

been found to be of prime war value. And a subsequent survey under some such competent body as the Federal Trade Commission will reveal in greater detail what trades we can afford to slight or even actively to discourage.

We stand in increasing need of this list of essential trades. It will increase confidence on every hand that we are not spoiling good artisans to make indifferent soldiers. It will save confusion and humiliation as the work of drafting the army goes on. It will assure a labor supply where it is most needed because it will afford public employment agencies some basis on which to work. It will call popular attention to the merited measure of honor and glory which our industrial army should share.

The work of mobilizing a hundred million people is a vast task, but it is possible if we know where man power is most needed. Our ignorance on this score is happily remediable. A strong national administrative body by which the problems here raised can be authoritatively treated can do much to equip us with knowledge and a systematic policy. A more efficient coördination of the agencies which now strive to unify the labor market will not only increase war output, but will carry over into peace times as a net gain to our industrial organization.

ORDWAY TEAD.

The Lynching in Bass County

BASS County is mostly rough land. At one corner it dips down into the river bottom, and here you see a few good farms, owned by the merchants and doctors and lawyers of Coxville and worked by Bohemian tenants. Coxville is the county seat and the only railway station in the county. It is just at the edge of the bottom, where a half dozen narrow valleys spread out like fingers into the upland. Motor parties from way across the state sometimes come chugging up the winding valley roads. The scenery is fine, the ladies say: we're lucky to live in so lovely a spot. But scenery is mighty hard to work. It doesn't even make good pasture, and we've got to live somehow.

Coxville, the tourists say, is one of the prettiest towns in the state. It is certainly pretty, with its shady streets on the flat and big brick houses planted on the spurs of the hills above. But Coxville is a den of thieves. There are five general stores all working in cahoots. Everyone of them has two sets of scales, one weighing small for your butter and chickens, the other weighing big for the

merchant's sugar and coffee and dried fruit. After they've skinned you on the weight, they skin you on the price. They've divided us farmers up among them. My trade, for instance, belongs to Miller's store. If I get mad and go to another store, I get even worse treatment than Miller was giving me. That's what they call a gentleman's agreement in Coxville. There are three stock buyers—mighty good friends they are, though they make a great noise about competition. They pay the same prices, about a dollar a hundred too low, if you figure out the Chicago market reports. There is a bank in Coxville, but it doesn't do business with farmers. It lends money at seven per cent to old Peter Hammond, who lets us have it for two per cent a month, and makes us pay a bonus for getting it.

Oh, yes, Coxville is a pretty village. They live well down there, and we half starve up on our hill farms. If they have a job of hard work, they hire some of our boys to do it and pay back a little of the money they sweat out of us. They take our girls for housework and make servants out of them—girls of real American stock, not Bohunks—but we're so poor we have to stand it. And they don't take too good care of them. Every now and then a girl comes crying home and some young blood from Coxville goes off for a tour around the world. More than once I've been at secret meetings at Lon Baker's shack, where we figured on going down and cleaning out the whole nest. But we never did anything.

"We're serfs, that's what we are!" Lon always declared. "They take our crops, they take our work, they take our girls. And we just sit around and jaw."

Lon was a mighty good speaker, and well read. He took the Appeal to Reason, and about knew by heart everything that was ever in it. But nobody took much stock in Lon. When we came away from his secret meeting somebody was sure to say: "Hell of a place, Coxville. They'll even take Lon's crops, Lon's work, and Lon's girls." Then everybody would laugh and side with Coxville. You see, Lon never had any crop to speak of, and scarcely ever did a lick of work. And you ought to see Lon's girls! Of all the skinny, freckled-faced, red-haired, shrieking cross-patches. But poor things, they didn't pick the father they were to take after.

We grumbled and ranted, but that was all, until we got track of what was going on down at the courthouse. The county offices, of course, had always belonged to Coxville. There was a Republican clique and a Democratic clique, and every four or six years, we'd put one clique out and the other in, and precious little good it did. Taxes

kept going higher, and we got to wondering what in thunder became of the money. There never was any to repair the bridges, and finally we had to ford the streams when we drove to town. The county was always years behind in its school money, and when we served on juries we were paid in warrants we had to discount with Pete Hammond at sixty cents on the dollar. Lon Baker went all over the county getting information about the taxes collected—he never paid his—and calculated that thousands and thousands of dollars just disappeared. At elections the clique that was out would yell for an investigation, but if they got in they never found anything. Finally we made up an independent party and elected a farmer treasurer, and got an expert accountant to go over the books.

The expert worked for six weeks and found the retiring treasurer, Dr. Williams, about a thousand dollars short. The doctor shelled out and moved to have his bond released, but we weren't satisfied. The doctor had a good salary, eighteen hundred a year, but Lon did some figuring and just about proved that the doctor spent a lot more than that. After he was elected treasurer, the doctor, who was nearly sixty, had married a young wife. She was a great beauty, and Lord, she knew how to make money fly! She kept her house furnished like a palace and always full of company. I knew something about what was going on there because my sweetheart worked for her. Lucy had to wear a black dress and a foolish little lace cap that made me mad whenever I thought of it. But Lucy adored Mrs. Williams, and Lucy's got a lot of good sense.

Well, we made up our minds that the expert had been bought off, so we got a new one, and Lon stood at his shoulder for a month. There wasn't any whitewashing this time. The doctor's accounts were over forty thousand dollars short. Of course he demanded a new investigation, but we got him indicted for embezzlement. The superior judge was an old friend of the doctor's and quashed the indictment: we had to start over again. Finally we got him to trial, but somehow they managed to hang the jury. We started a new prosecution, but everything went against us. Our lawyers gave our case away, the judge ruled against us, our witnesses went back on their testimony. It was plain, the doctor still had some of that forty thousand, and we'd never get him till it was all spent. Down in Coxville everybody was talking compromise. If we'd let the doctor off, his friends would pay back ten or fifteen thousand, and the county would be saved the cost of years of litigation.

This was more than we could stand. All over the county the farmers were holding meetings:

what they talked of doing to Coxville I wouldn't dare to say. Lon Baker spoke at every meeting: what he said sounded like mighty good sense, too. What was at stake, now, Lon argued, was not just money, but the Law itself, the Law that was there before courts were created and that would remain after the courts had rotted away. The Law, he said, didn't need the courts: any body of freemen had the right and duty to take the Law into their own hands when the courts had failed. Our court had failed and it was time to act.

One day the word passed around to be at Ashton's mill about a mile above Coxville, at ten o'clock at night. Lucy had been getting suspicious and insisted on my passing the evening at her house, but I managed to get away. There were already fifty or sixty men at the mill when I got there. Lon Baker had a bunch of pine knots for torches: popular justice, he said, had been executed in old days by torch light. Most of the other men carried lanterns.

Nothing had been said about what we were going to do, but there were a lot of guns in the crowd and several men had brought ropes. Lon had a rope and seemed rather put out that there were others. They might arouse suspicion, he said, as if the whole county hadn't been in the secret. We waited until there were about a hundred of us and then struck out over the hill, to get to the doctor's house without passing through the village. We walked fast and talked mighty little. Lon was in his glory, leading a body of Anglo-Saxon freemen to the defense of the Law. So he put it. But the rest of us felt rather sick of our job. Every man shaded his face as well as he could with his hat; if the light of a lantern flashed on him he seemed to dodge. You see, the doctor was a pleasant old fellow we had all chatted with. The Law had to be vindicated but we'd rather have vindicated it on someone else.

We put out our lights, except Lon's torch, and scattered in groups among the blooming lilacs on the doctor's lawn. My post was near the parlor window. It was wide open and I could see the doctor sitting in an armchair. To see him for the first time, you'd say he was about forty: anyway he was straight and quick, smooth-shaven and hardly gray. He was rather pale this night, and looked tired. Mrs. Williams was at the piano, very fine and aristocratic. She certainly was a beauty! She seemed to be happy; anyway the music she was playing was very sweet and gay. At that moment most of us were for backing out, I believe. But Lon went up to the door and gave it a terrible thump. Mrs. Williams sprang from her music stool: the doctor rose slowly and stepped to the door. As he opened it everybody got out

of the path of white light—everybody but Lon, who waved his sputtering torch.

"Good evening, Lon," the doctor said quietly. He looked around rather sharply and he must have got glimpses of the men among the lilac bushes. If he was uneasy though, he didn't show it. "What can I do for you?"

"We represent the Law," said Lon, making his voice as deep as a drum. "You can bribe the courts, but you can't beat the Law."

"Oh dear, what is the matter?" Mrs. Williams appeared beside the doctor in the doorway and clutched his arm anxiously.

"You can't beat the Law," said Lon again. "You have stolen the people's money. You have suborned witnesses and bribed the courts. You thought the Law was dead. But it has raised us up, Anglo-Saxon freemen, to execute its decrees."

"One moment, gentlemen, and we can arrange our business to your satisfaction. My dear, will you please go inside? This is politics, and we may get a little rough."

"Yes, get her out of sight," said Lon. "She was the cause of it all. You stole our money to make her better than our wives and daughters."

"I won't go," said Mrs. Williams, "I can't understand what this is all about."

"Oh, you can't?" said Lon. "You can't understand that we're sore about the forty thousand you made him steal?"

Mrs. Williams first went white and then red. "I made him steal?" Nobody had ever spoken to her like that in all her life.

"Suppose we leave the women out of this," said the doctor. "It's true. I took the county's money. I'm ready to take the consequences."

"You took the county's money?" Mrs. Williams exclaimed. "But you said it wasn't true. You said it was all politics."

"Yes," said the doctor.

"But why?" Mrs. Williams seemed bewildered. Lon laughed, but the rest of us just felt sorry for her. That kind of woman never thinks where the money comes from, I suppose.

"Why?" the doctor repeated. "You knew we weren't living on my salary."

"But I thought—I thought you had——"

"You thought he had money," said Lon. "You married him for his money and he didn't have any. So he had to steal some."

"It isn't true," Mrs. Williams took her hand from the doctor's arm. "You know it isn't true."

"Of course," said the doctor, "but if it were—I'm an old man, my dear, and it's precious little I had to give you."

Mrs. Williams looked down on her white breast with the twinkling necklace, her pink dress and heavy lace. You could see what she was thinking. For all her beauty, she'd been bought, bought with stolen money. She knew that was what we were all thinking. She put up her chin, turned round and walked swiftly back into the house. She seemed to feel so insulted and ashamed that there wasn't any room left in her mind for the doctor's troubles. She was deserting the doctor, and deserting him for good; there wasn't a man of us who couldn't see that. The doctor saw it all right, too. Poor old devil, all his smart youthfulness dropped from him. All at once you noticed how wrinkled, how gray he was. So that's what it means to be old! I'd never realized that before. Maybe my Lucy's arms aren't so white and smooth and tapering as those I just saw, but they come free, if I do pick a crow's living out of my hill farm. And I'd bet my life, if I were caught stealing, Lucy would stand by me. That's what it means to be young.

"Well, gentlemen," said the doctor wearily, "why don't we go ahead?"

"Yes, why don't we?" cried Lon, waving his torch.

But a huge, husky voiced farmer I didn't know pushed himself in front of Lon.

"Doctor, we're tired of bein' robbed. I don't know as I blame you. I reckon we'd all steal for a woman, leastwise such a pretty one. But it's got to stop. Next man we catch stealing from this county gets the rope."

"Next man!" yelled Lon. But it was plain that everybody wanted to compromise on the "next man." We felt the doctor had got about what was coming to him, anyway. Already numbers of men were moving toward the gate or leaping the picket fence.

I got away as quickly as I could, wanting to avoid Lon, who lives above me on the same road. But Lon was walking fast too in his rage, and overtook me half a mile out of town.

"There's no Law left in this country!" he exclaimed bitterly. "The law is dead. We're only serfs. Not a drop of free Anglo-Saxon blood in us."

There was something in what Lon was saying. The Law was dead, but I wasn't mourning. Up a hill side to the right there was a light burning. It was late, but Lucy'd like to know everything was all right; no doubt she was worried. So I let Lon get a little ahead of me in the darkness and slipped away on a side path, glad to hear the last of his ranting: "The Law is dead. We're serfs, plain serfs."

ALVIN JOHNSON.

At the Capitol

A Policy in Government Control

ALMOST in spite of its own efforts Congress is becoming more and more an exponent of government ownership and government control. In the forty-eight bills which have been passed at the present session there have been twelve which were not for appropriations or for some minor administrative adjustment; and practically each one of these twelve might be taken to justify Senator Hardwick's description of the dawn of "State socialism, pure, simple, unadulterated, and self-confessed." Congress has set the government up as an agent for the compulsory insurance of seamen, has authorized condemnation proceedings for any land that the War Department chooses to utilize, has established government control over foods and fuels, exports, freight cars and the ships for which private initiative had done the planning. One bill which has passed the House will provide further supervision in the manufacture and sale of explosives; another will provide, more nearly than has yet been provided, government supervision over the profits of individuals and corporations.

It was of course to be expected that preparation for war would mean centralization and a cutting down wherever possible of the practices of waste and duplication which are complacently tolerated when the country is at peace. But it was also to be expected that the broad strides which have at least legally been taken toward a temporary state socialism should meet vigorous opposition from a Congress which has for years been hostile to anything suggestive of government ownership. Progressives in Congress have long been trying to substitute for the policy of bestowing water-power sites upon private concerns a beginning at development of those sites by the government itself. Attempts to meet the rising curve in tenant farming, to experiment in government munitions production, to organize an agriculture that is now showing the effects of indifference, have had determined opposition. The legislative experience of Mr. Meyer London, and his failure to secure support even for his resolutions of inquiry and investigation, is a record of the antagonism to government control in Congress.

With a traditional conviction that anything which the government might do in the management or control of business was a failure almost foreordained, it is surprising that there has not been more discussion of the possibilities of failure in the present instance. Assertions that the Constitution was being outraged, and that the Executive was usurping the last prerogatives of Congress, there have been in number. There have also been one or two unassured references to the issue of states' rights; and there have been regrets expressed by Mr. Moore and other members that, proper as might be such measures as the one granting government insurance to sailors, there was no denying that they were competitive with the established privileges of private enterprise. But there have not been a dozen attempts to prove that unregulated private enterprise is the asset in a time of war that it is in a time of peace. Mr. Lodge, admitting "a desire to show the beauties of government management," has argued for the private manufacture of rifles; his colleague, Mr. Weeks, has predicted nothing but disappointment in efforts at government control, because, "for more than sixteen hundred years, there have been attempts to regulate the prices of products by governmental action, and they have invariably proved failures." The infrequency of attempts to raise the issue indicate a general acknowledgment in Congress that in an emergency

control over business can, if it successfully skirts constitutional provisos and states' rights and congressional prerogatives, profitably be lodged in a central authority.

Whether in addition to this acknowledgment of temporary desirability there are being fostered the beginnings of a partiality for government management and control, in times of peace, is not so clear. In the way of defining one innovation as a purely temporary device, and another as being in part at least worth saving permanently, there have been few attempts. There is a clear difference, for instance, between Senate bill 1871, conscripting men for an army, and Senate bill 2356, declaring the government's interest in the problem of car shortage. But there has been no effort to suggest that while the purpose of Senate bill 1871 is momentary, the provisions of Senate bill 2356 recognize a need which is quite as real, if less suddenly imperative, in a time of peace as in a time of war. Mr. Mann, classing all war measures in a single group as unavoidable, has acknowledged that "we are undergoing the greatest revolution in government which this country has ever seen," and expressed a sincere hope that it will turn out to be a purely temporary one. Mr. Lodge and Mr. Weeks have not expressed an opinion, but would doubtless be glad to do so if they had the smallest idea that any part of this new socialization was to hold on after Germany had been defeated, and cause for socialization removed. On the other side, Mr. Borah has declared that his method would be to make temporary use of the great industrial organizations of the country, "and then, when the war is over, turn them back, stripped and purged of their monopolistic elements."

Subtract the remarks of Mr. Borah and Mr. Mann, however, and there has been little discussion of what part of the reorganization now being effected is being done in any way except temporarily. This is unfortunate—for if there is to be a part of the new order salvaged, at the end of the war, its permanency will be better prepared for by an early beginning to enlist favorable opinion for it in Congress. Such an opinion might produce bills more nearly drawn so as to make their peace-time continuation easy and desirable. So far, interest in building public approval for future innovations has been limited to a few radicals, with no regard for party lines. But since the Republican party in Congress has as many stand-pat members as the Democratic party has negligible ones, the question of permanent extension of some government interest in business may ultimately reach the electorate. In voting upon a specific issue in the congressional elections of 1918 there may be expressed a public judgment on the issue.

In the meantime, though the present session may not have long to run, here is a subject for congressional discussion—and one which might well be substituted for the debate over administrative trifles that will set in, when the revenue bill and the new appropriation bills are up for consideration and there is afforded the customary opportunity for a discussion of irrelevant issues. A topic immediately available is the disposition that is to be made of the immense funds which will derive from operation of the new government merchant ships, a problem as yet not considered in Congress. A more general need is the desirability of having some steadier course than objecting, one day, to a small venture in government insurance, and on the following day conscripting life and granting authority to requisition the United States Steel Corporation. Congress has an unsatisfied desire to debate questions of policy, and here is one of which even an inadequate discussion will serve the purposes of publicity.

C. M.