

in politics, or the development of a new party. There are many and long steps to be taken before the disgust of scattered and unorganized persons will be crystallized. The situation does, however, indicate that with success in the creation of a new party is bound up such success as may be achieved in renewal of trust in political action and in renewal of hope of something significant coming out of political life. To put the matter baldly and briefly, indifference to politics is the product of unbelief in the sincerity of the old parties. Nothing is hoped from them because it is felt that they are both the servants of the same dominant railway, banking, and corporate industrial forces. Disgust with politics, cynical acquiescence in corruption, is due to the fact that this covert, this unavowed, alliance of government in cities, States, and the nation with "big business" is known to be the chief cause of graft and loot in politics. There was a general resentment directed against corrupt politicians in the nineties and early years of the present century. The indignation which was aroused led to a series of political house-cleanings, more or less successful for the movement. Now there is wide-spread recognition of the fact that the guilty politicians are not the ultimately guilty parties. The political racket is a symptom of an underlying economic racket. Seeing no way to deal with the latter, it seems a saving of time and energy not to get too excited about the former.

This situation, however, does not make it any easier to bring a new party to birth. Indeed, it indicates the difficulty in the way of it. The radiations and ramifications of the economic régime under which we live are so subtle and wide that they create a feeling of general helplessness and timidity about the possibility of any significant change. The open flouting by Mencken and his fol-

lowers of the idea of any real improvement in public and social affairs finds a feebler echo in the minds of "tired liberals." They would like to do something, but they do not know how to go to work nor where to begin. The whole situation is out of hand.

I am not content, however, to stop without pointing out that the revival of intelligent hope for and from political life is identical with the cause of creating a new political party. There are certain practical conclusions which follow from this unity. One is the fundamental character of the principles upon which a new party must be built. It must start from the fact that all vital political questions of the day have an economic origin, and have their impact where men live, industrially and financially, in the shop, home, and office. The principles and policies of new political thought and interest must not be afraid to borrow and to develop many measures which have been stigmatized as socialistic and which have been allowed, in their political bearing, to become too much a monopoly of a practically ineffective socialistic party. It is not enough to make the masses aware of the extent to which government has become an instrument of economic privilege, and to urge abolition of this control exercised by a small class in behalf of their own advantage. Negations and oppositions sometimes arouse temporary sentiment of great immediate force. But they are transient in themselves and in their effects.

I shall not try to write a platform which will fulfil the condition of basing political action upon industrial, commercial, and financial realities, instead of upon sham issues long dead historically. But certain matters may be pointed out to illustrate and give body to the idea. Modern business is carried on by money and especially credit. Those who

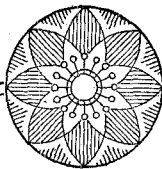
control the giving and withholding of credit govern the country, whoever controls government in name. The government must resume in fact control of credit. Private, unregulated ownership of natural resources in land, which signifies mines, oil, timber, and water-power—which means, also, to-day, electrical power—must yield to drastic taxation of the land values created by the community and necessary to the healthy development of the community. Operations which tend to become natural monopolies, like railway transportation, public utilities, means of communication, must come under a governmental regulation so complete as not to be distinguished from public ownership. It must be realized that civil rights, liberty of speech, assembly, publication, are not merely individual rights, but are essential to the welfare, the healthy growth, of society. Such points as these at least illustrate the nature of the principles upon which alone a new party can be built, while they demonstrate the fundamental and radical character of the political thinking which must be done.

The situation also discloses a fact important for the tactics to be pursued. They must be long-time, and at first primarily educational, tactics. I should have little faith in what a new party could accomplish if it came into power in 1932 or 1936. Past third-party movements have been ineffectual because they aimed too much at immediate success, and because these had done little preliminary work in thought, study, and the preparation of men able to carry new ideas into effect in legislation and administration. My statements may suggest to some persons a continuation of the tactics which rendered liberalism ineffec-

tual in the fact. By “educational activities” may be understood a cloistered withdrawal from the scene of action, an idea that “appeal to reason” is enough. But such procedure is not education; it is at best a preparation for education, and is likely to be something much more futile. There is no education when ideas and knowledge are not translated into emotion, interest, and volition. There must be constant accompanying organization and direction of organized action into practical work. “Ideas” must be linked to the practical situation, however hurly-burly that is.

The thing which gives me least fear and discouragement is the statement, no matter how often it is reiterated, that such a movement can appeal only to a minority, and at the outset a comparatively small minority. In the first place, there is already political discontent and unrest among the masses. These need direction and organization, but there is something there to direct and to organize. Apathy is in large measure due to the fact that nothing fundamental, nothing sufficiently radical in the way of principles, has been offered. And in the second place, every movement of any account in the history has been the work of minorities. I do not agree with the statements which are freely propagated in the interest of reactionary policies about the low mentality of the masses. The adult is more apt to learn than youth. But the courage and conviction which instruct them must first proceed from the few. The question of whether there is hope in and for politics is finally a question whether there is a minority having the requisite courage, conviction, and readiness for sacrificial work.

Frank Kent's article on Charley Michelson in SCRIBNER's became a campaign issue in the November elections. Another important article by Mr. Kent will appear in an early number.



By Lillian T. Leonard

In the Beartooth Country

THE day breaks like a bud into a flower;
A soft, West wind is blowing out the stars;
I see the moist moon fade before the glower
And blackness of the Beartooth peaks and scars;
The sky spreads like crushed turquoise—blue with grays;
Like skies on fickle February days.

All night wild geese have flown, their lonely cry
Still echoes in the gulch. Slowly the sun
Smooths the dawn-petals and lets warm fingers pry
Beneath the ice-lipped creek where once sedge spun
And twisted in the current's steady flow,
Or shot like uncured arrows from a bow.

Impatiently I watch the late May pout,
Swinging the mask of March. Indifferent.
Hinting: 'Twere better that the Sioux pitched out
Their ten-point teepees than for you to plant.
Why let blue flax and pale green barley grow
Where once scraped sagging poles of Bloods' travaux!

O, Pioneer!

THIS wrestling with the earth! As God's in Heaven—
Each morning when the world's edge kindles fire,
I rise to work and spend the strength rest's given,
For labor of a day until I tire.
What labor? Well, the measure of a field,
The stiff, hard guidance of a breaking plough,
A later harrowing to plight a yield
To Ceres. And a prayer breathed every now
And then lest turning back the powdery soil
Might cloud my eyes and all of Pisgah fade
Into a famished waste of swindled toil
And I lose what high-hearted hope had paid.
So, wrestling with the earth, I lift my face
To view the furrows straight as wild swans' flight,
And vision pale green fields to take the place
Of drought-embittered grass when, over night,
Red autumn thunders on me unaware,
The sound of harvest engines drum the air. . . .

I stand to grapple with an answered prayer.