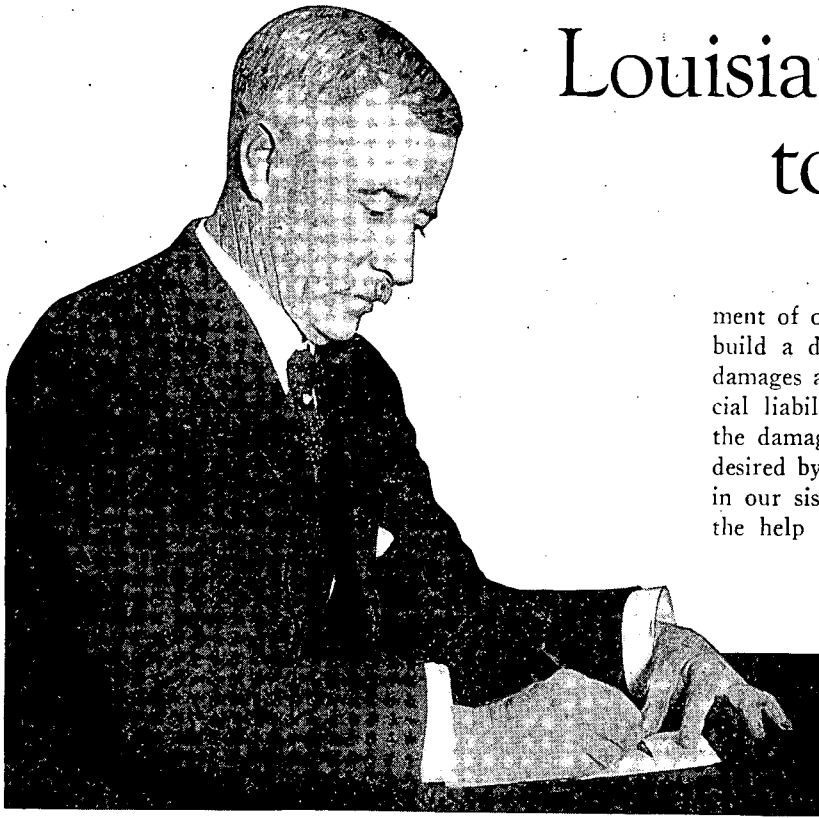


Louisiana Looks to Washington

By JOHN M. PARKER



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Ex-Governor John M. Parker of Louisiana

HERE is no question that the Mississippi Valley represents the most fertile and productive section in the world. Its prosperity and the safety of its inhabitants is a matter in which the people of the entire United States are deeply and vitally interested.

This Valley alone could produce every commodity necessary to feed and clothe the nation. Without holding post mortems over past conditions, the nation should look forward to protecting this great garden spot forever from the danger of overflow.

The breaking up of the great farms is a certainty. Nowhere else can the small farmer find a more pleasant and profitable occupation than in this territory with its mild climate, wonderful soil and great possibilities in every known variety of agriculture, poultry-raising, dairying and other industries necessary for the public welfare and so ideally situated for the health and happiness of those farmers and their families, the latter largely to form the future of America.

Every thinking person will realize that sectional lines are wiped out for all time and that the man from the North, the East, or the West coming here will be cordially welcomed. The independent self-respecting Caucasian, seeking to make his home happy and contented, taking advantage of our splendid system of schools, highways and churches, will not only be attracted to this country but will learn to love it as do those among us who have been fighting against heavy odds caused by the fact that our troubles are due to no carelessness on our part but largely to deforestation, tile drainage and the hurling at us in an irresistible flood of the waters of our thirty sister states between the Appalachians and the Rockies.

Our appeal for absolute control by the national govern-

ment of our levees is a matter of fairness and justice. If I build a dam and impound the waters, and it breaks and damages another, the courts have repeatedly fixed the financial liability on me—that is, on the party responsible for the damage. But it would be not only impossible but not desired by any of us to go to the courts against those people in our sister states who are improving their property with the help of engineers and thereby hurting us when those waters break loose. It is the belief of a great many of us in the lower Mississippi Valley that if the facts were properly put before them the national government would not only assume absolute control of our levees but that this action would meet with the overwhelming approval of the American people.

Sitting in my office yesterday three delegations called from the parishes of St. Landry, Iberia and Avoyelles, which were threatened with a break in the levee. Many of these people had been my personal friends for years.

After two seasons of crop failure, they now have one of the most satisfactory prospects in years. They came in, some with drawn faces showing emotion, telling how their corn is more than knee-high; others of their cotton branching out beautifully, their rice crops fine and their sugar cane growing rapidly with a splendid stand. They came to make a plea for help to save them, because if this disaster should follow two years of depression it would mean eternal ruin.

These sections are occupied by some of the thriftiest and most patriotic people in America, who own their own homes, small farms which furnish their every need and leave them ordinarily a surplus. They have never begged. They do not want charity. They are noted for their fidelity in meeting their obligations. If disaster should come now their only salvation would be in securing funds to be repaid over a term of years to enable them to repair and put their property in shape for another crop. [A week after this was written the three parishes mentioned were six feet under water.—Editor]

Ordinary floods in our country have been borne with stoicism. In 1922 no requests were made for contributions. But with the untoward conditions of this year and disaster after disaster crowding upon us, positive assurance should be given us that the United States government will meet its obligation to protect lives and property; and take immediate steps toward that end that will enable us again to go to work with renewed vigor in the certainty that with government control and construction of levees the entire Mississippi Valley will become the garden spot of America.

Don't invest our funds in the Old World. Place them with our own people where they will prove a blessing, ensure their rapid recovery and earn the everlasting thanks of those whose lives and investments will be made safe.

Up from the Bottom Lands

By ARTHUR KELLOGG

THE Mississippi Delta is the bottom of the United States. The bottom lands from Cairo to the Gulf have been built up one painful inch upon another from the alternate flooding and drying of an uncontrolled river. More, the people of the bottoms, excepting those of New Orleans and the other cities, the planters and occasional odd groups like the Acadians of Louisiana, are, in the mass, a population of Americans definitely below the national standard of living. They are sick, not only in the sense that all of us are sick from time to time; they are plagued with diseases which the rest of us have more or less thrown off. Not only are they poor, they are in debt, and they are in debt in such a way that they are bound to the land by their debts; landlords and tenants, white and black alike, in the mass they are peons. They are illiterate, so much so that as a visitor to the refugee camps during the flood I was at once struck with the absence of bulletins and learned that all notices and even the simple rules of the camp must be made known by word of mouth. They are the victims of a one-crop agriculture; the results of their year's work may hang on the word of far-off bankers, on a war in Europe, on a market centering in another continent, on competition newly sprung up in four continents, on the buying power of the English pound.

For two months the flood has thrown the plight of these Americans onto the front pages of every newspaper in the country, a panorama of printer's ink and pictures as long as the Delta itself and quite like it—a black-and-white ribbon of suffering. The people of the country have given eagerly for flood relief. The next step is to discover what may be done by way of permanent improvement after the sixteen-million-dollar relief fund has been spent, what agencies have the entree to the field and how they may bring to bear their resources and experience in a way to lift the Delta civilization toward that good life which it is our reasonable ambition to make possible for all people in the United States.

Foremost among such agencies is the Red Cross, which has been on the ground since early April over a territory six hundred miles long and has earned the active good will of the whole population. It has the advantage of a continuing organization; its local chapters, usually on a county basis, are ready to carry on after the disaster relief workers, the surgeons and nurses from headquarters have finished their task and moved on to meet other disasters.

The Red Cross has inevitably proved an educationally disruptive factor in the old bottom life, perhaps second only to the flood itself. It has had in its camps for from four to six weeks a total of almost six hundred thousand people, of whom the great majority have been tenant farmers and farm laborers and their families, most of them Negroes. It has vaccinated more than one hundred thousand of them in spite of their misgivings that the permission of "the boss" ought first to be obtained; it has shot three hundred thousand for typhoid. It has fed them good food, in some cases against the protests of planters who feared they would go back home dissatisfied with the old victuals. It has admitted to the camps lecturers and preachers and singers and recreation leaders, many from Negro colleges, who have talked with them about better ways of living: how to screen against malaria and to avoid typhoid, how to grow vegetables and what vegetables to plant for

a varied diet. On leaving camp every family has been given packets of quick-growing vegetable seed and with instructions about planting so that in a few weeks in this hot, moist country there may be fresh food of a variety which perhaps has never been eaten there before. That, too, displeases some of the planters, for they want every foot of ground planted to cotton—"Cotton to the doorstep"—and they want the tenants to buy food from the plantation store. It is a common sight to see farmers buying sweet potatoes and corn at the store in a country where both can grow almost without cultivation.

There have been no epidemics in the camps, but the usual number of cases of measles, mumps and the like came in with the refugees, and there have been more than the ex-



Cartoon by Knott, in the Dallas News

The shiftless attitude of the past