

"party" took hold. It is only now being realized that what sensible men desire in a member of parliament is honor and capacity rather than a mechanical loyalty to a "platform." They do not want to dictate to their representative; they want a man they can trust as their representative. In the fifties and sixties of the last century, in which this electoral reform movement began and the method of proportional representation was thought out, it was possible for the reformers to work untroubled upon the assumption that if a man was not necessarily born a

. "little Liberal
or else a little Conservative"

he must at least be a Liberal-Unionist or a Conservative Free-Trader. But seeking a fair representation for party minorities, these reformers produced a system of voting at once simple and incapable of manipulation, that leads straight not to the representation of small parties but to a type of democratic government by selected best men.

Now I will not pretend to be anything but a strong partisan in this matter. When I speak of "democracy" I mean "selective democracy." I believe that "delegate democracy" is already probably a failure in the world, and that the reason why today after three and a half years of struggle we are still fighting German autocracy and fighting with no absolute certainty of victory is because the affairs of the three great Atlantic democracies have been largely in the hands not of selected men but of delegated men, men of intrigue and the party machine, of dodges rather than initiatives, second-rate men. When Lord Haldane, defending his party for certain insufficiencies in their preparation for the eventuality of the great war, pleaded that they had no "mandate" from the country to do anything of the sort, he did more than commit political suicide, he bore conclusive witness against the whole system which had made him what he was. The one man who has risen to the greatness of this great occasion, the man who is, in default of any rival, rapidly becoming the leader of the world towards peace, is neither a delegate politician nor the choice of a monarch and his councillors. He is the one authoritative figure in these transactions whose mind has not been subdued either by the party machine or by court intrigue, who has continued his education beyond those early twenties when the mind of the "budding politician" ceases to expand, who has thought, and thought things out, who is an educated man among dexterous undereducated specialists.

The President of the United States is more in the nature of a selected man than any other conspicuous figure at the present time. And be it re-

membered that Mr. Wilson is not the first great President the United States have had, he is one of a series of figures who tower over their European contemporaries. The United States have had many advantageous circumstances to thank for their present ascendancy in the world's affairs; isolation from militarist pressure for a century and a quarter, a vast virgin continent, plenty of land, freedom from centralization, freedom from titles and social vulgarities, common schools, a real democratic spirit in their people, and a great enthusiasm for universities, but no single advantage has been so great as this happy accident which has given it a specially selected man as its voice and figurehead in the world's affairs. It is to the United States of America we must look now if the world is to be made "safe for democracy." It is to the methods of selection as distinguished from delegation, that we must look if democracy is to be saved from itself.

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A Policy of Reconstruction

[From an address delivered before the Institute of
Social Sciences]

CONSIDERED as a going concern, collectively engaged in the traffic of human living, the American commonwealth is perhaps not ready to go into the hands of a receiver. There is, at the best, a wide-spread apprehension that the affairs of this going concern are in something of a precarious case. The case may not be so grave; but the derangement of conditions caused by the war, as well as the degree in which the public attention now centres on public questions, mark the present as the appointed time to take stock and adopt any necessary change in the domestic policy.

In assuming or accepting the assumption that there is need of some reconstruction, it is supposed that the system of use and wont under which the community now lives and does its work, is not altogether suited to current circumstances, it is more or less out of date. This also carries the further assumption that the evil to be remedied is of a systematic character, and that merely palliative measures will no longer serve. This involves the proposition that some realignment of the working parts is necessary even at the cost of deranging any vested rights and interests that may stand in the way. That is what reconstruction means—it is a revision of vested rights, for the common good. What is to be avoided at all costs is the status quo ante.

An illustrative case may serve to show what is

intended by the phrase "vested rights," in the more comprehensive sense. In modern industry as conducted by the methods of big business, it is one of the vested rights of the owner or employer freely to engage workmen on any terms on which they can be got, and to discharge them at discretion. It is another of his vested rights freely to employ as many or as few men as may suit his purpose, which is a quest of profits, and to work his own industrial plant more or less nearly up to its capacity, or not at all, as may suit his own purpose, in his quest of profits. On the other hand, among the vested rights of the workmen, or at least claimed as such, is their right to a job; so also an alleged right to discriminate as to what other men are to be associated with them on the job; also a right to quit work when they choose, i. e., to strike at discretion.

But taken in the large and seen from the point of view of the interest of the community, these vested rights of the two parties in controversy will figure up to something that may be called a right to exercise an unlimited sabotage, in order to gain a private end, regardless of the community's urgent need of having the work go on without interruption and at full capacity. The slowing down or stoppage of the industrial process at any point or on any plea by those who control the equipment or the personnel of industry works mischief to the community by that much, and falls short of that service which the community has a right to expect.

In such a case, it is evident, the vested interests so working at cross purposes are thereby cheating the community of the full benefit of the modern state of the industrial arts; and it is plain that such a case of interests working at cross purposes is a fit subject of revision. It should also be plain that the revision must be made primarily with a view to set up a condition of things that shall bring as much as may be of usefulness and content, and with only a secondary regard to the present vested interests of any one of the persons concerned.

This case of conflict between employer and employees, between the owner of plant and the owner of workmanlike skill and power, may serve to show what is here intended by incompatible or mismatched vested interests. It is not here intended to find fault with either party to such a conflict. It is unreservedly assumed that they are all honorable men and all within their rights, as these rights have been allowed to stand hitherto. It is because the existing arrangement, quite legitimately and dispassionately, works out in a running campaign of sabotage, that the whole matter is to come up for a revision and realignment in which vested interests are to be set aside, under a higher necessity than the received specifications of use and wont and law. It is not that the conduct of the persons concerned

is to be adjudged immoral, illegitimate or improper; it is only that it, and the kind and degree of discretion which it involves, have in the course of time become insufferable, and are to be disallowed on the ground of urgent expediency.

The points and passages in the conduct of industrial affairs at which vested interests work at cross purposes among themselves or at cross purposes with the common good, are many and various, and it could serve no purpose to attempt an enumeration of them here. There are few lines of industry or trade where nothing of the sort occurs. The inefficiency of current railway enterprise, e. g., as seen from the point of view of material usefulness, has forced itself on the attention of the administration under pressure of the war situation, so has the privately owned production and distribution of coal and the handling and distribution of food products. Shipping is coming under the same charge of costly incompetency, and the oil, steel, copper, and timber supply are only less obviously getting into the same general category of public utilities legitimately mishandled for private gain.

But to enumerate instances of such cross purposes between vested interests and the common good would scarcely be fruitful of anything but irritation. It may be more to the purpose to indicate what are the characteristics of the modern industries by virtue of which their businesslike management comes to work at cross purposes with the needs of the community or of a given class in the community; and then to look for something like a systematic remedial treatment, which might hopefully be turned to account—in case some person or persons endowed with insight and convictions were also charged with power to act.

It is believed that this working at cross purposes, commonly and in a way necessarily, though not always, rises to disquieting proportions when and in so far as the industrial process concerned has taken on such a character of routine, automatic articulation or mechanical correlation, as to admit of its being controlled from a distance by such means of accountancy as are at the disposal of a modern business office. In many, perhaps in most, cases this will imply an industrial plant of some appreciable size, with a correspondingly large force of employees; but much the same outcome may also be had where that is not the case, as, e. g., an enterprise in automatic vending machines, a "news company," so-called, or a baggage-transfer concern of the larger sort.

The mischief which such a situation gives rise to may be either or both of two distinguishable kinds: (1) disagreement and ill-will between employers and employees; and (2) mischievous waste, ex-

pense and disservice imposed on the concern's customers. Not unusually the large and formidable concerns classed as big business will be found censurable on both counts. Again it is necessary to recall that this is not intended as implying that such management is blameworthy, but only that a businesslike management under such circumstances, and within its prescriptive rights, results in the untoward consequences here spoken of.

If this account of the state of things out of which mischief of this character is wont to arise is substantially correct, the description of the circumstances carries its own suggestion as to what should be a promising line of remedial measures. The mischief appears to arise out of, or in concomitance with, the disjunction of ownership and discretion from the personal direction of the work; and it appears to take on an added degree of mischance so soon as the discretionary control vested in ownership comes to be exercised by an employer who has no personal contact with the employees, processes employed or with the persons whose needs these processes are presumed to serve—that is to say, so soon as the man or staff in control pass into the class of supernumeraries, in respect of the mechanical work to be done, and retain only a pecuniary interest, and exercise only a pecuniary control.

Under these circumstances, this central or superior control can evidently as well be exercised by some person who has no pecuniary interest in the enterprise; and who is therefore free to manage the industry with a view to its fullest usefulness and to the least practicable generation of ill-will on the side of the employees. Roughly speaking, any industrial process which can, and in so far as it can, be sufficiently well managed from a more or less remote office by methods of accountancy and for financial ends, can also, by the same token, be managed by a disinterested administrative officer without any other than formal recourse to accountancy and without other than a secondary view to pecuniary results.

All of which patently goes to sum up the needs of remedial measures, under two heads: (1) Disallowance of anything like free discretionary control or management on grounds of ownership alone, whether at first hand or delegated, whenever the responsible owner of the concern does not at the same time also personally oversee and physically direct the work in which his property is engaged, and in so far as he is not habitually engaged in the work in fellowship with his employees; (2) To take over and administer as a public utility any going concern that is in control of industrial or commercial work which has reached such a state of routine, mechanical systematization, or automatic articulation that it is possible for it to be habitually

managed from an office by methods of accountancy.

Needless to say, that when set out in this bald fashion, such a proposed line of remedial measures will appear to be shockingly subversive of law and order—iniquitous, impracticable; perhaps socialistic. And it is needless to argue its merits as it stands; particularly not to argue its merits within the equities of the existing law and order. Yet it may be as well to recall that any plan of reconstruction which shall hope to be of any slightest use for its main purpose, must begin by violating one or another of the equities of the existing law and order. A reconstruction means a revision of the present working system, the present system of vested interests, and of the scheme of equities within which that system is now working at cross purposes with the common good. It is a question of how and how far a disallowance of these existing vested interests is to be carried out. And the two propositions set out above are, therefore, intended to mark the direction which such a remedial disallowance of prescriptive rights will obviously take; not the limit to which such a move will necessarily go.

There is no socialistic iconoclasm in it all, either covert or overt; nor need any slightest animus of moral esteem or disesteem be injected into the argument at any point. It is a simple matter of material expediency, in which one of the prime factors to be considered is the growing prospect of an inordinate popular distrust. And the point of it all is that the present system of managing the country's larger industrial concerns by business methods in behalf of vested interests is proving itself bankrupt under the strain of the war situation; so much so that it is already more than doubtful if the community at large will hereafter be content to leave its larger material interests at the mercy of those business motives, business methods, and business men whose management is now shown to work such waste and confusion as can not be tolerated at a critical time. The system of vested rights and interests is up for revision, reconstruction, realignment, with a view to the material good and the continued tranquillity of the community at large; and there is therefore a call for a workable scope and method of reconstructing the existing scheme of law and order on such lines as will insure popular content. In this bearing, the meaning of "Reconstruction" is that America is to be made safe for the common man—in his own apprehension as well as in substantial fact. Current events in Russia, for instance, attest that it is a grave mistake to let a growing disparity between vested rights and the current conditions of life over-pass the limit of tolerance.

THORSTEIN VEBLEN.

The Age of Innocence

SWEET and wild, if you like, the first airs of spring, sweeter than anything in later days; but when we make an analogy between spring and youth and believe that the enchantment of one is the enchantment of the other, are we not dreaming a dream?

Youth, like spring, taunts the person who is not a poet. Just because it is formative and fugitive it evokes imagination, it has a bloom too momentary to be self-conscious, vanished almost as soon as it is seen. In boys as well as girls this beauty discloses itself. It is a delicacy as tender as the first green leaf, an innocence like the shimmering dawn, "brightness of azure, clouds of fragrance, a tinkle of falling water and singing birds." People feel this when they accept youth as immaculate and heed its mute expectancies. The mother whose boy is at twenty has every right to feel he is idyllic, to think that youth has the air of spring about it, that spring is the morning of the gods. Youth is so often handsome and straight and fearless, it has its mysterious silences—its beings are beings of clear fire in high spaces, kin with the naked stars. Yet there is in it something not less fiery which is far more human. Youth is also a Columbus with mutineers on board.

As one grows older one is less impatient of the supposition that innocence actually exists. It exists, even though mothers may not properly interpret it for boys. Its sudden shattering is a barbarism which time may not easily heal. But in reality youth is neither innocence nor experience. It is a duel between innocence and experience, with the attainments of experience guarded from older gaze. Human beings take their contemporaries for granted, no one else, and neither teachers nor superiors nor even parents find it easy to penetrate the veil that innocence and ignorance are supposed to draw around youth.

If youth has borrowed the suppositions about its own innocence, the coming of experience is all the more painful. The process of change is seldom serene, especially if there is eagerness or originality. The impressionable and histrionic youth has incessant disappointment in trying misfit spiritual garments. The undisciplined faculty of make-believe which is the rudiment of imagination can go far to torture youthfulness until a few chevrons have been earned and self-acceptance begun.

Do mature people try to help this? Do they remember their own uncertainty and frustration? One of the high points in Mr. Trotter's keen psychological study, *Instincts of the Herd in Peace and War*, indicates adult jealousy of the young. Mr. Trotter goes beyond Samuel Butler and Ed-

mund Gosse in generalizing their kind of youthful experience. He shows the forces at work behind the patronizing and victimizing of the young.

Viewed in a broad way, it is neither surprising nor portentous that there should naturally exist a strong and persistent jealousy between the adult and the young. Indeed, many of the superficial consequences of this fact are mere commonplace. Throughout most of the lower animals the relation is obvious and frankly manifested. . . .

The tendency to guard children from sexual knowledge and experience seems to be truly universal in civilized man and to surpass all differences of morals, discipline, or taste. . . .

Every adult necessarily possesses a primary bias in his attitude toward the young, and a bias which is connected with instinctive impulses of great mental energy. However much this tendency is overlaid by moral principles, by altruism, by natural affection, as long as its true nature is unrecognized and excluded from full consciousness its influence upon conduct must be excessive and full of dangerous possibilities. To it must ultimately be traced the scarcely veiled distrust and dislike with which comparative youth is always apt to be met where matters of importance are concerned. The attitude of the adult and elderly toward the enthusiasms of youth is stereotyped in a way which can scarcely fail to strike the psychologist as remarkable and illuminating in its commonplaceness. The youthful revolutionary, who after all is no more essentially absurd than the elderly conservative, is commonly told by the latter that he too at the same age felt the same aspirations, burnt with the same zeal, and yearned with the same hope until he learnt wisdom with experience—"as you will have, my boy, by the time you are my age." To the psychologist the kindly contempt of such pronouncements cannot conceal the pathetic jealousy of declining power. Herd instinct, invariably siding with the majority and the ruling powers, has always added its influence to the side of age and given a very distinctly perceptible bias to history, proverbial wisdom, and folklore against youth and confidence and enterprise and in favor of age and caution, the immemorial wisdom of the past, and even the toothless mumbling of senile decay.

The day will come when our present barbaric attitude toward youth will be altered. Before it can be altered, however, we must completely revise our conventions of innocence. Youth is no more certainly innocent than it is certainly happy, and the conspiracy of silence that surrounds youth is not to be justified on any ground of over-impressionableness. Innocence, besides, can last too long. Everyone has pitied stale innocence. If a New York child of ten becomes delirious his ravings may quite easily be shocking to older people. Already, without any particular viciousness or precocity, he has accumulated a huge number of undesirable impressions, and shoved them under the surface of his mind. What, then, to do? The air of spring that is about him need not mislead his guardians. They may as well accept him as a