sit still until a hurricane blast impresses you with a knowledge of the air it springs from by sweeping you and other obstacles out of its path.

There are many straws to-day traveling before a breeze of unvarying direction, all showing with consistency the set of public opinion. At times, as at recent by-elections, quite a summer gale has blown, and large fragments of the political machine have been torn up, carried away, and seen no more. Every sign of the weather suggests that the wind is steadily deepening in weight.

No one who comes in contact with his fellow citizens can fail to realize the deepening sense of public dissatisfaction that pervades the mind of every section of the people. How it expresses itself at political meetings I do not know; it, apparently, however, is making its mark upon the ballot box; but I have experience of the reasons which are advanced for its existence at large meetings of thoughtful men and women, who in increasing number are meeting throughout the country to dis-

cuss social and economic problems, with no eye upon the political barometer, in no partisan spirit; critically, it is true, but solely to advance the common welfare.

The chief impression left upon one's mind after such a gathering is the completeness with which one lesson has been learned from the war. All respect for political parties, creeds, and shibboleths has vanished. They carry to-day with the ordinary man no value whatever. One favorite subject of irony, at times, of sarcasm, is the eager anxiety of so many people to assure their supporters, that it was really at the sacrifice of private conviction to public expediency that they came forward as nominees of the Coalition Government to show the road to national prosperity and happiness. But when it comes to private conviction, to a convincing exposition of the requisite measures of social and industrial reform — *vox et praterea nihil*.

The truth is that the present Coalition Government has no considered policy whatsoever to deal with the many home questions that are uppermost in the mind of everybody. I am bold enough to assert there is not in existence at this moment in government or official circles even what faintly approaches a thought-out scheme — nothing but a lot of haphazard Cabinet decisions upon particular ills that have forced themselves from time to time by violent ebullitions on the notice of the government, but which, even if removed from their