

La Follette, Oil, and the Presidency

By BEN GITLOW

There is a lot of talk in Washington that President Harding will be renominated by the Republican Party in 1924. However, if a large section of the Republican party represented by such men as Borah and LaFollette have their way someone else will be the party's choice. That is why in Washington at the present time a number of Republican politicians are energetically grooming themselves for the presidential nomination.

Prominent among these is Senator LaFollette. The Wisconsin Senator is an imposing figure. He is the liberal among liberals in Congress. He is the political leader of the American Middle Class. The farmers and small business men from practically all sections of the country enthusiastically follow him. For years he has been heralded as the bitter opponent of the vested interests and big capital. He has championed many of labor's fights and is today indorsed by Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor. In the state of Wisconsin, Victor Berger and the whole Socialist Party of the State support him. A more popular political figure than Senator La Follette cannot be found. If the Republican Party wants to nominate a man who will fill the bill as the people's choice then he is the man.

The Republican Party representing politically the big capitalist interests of the country, among whom the most influential are the oil interests, must however first be sure that whatever man it nominates that man will be acceptable to the big capitalist interests, especially those of oil. The politicians who are striving to reach the White House besides building up their popularity among the so called common people who in droves can be expected to deposit their votes at the feet of some idol, are in devious ways trying to win the approval of Standard Oil and its cohorts. Blessed is the senator who can go forth in search of greater honors if his arduous uphill grind has been well lubricated by the holy and exceedingly precious oil, for verily the path to the White House is paved with petroleum.

La Follette has his eye on the White House. He would like to get the Republican nomination for president. He knows he is the people's choice. To be the people's choice is not enough. He must assure the Republican Party that he is also the Oil man's choice. LaFollette, the terror of the vested interests, must prove to them that they have nothing to fear from him if he is to get into the good graces of the oil interests and thus make possible the winning of the Republican nomination.

Therefore, LaFollette has his eye also on 26 Broadway, New York City, Headquarters of the Standard Oil Company. That is why LaFollette has conducted the investigation of the oil men in a manner to please them. The oil men have met LaFollette, the terrible Turk, trust regulator, monopoly buster, etc., and like him.

Oh! Yes! They expect LaFollette to denounce them in his report, but as William Hard expresses it, he was urbane and benign in his personal demeanor towards them. The oil men are perfectly willing to have LaFollette indulge in a few cuss words against them.

That costs them nothing and does no harm. This may perhaps still further increase the popularity of LaFollette. The oil men however are satisfied and pleased. LaFollette has proven to them that he is not to be feared but instead can be trusted as a friend.

LaFollette is paving his way to the White House with oil and the poor dupes, especially the poor farmers and workers, who support him will wonder how it was they were betrayed.