

Woodrow Wilson and His Clients

MONDAY, September 25, is the thirty-first anniversary of one of the saddest and most costly days in American history. It was on that day that Woodrow Wilson made his last public speech. He was fighting to win over the American people to the cause of the League of Nations, for he was convinced that the war just ended would become merely the opening episode of a continuing tragedy if the nations failed to establish world law. And the biggest test was right here in America. Public opinion was slow in seeing the connection between world peace and world law. Traditionally, too, the American people had been accustomed to waiting for a problem to come to a boil before doing anything about it. Wilson's case rested on the need to anticipate crisis as the best means of crushing it.

Imagine the unutterable anguish of the man who had managed to convince millions of people all over the world of this, only to return home to find that leaders of the opposing political party had been capitalizing on the desire of Americans to forget about the war, forget about Europe, forget about involvements. And the campaign against the League was succeeding. Hence Wilson's decision to carry the fight for peace to the people. It was to be a tour that would attempt to crack open the isolationist heartland. The compressed schedule called for about one hundred speeches before audiences in almost every state stretching from Ohio to the West

Coast—all in a few short weeks.

The best account of that trip—Wilson's last public trip—is to be found in a compelling and evocative book, "Woodrow Wilson as I Know Him," by Joseph P. Tumulty, his confidant and friend who served as private secretary for eleven years. The book appeared in 1921 and is now out of print, but it is hoped that the publishers can be persuaded to bring out a new edition, for what it has to say is even more timely today than it was a generation ago.

Tumulty wrote that the small group around Wilson resisted the idea of the trip as soon as it became known. The President had returned from Europe showing the effects of his exertions. He was suffering from violent headaches and was easily fatigued. When an attempt was made to postpone the trip Wilson would have none of it. He told Tumulty that he knew he was "at the end of my tether," but insisted that a desperate effort had to be made to win over the American people in time.

"If the Treaty should be defeated," he said, "God only knows what would happen to the world as a result of it. In the presence of the great tragedy which now faces people everywhere, no decent man can count his own personal fortunes in the reckoning."

Tumulty suggested a compromise. Set aside one week in the tour for a rest at a quiet place in the Grand Canyon. Even this the President rejected. "This is a business trip, pure and simple," he insisted, "and the itinerary must not include a vacation of any kind."

The trip got under way. As it progressed, Wilson seemed somehow to find a magical second wind that enabled him to speak three, four, or even five times a day, seven days a week. Tumulty and the President's staff marveled at his ability to mask his fatigue while talking. Never had they heard him more eloquent or more convincing. Many of the talks were extemporaneous but they all reflected Wilson's great talent for clarity and precision of thought and expression.

And Wilson's message was getting across. It was hard work, but you could see the people responding to the call for sanity and the need to put decency to work in dealings among nations. There were hopes in the President's party that the encouraging early reactions would reach a crescendo by the time the tour ended. When the President spoke at Pueblo on September 25 he was more impassioned and effective than ever. It was a longer talk than usual, and it almost seemed that Wilson realized it might be his last. As he spoke the audience

was deeply moved by what he said but they were also moved by his frail appearance. It was easy to see that something was wrong; his face clearly showed the effects of the constant strain not only of the trip but of his labors overseas for the League.

He began his Pueblo talk by saying that he had come to speak in behalf of his clients. Those clients, he said, were the next generation. He wanted to be sure that the measures would be taken here and now that would make it unnecessary for that next generation to be sent on another war errand. He spoke of the hundreds of American mothers who came up to grasp his hand during his trip—mothers whose sons had been killed in France. They had said, many of them, "God bless you, Mr. President."

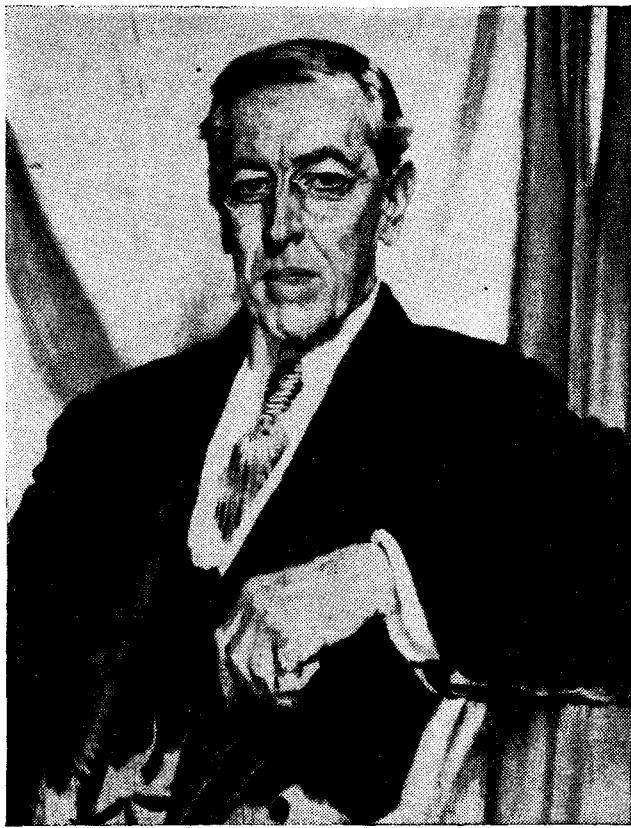
"Why, my fellow citizens," he asked, "should they pray God to bless me? I advised the Congress of the United States to create the situation that led to the death of their sons. I ordered their sons overseas. I consented to their sons being put in the most difficult parts of the battle line, where death was certain, as in the impenetrable difficulties of the Argonne forest. Why should they weep upon my hand and call down the blessings of God upon me? They do so because they believe that their boys died for something that vastly transcends any of the immediate and palpable objects of the war. They believe that wrapped up with the liberty of the world is the continuous protection of that liberty by the concerted powers of all the civilized world."

"These men were crusaders. They were going forth to prove the might of justice and right, and all the world accepted them as crusaders. Their achievement has made all the world believe in America as it believes in no other nation in the modern world."

THE PRESIDENT spoke of his visit to a hillside near Paris, at the cemetery of Suresnes, where American soldiers were buried. He then referred to the many men in Congress and public life who were now opposing the creation of a world society which, if all nations joined in giving it real authority, might be able to crush the causes of war, and he said he hoped these men might have been with him to see those graves.

"I wish," he said, "that they could feel the moral obligation that rests upon us not to go back on those boys, but to see the thing through, to see it through to the end and make good the redemption of the world. For nothing less depends upon this decision, nothing less than the liberation and salvation of the world."

"Now that the mists of this great



—Sir William Orpen.

Woodrow Wilson—"God bless you, Mr. President."

question have cleared away, I believe that men will see the trust, eye to eye and face to face. There is one thing that the American people always rise to and extend their hand to, and that is the truth of justice and of liberty and of peace. We have accepted that truth and we are going to be led by it, and it is going to lead us, and through us the world, out into pastures of quietness and peace such as the world never dreamed of before."

As the President spoke, Tumulty looked around and could see the impact of his words. Hard-boiled newspapermen who had sat dry-eyed through the previous speeches were now visibly moved. He looked at Mrs. Wilson and saw tears in her eyes. The thousands of people in the large amphitheatre were responding to moral leadership.

But the tour was never completed. Late that night, the night of the Pueblo speech, Dr. Grayson, the President's physician, summoned Tumulty. The President was seriously ill. His left side was paralyzed. One side of his face was limp and expressionless. His left arm and left leg failed to respond to stimulus. The searing headaches that were an old story throughout the tour now held the President's mind in a steel-like grip.

The Western trip was over. Woodrow Wilson had fought and lost.

For at least fifteen years Americans gave little thought to this defeat. All during the Twenties and into the Thir-

ties it was fashionable to view Wilson kindly but somewhat skeptically. He was a great idealist, we said patronizingly, a great idealist who never realized we lived in a practical world. The word "impractical" became his epitaph.

But during the Second World War and, indeed, in the years immediately preceding the war the realization grew that Wilson was perhaps the most practical man of his time, for he had addressed himself to the basic needs of America and the world both. He spoke of ideals, certainly, for he believed that ideals were our natural assets and, in time of emergency, our finest weapons. Our failure to act on those ideals in time resulted in

countless thousands of Woodrow Wilson's "clients" going on another war errand.

And what about Woodrow Wilson's ideals today? There is a United Nations, and the United States has accepted the responsibilities of membership. But is the United States exercising the type of leadership in the United Nations that can yet achieve world law? There are signs that we are, as in Korea. But there are also signs that the United States is still hypnotized by the false slogans of sovereignty, still willing to shelter the fallacy that world law can operate without compulsory obligations and commitments. We are reluctant to talk about the ideal of world citizenship, though it could be the most effective salient there is against Russian ideology. When we talk about ideals we mumble them somewhat incoherently, as though they are uncomfortable on our lips.

When Wilson spoke ideals he was not self-conscious, he did not stammer, he was not apologetic. He was representing the strength of America as he understood it and as history had confirmed it. We do not honor his memory unless we also honor his convictions. At the heart of those convictions was the belief that vision—vision with spaciousness and moral grandeur—is not only the solvent of potential danger but the natural setting for a human community at peace.

—N. C.

Good News

► The drive to wipe out illiteracy in the Philippines has picked up such momentum that 40 per cent of the national income now is devoted to fundamental education. Since World War II the Government has nearly doubled the number of elementary schools, achieving the first goal of a school in every village. More than four and a half million children and adults out of a population of nineteen million now are in classrooms.

► In Bobtown, Pa., the jail has been closed for lack of business and converted into a post office.

► After fifteen years of waiting International Longshoremen's Local 1368 (Negro) will go to work at Port Brownsville, Texas. I.L.A. Local 1367 (white) voted to give 24 per cent of the work at the port to the Negro local.

► A French Government commission has been appointed to supervise comics and other publications sold to children and adolescents. Under the terms of a recent law children's literature may not offer "any picture, story, incident, or title showing gangsterism, stealing, debauchery, crimes, or misdemeanors in a favorable light." The commission will report infractions of this law and suggest measures to improve publications for children.

► The Court of Chancery in Wilmington ruled that Delaware Negroes must be admitted to the University of Delaware on the same basis as white students because educational facilities at Delaware State College for Negroes are "grossly inferior." The court opinion did not deal with the question of segregation, but considered only whether facilities at State College were equal to those at the University.

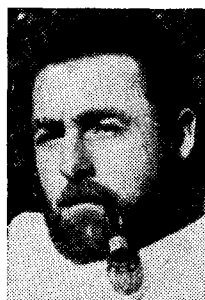
► A Museum of International Folk Art is being built in Santa Fe, New Mexico. This will be the first folk-art museum of an essentially international character in the world. Close links will be sought with other institutions throughout the world.

► A common printed language has just been worked out for the one million blind people of Africa, who speak some eight hundred tribal languages. The system of Braille was finally approved by a committee of blind Braillists and linguistic experts meeting in London. UNESCO participated in this meeting as part of its campaign to develop a common Braille for all the peoples of the world.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Nayantara Sahgal



John F. Muehl

"Interview with India"

EDITOR'S NOTE: Four weeks ago SRL featured on its cover a book that was acclaimed by Louis Fischer as a work of fine style and strong opinion: "Interview with India," by John Frederick Muehl. This young writer had spent six months in India living native-style in small villages. "He came out of India," wrote our reviewer, "a bitter, angry man."

Shortly after the review appeared SRL received a letter from Miss Nayantara Sahgal protesting the substance of "Interview with India." The writer is the daughter of Mrs. Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Indian Ambassador to the United States.

Mr. Muehl was furnished with a copy of Miss Sahgal's letter. His reply follows on the next page.

SIR: I would appreciate the courtesy of your paper to express my views, which I believe are commonly shared by other Indians, regarding the recent John Day publication "Interview with India," by John Frederick Muehl [SRL Aug. 26].

This book is remarkable in many ways, above all, in that it shows a genuine desire on the part of the author to understand India. His journeys and the manner in which he lived during his long and difficult search for understanding are indeed admirable. However, it is a book strangely lacking in perspective and for this reason I was surprised that the John Day Co. could think highly of it and that Pearl Buck could comment as favorably as she has done on the back cover. Let me explain what I mean.

The most outstanding flaw seems to be the author's obsession with the poverty of India. No one but an American so obviously lacks a world perspective as to be so completely overwhelmed at the sight of a poor country. Mr. Muehl should go on similar travels through other parts of the East, Europe, and the American Deep South. He will then see India's poverty in its correct relation to poverty the world over and not be upset by it. Poverty, particularly in the East, is a centuries-old bugbear due to several causes. Two common ones are foreign domination and, as a result of this, the lack of an industrial revolution. The appalling condition of your Deep South exists despite your industrial revolution and your freedom from foreign domination. The present Government of India is keenly alive to the misery prevailing in Indian vil-

lages, but not even the best-intentioned and best-equipped government in the world can bring about sweeping and total reform in five months after it comes to power, which is the time of Mr. Muehl's writing.

Apart from this over-all preoccupation with poverty, the book is full of naive observations and even some outright errors, such as when Sardar Patel is called a Brahmin. He happens to be a Vaishya. With reference to the author's observations—he is startled by the fact that many Kathiawar villagers take opium and refers to this repeatedly. Is this not the equivalent of the immoderate drinker in your country? Does no poor man in America, or anywhere else for that matter, ill-advisedly spend his money on liquor when it would be better spent on his home and family? Then, speaking of the temples of Madura and Rameswaram, Mr. Muehl is taken aback by what he describes as "their Gods killing and wooing, copulating and dying in monstrous heaps of frenzied stone," and "bloody Kali . . . ensconced in majesty." Appalling and primitive though this may seem to the eye of the foreigner, it happens to rank among the world's greatest art.

Then again, Mr. Muehl expresses time and again the belief that the present Government of India has failed to reach the people and to respond to their needs. He evidently has come to this conclusion after his talks with villagers during his travels. Were a similar journey to be made through the countryside of America, would every farmer and hillbilly be informed of what is being done for him in the shape of laws being enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives? And remember this is largely a literate country. In this connection Mr. Muehl repeatedly speaks of Nehru as "going over to the conservatives" and of Gandhi as a reactionary. He says that the Government is more concerned with minor matters like putting an end to gam-

bling and drinking than with real reform. He is wrong. This happens to be the concern of one or two provincial governments, and then, too, not to the exclusion of other problems. The Central Government, together with the remaining provincial governments, is in fact not even bothering with these matters and has often asked the provinces to shelve them in favor of more urgent problems.

What does Mr. Muehl mean when he says that the Government of India has undertaken no major reform and that its members are no longer the revolutionaries they once were during British rule? Now, as during the British regime, India does not favor savage and sudden revolt or violent reform. It took twenty-seven years of peaceful revolution and hard labor to stage the withdrawal of a foreign government. It will take many times that number of years to fashion the India of Gandhi's ideal. The task of building up is always a slower and more difficult one than that of tearing down, especially when the Government chooses gradual, peaceful means to bring about reform. Mr. Muehl got so wound up with the problems of the villages, with the stark poverty, and the fact that the villagers were addicted to opium that he could not see the forest for the trees.

It escaped him entirely that the revolutions and reforms going on in India are numerous and diverse, affecting many parts of the economic, social, and political structure. Firstly, the merger of the princely states with the provincial governments has been a historic landmark. After thousands of years of independent feudal rule these states are now functioning along democratic lines in harmony with the Central Government of India. Secondly, the Government has launched enormous projects towards better irrigation and land development. Witness the Damodar Valley project in West Bengal and Bihar, the Koshi Valley project in West Bengal, Bihar,



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

"I don't know anything about Alaska, Mr. Seward, but the fact that the Russians are willing to part with it looks mighty suspicious."