

Democratic attitude seeks to emasculate the issue and to dismiss the proposed new party as unnecessary.

In our opinion the Democrats will fail in their present attempt to denationalize the question of the distribution of economic power. For the next fifty years the most important task of loyal and patriotic American citizens will be that of overcoming the existing tendency of the American nation to become a self-satisfied and intolerant plutocracy and of rebuilding with a more humane end in view the legal and economic foundations of American life. It will take a long process of education to convince many of the most disinterested and intelligent people in the United States of the importance and the unavoidability of this job. They do not understand the function of conflict in the social economy of a democratic people. They like to believe in the possibility and desirability of avoiding conflict by placing expert knowledge at the service of the well-intentioned search for immediate agreements. They will be slow to understand that conscious conflict is often the only means by which the obstacles to coöperation are removable. But they will be obliged to choose, and it is essential that when they choose the better and the larger number of them shall choose the Progressive alternative. Just at present a majority of them tend to look the other way, but as the economic issue becomes illuminated as well as advertised, they will find it increasingly hard to stomach the essential unintelligence and obscurantism of the Republican attitude. It is the task of Progressives, to mold the ideas and policy of their party so that, without ceasing to be consciously a party of conflict, they will win the support of individual liberals by becoming also the party of social discovery, technical invention, administrative adjustment and ultimately of national reconciliation.

Where Revolution Stalks

AN insidious revolution, says President Nicholas Murray Butler, is quietly eating its way, like a microscopic fungus, through the heart-of-oak of American government. In spite of all our loyalty to the institutions of our fathers we have been doomed to see them gradually softened and brought to impotence by processes that have been, hitherto, so subtle that we have not even perceived their nature. Conceived as a federation of sovereign states, our national life has become more centralized year by year until the time has arrived when the states out of which the nation has been built are little more than hollow shells, empty of real meaning and authority. More important, with this removal of the protection of local government the individual citizen has been exposed increasingly to the domination of a central governing power that has become with each successive Congress more intrusive and more

dictatorial. Nothing is any more beyond the province of federal authority to regulate. In our home life, in our social communication, in the conduct of our private businesses we have now to submit to the dictation of constitutional amendments and congressional enactment, and the end is not in sight. But that end is revolution.

The purpose for which President Butler drew this picture in his recent speech to the Institute of Arts and Sciences at Columbia University was to sound a call to arms. Dr. Butler is "confident the American people would overwhelmingly oppose changing their present form of government." Doubtless he is right. The American people are in a more complacent mood just now than any other in the world, naturally, since they are more comfortable than any other people. But the process of change which has stolen silently upon them through the concatenation of circumstances over which no political body has control can be checked neither by complacency nor by a call to arms, though it be sounded through the trump of Gabriel. You cannot indict nature. This revolution is not only silent and insidious; it is inevitable. Among economists it is known as the industrial revolution.

Now the industrial revolution is obviously not confined to America. England is quite generally taken as the seat of its inception. It was in England that an obscure conjunction of accidents brought forward a large and powerful middle class, and fostered commerce and manufacture, science and discovery and ultimately the mechanical inventions which revolutionized that industry and so have altered the whole character of modern civilization. Furthermore, the mechanical arts have spread with unprecedented rapidity to all parts of the earth. No valley is any more too remote for the power drill, no steppe too barren to be traversed by rail. Nevertheless the United States is the foster child of the industrial revolution. As a world power we have no pre-industrial past. The life history of the nation coincides precisely with the inception, the development and the consummation of industrial society. In no other country have the mechanical arts had their way so thoroughly.

Figured in terms of industrial development, this is our gain. But viewed as a problem of control, it is our greatest hazard. The fact is that mechanical industry is almost completely beyond the control of existing governments. That is not strange. The governments of today are outgrowths of the governments of yesterday. Thus the American Constitution, framed in the late eighties of the last century but one, undertakes to preserve the peace of farmers and handicraftsmen, and to regulate the scanty commerce of the stagecoach and the clipper ship. When it was adopted there was no machine industry anywhere; but no sooner had it come into operation than the people whose basic law it is became through a century and a half the greatest industrial and commercial nation of the world. The

instrument that was framed to control the operations of fishers, farmers and cotton planters now exercises jurisdiction over Standard Oil Companies, the United States Steel Corporation, the Pennsylvania Railroad, the du Pont chemical, and other, interests, the highly disorganized coal operators and the highly concentrated bankers.

Needless to say, it has made a mess of it. As the job has grown, all sorts of subterfuges have been required. Emergency regulations of every conceivable kind have been passed, investigations have been conducted, new departments of government created. A great many of these moves have been promptly pronounced contrary to the provisions of our eighteenth century Constitution. Others no doubt would have been had their significance been apparent at the time. Thus two of the most potent instruments of our present system of government are the Interstate Commerce Commission and the Federal Reserve Board—neither of them contemplated in the Constitution nor dreamed of for a hundred years after its formation. The general confusion could not be illustrated better than by the necessity which has arisen again and again of warping to the interpretation of the most extensive cases of industrial control the amendment passed in 1866 to protect the southern negro in the possession of his meagre chattels.

All these facts are notorious. Yet in the face of them the president of our greatest university is so ignorant or so arrogant as to leave them completely out of his reckoning. Alarmed by the shoddy patch-work of most of our recent attempts to control our own industrial life, he has either the stupidity or the audacity to propose a return to the simple local government of the founding fathers. What annoys him is not the precariousness of the control exercised by the present instruments of government, but the absurdities of subterfuge to which legislation has been driven under the Constitution. Behold our impotence, he says in effect. We have sought to free the negro, and he is still in chains. We have sought to banish liquor, and the country swims in it. And now, follies upon follies, we are essaying to keep children out of the factories and to raise the national standard of literacy.

To propose such a program as a return to eighteenth century liberalism is simply preposterous. The stalwart independence of our forefathers was in the first place a defiance of aristocratic privilege. As it gathered economic bearing it reflected the eighteenth century economic doctrine of *laissez faire*, and that, as any reader of Adam Smith may discover, was an attack on mercantile monopoly entrenched behind royal grant and special tariff. The equivalent of that doctrine today would be a program, whether of letting be or regulation, aimed at the industrial monopolies of our own time. Is that what President Butler envisages in his version of *laissez faire*? Absolutely not. He would curb the federal government so as to leave the schools to the

munificence of the rural community, the children to the tender mercies of immigrant parents and industrial employers, liquor to the refined ministrations of the brewer and distiller and the negro to the grandfather clauses of local governments. He is against federal control; but he is against federal control of industry and federal control of the rich. He is against taxing New York to pay for the schools of Idaho. He is against coercing employers in the matter of child labor. He is against federal protection of common labor.

But in particular President Butler is against amendments. This is the crux of the matter. He wishes to preserve the Constitution. He laughs cynically at the ineffectiveness of these patch-work regulations. But of course they are ineffective. Any attempt at control of modern industrial machinery that is based on our federal Constitution, as it now stands, will be a relatively ineffective subterfuge. Proper control might perhaps be decentralized; but it would necessarily be decentralized not to local areas, to the county sheriffs and the town meetings that were the very symbol of good government to our rural ancestors, but to the industries, to the corporations themselves, which are the real units of power in the modern world. Such a decentralization would spread out the governing power not from Washington to Gopher Prairie but from Congress to the board room of the United States Steel Corporation, from the White House to the council chamber of J. P. Morgan and Company.

The cry for government by the original Constitution without amendment is a cry for a government that is impotent against the real powers of the present civilization. Those powers are not ephemeral. They are as permanent as civilization itself, a silent proof of the inward revolution. President Butler recalls Voltaire's aphorism that most dead governments have disappeared through suicide. Let him reflect further that most governments have committed suicide by clinging to a rigid formula just too long in the face of a changing social order.

Barriers to Progressivism

IN an article published in our last issue Mr. Walter Lippmann charges the New Republic "with making a virtue of Progressive ambiguities while it expends its scorn on Democratic and Republican ambiguities." A review of the political articles published in the New Republic during the past six months would not, we believe, substantiate this charge. The New Republic has not erected the ambiguities of the Progressive program into a virtue. We have claimed only that such ambiguities were, considering the sources from which a new party must be derived, unavoidable, and, if the proposed party realized its promise, remediable. Ob-