

FIGHT IN WEST IS CENTERED MAINLY ON RADICALISM

By David Lawrence

(Copyright, 1920. This is the second of a series of three articles analyzing political and economic conditions west of the Mississippi river, based upon a personal investigation in 14 states, including 25 of the largest cities, during the last 30 days.)

Chicago, Oct. 6.—Radicalism, which the average Easterner may have thought was on the wane, has penetrated the politics of the West to such an extent that it is hardly an exaggeration to say most folk in the majority of the Western states hardly realize there is a presidential election this year.

Far more important to the people of Montana, Colorado, Idaho, North Dakota and Washington are the local issues introduced by the Non-Partisan league or a coalition of the farmer and labor elements. Party lines have been broken. The business men of a community, the bankers, the merchants, the professional classes generally, are forgetting that they were originally Republicans or Democrats and are uniting to beat the effort of the agricultural proletariat to gain control of the reins of state government.

Similarly, the farmers and laboring

classes have forgotten their own party affiliations and whenever the Non-Partisan league candidates are listed as Democrats, the farmer and laborer strength is mustered for the Democratic state ticket, as in Montana and Colorado; whereas, in North Dakota, where the machinery of the Republican state organization is in the hands of the Non-Partisan league, the vote of the farmers is for the regular Republican state ticket, all of whose candidates as a rule have succeeded in getting their names on the ballots as the regular nominees in the primaries.

Heretofore, where reforms have been desired, people who thought in political terms imagined that the third party was the best means to their end. Well, it proved wrong. The third party movement of 1912 nationally has gone by the boards. Three-cornered fights, even in the states, have proved futile.

The Non-Partisan league hasn't tried third party tactics. It has gone into the primaries and captured the regular Democratic or Republican organization. That's why there's so much agitation in the West to abolish the primary system and go back to conventions, where the choice of candidates can be more easily controlled and party machinery preserved. But the Non-Partisan league has enough strength for the present to keep the primary system, its most valuable asset.

It can easily be seen, however, what the effect on a presidential contest can be when the absorbing interest in so many states is whether the Non-Partisan league candidates can be beaten by a coalition of another of non-partisan character between conservative Democrats and Republicans.

TOWNLEY LIKE PENROSE
Of course one hears the Non-Partisan league leaders called "reds" and "Bolsheviks" and "radicals." Their methods

are radically different from what has been the usual course of political affairs in the past, and the whole thing may be called radicalism, but even the most ardent forces opposing the Non-Partisan league no longer call the average farmer or laborer who votes for the Non-Partisan league ticket "Bolshevik" or "red."

The epithets are reserved for the organizers and leaders. It is amusing in some states to see how the Non-Partisan league, which denounces the "kept press" and the "plutocratic interests" for controlling the newspapers, turns around and establishes newspapers of its own and colors the news along lines favorable to the Non-Partisan league.

C. A. Townley, head of the Non-Partisan league, is as dominant a figure in the movement as Penrose is in the Republican party. Opinions may vary as to the types of men or their benefit to the community, but fundamentally each has his lieutenants and gives orders and controls his organization just as efficiently as the other.

COX IS FRIENDLY
Governor Cox, the Democratic presidential nominee, has encountered the Non-Partisan league movement on his travels and has sought to capture its vote. He has analyzed the causes of the upheaval and has insisted that it result from autocratic and oppressive government and that the extremes to which the Non-Partisan league may have gone in its demands for state ownership of public resources and utilities is the direct result of gouging of the farmers. He used North Dakota as an example, and says the farmers saw the speculator reselling their wheat at higher prices and classifying the poorer grades as superior and so on. The state-owned elevators and cooperative marketing organizations, if established earlier, would have averted the Non-Partisan league, in Governor Cox's judgment. All this is controversial. Senator

Harding, on his front porch, says nothing about it and gains the conservative vote. The voice of Governor Cox does not reach enough of the Non-Partisan leaguers as a rule to help him. The Non-Partisan league press caters to radicals and finds it advantageous to build up a distrust of both the Republican and Democratic national organizations. So praise of Governor Cox is mild and there is relatively little appreciation of his friendly words for the causes behind the Non-Partisan league; indeed, he probably loses with the conservative Republicans and Democrats who are offended at his flirtation with the Non-Partisan league, what he gains with the rank and file of the movement.

PALMER AND BURLESON

But in the states where the fight for control of the state government is almost a matter of life and death, in the opinion of the merchants, the drive is against everything Democratic, if the Non-Partisan league happens to have its candidates on that ticket, as in Colorado and Montana. In Idaho the Non-Partisan League has endorsed Senator Nugent, the Democratic candidate for reelection. Republican leaders say this means a split ticket, as the farmers will vote for Harding and Democrats, who are in, in every case, including Washington, where the Farmer-Labor ticket is independent of the two old parties, the defections to Debs and Christensen are considerable, at least enough to hurt Governor Cox, who needs every vote he can get in the West.

Again, it may be said that among the historic elements in the West the feeling prevails that Attorney General Palmer, by his raids, and Postmaster General Burleson, by his suppression of radical publications during the war, reflect a reactionary regime in Washington during the Democratic administration and that they ought to be punished, even

though "another set of reactionaries" is thereby elected.

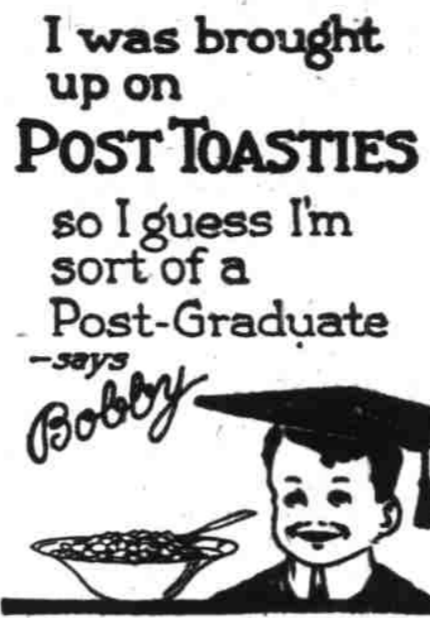
DEMOCRATS LACK MONEY
If it were not for the handicaps, Governor Cox's direct bid for the radical vote of the West would have fallen on more fertile soil. The electoral vote of the West might have been captured by such tactics and an affiliation with the Non-Partisan league, but the losses in the conservative estimate might have made national success impossible. Besides, Governor Cox is not a radical at heart, but a successful business man, wealthy and aggressive, something which the average member of the Non-Partisan league is not apt to associate with a permanent interest in the doctrines of the league.

Business, big and little, is waiting the outcome of the battle in many states. The fall in prices, the failure in crops, the tightening of credit by the federal reserve board, all have alienated both farmers and business men. They also

feel that the national government has had something to do with the economic problems and the Democrats haven't the money or newspapers to prove that much of the trouble is due to the war and reluctance of the United States to join a League of Nations and help stabilize trade and financial conditions throughout the world.

(Tomorrow's dispatch will deal with the relative value of prohibition, League of Nations, taxation, as issues and the personal equation of the candidates. This will be followed by a resumption of the canvass of states.)

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