
A Look at the Elections.

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The sovereign American citizens have spoken again. In their voices there is the confused sound of booze, bonus, subsidy, tariff, revolt against governmental oppression, and general discontent. But the American sovereigns have no definite conception of what is wrong, nor any clear program for changing the conditions which arouse their protest.

The Harding landslide of 1920 was the result of two influences. The first of these, was the desire of the industrial capitalists to take full advantage of the strong position in which they found themselves at the end of the war. They wanted to produce goods and sell them at the high profits which still prevailed in 1920. They were against the League of Nations, against assuming any international obligations, against meddling in the affairs of Europe. They wanted a government which would support their policy of economic nationalism.

The second influence was the discontent of the American people with the situation in which they found themselves with the situation in which they found themselves at the end of the war. High hopes had been aroused by the great promises of better things through which the war spirit was kept alive — and none of these promises materialized. After the war it was the same as before the war — rather a little worse. The result was that the candidate of the Wilson administration was buried under the greatest mound of votes in the history of this country.

The struggle between industrial capital and finance capital (in the shape of the great international banking houses) was the central issue of the 1922 elections.

The Harding Administration has loyally served the economic interests to which it owed its power during the twenty years in which it has been in office. In its foreign policy it has fought more aggressively for

American industrial capital than for the international bankers. It has stood like a stone wall against cancellation of the debt of Europe to the United States, desired so much by the international bankers. It has refused to assume any obligations in Europe. On the other hand it has fought valiantly for the rights of Standard Oil in the oil fields of the world. It has passed the tariff bill desired by the industrial capitalists. It has on its program the ship subsidy bill in the interest of another group of industrial capitalists.

However, the policy of economic nationalism which looked so good in 1920 is no longer attractive in 1922. The industrial capitalists have found that things have not worked out as well as they expected. Cutting loose from Europe and pursuing the policy of grabbing everything in sight, has not freed them from the effect of economic forces generated during the war. In the place of a great market in which to sell goods at high prices, in place of the high profits of 1920 they have passed through two years of depression. Their strong position in relation to the broken-down industry of Europe has not availed them, because the market for their goods has collapsed. Thus the enthusiasm for the policies which carried Harding into office has waned even among the most earnest supporters of those policies — the industrial capitalists of the United States.

As for the sovereign American citizens, they have merely reversed the process of 1920. They were uncomfortable as a result of the policies of the Wilson Administration and they flocked to Harding in the hope that they might secure relief from the things which were hurting them. Having found no relief in Mr. Harding's "normalcy," they are in turn expressing their discontent as they expressed their discontent in 1920 — by voting for his opponents.

While these are the broad lines of the election results, there is something more promising in some of the undercurrents apparent in the election returns. The American people have been (and still are) politically the least conscious of all the peoples among who capitalist civilization has reached a high point of development. The economic groupings have not found clear political expression.

The election returns indicate the strengthening of a new group, definitely representing the economic interests of a section of the American people. This group of so-called "radical" is made up of men of both political parties. These men represent the interests of the middle class and well-to-do farmers as against the big capitalists. The development of this group is a promise of a new political alignment, an alignment which will bring into existence in the United States a conservative party of the capitalists; a Progressive Party representing the interests of the middle class and wealthy farmers; and a Labor Party, the mass party of the workers.

The tendency toward this development shown in the election returns by the election of 'radicals' from a number of western states — Brookhart in Iowa, Shipstedt in Minnesota, Frazer in North Dakota — is the most promising thing in American political life.

Mr. Gompers hailed the election results with the comment, "principles have won a wonderful victory." It is hard to discern any victory for labor in the election returns. Labor played the part which it has always played in American political life — the part of a mere appendage to one or the other of the old parties, with

no conscious political program of its own. Labor in this past election was still playing the part of the sovereign American citizen, whose privilege it is to swing from one of the old parties to the other.

There will be no victory of principle for labor until it does what the middle class and well-to-do farmers seem about to do — develop a political party which will represent their class interests.

One item of news in connection with the election returns deserves particular notice. It throws light on our system of government — on the provisions which are made by the Constitution for the protection of the ruling class in this country.

Under the Constitution, the newly elected representatives and senators go into office next March, but a section of congress is not due until December, 1923. In commenting on this situation, one of the capitalist papers remarked "The edge of the feeling of protest which brought these successes (of the 'radicals') may be dulled by that time."

Suppose in place of merely cutting down the Republican majority, these successes represented the accession to power of a party antagonistic to the interests of American capitalists. Under the Constitution, the capitalists would have a year in which to prepare for the struggle against the new party, a year in which all the power of the government would remain in their hands for use in destroying their opponents. That shows how well the forefathers safeguarded themselves against any revolutionary changes through successes in the elections; and what a hoax, on all essential points, bourgeois democracy is.

Transcribed by Mitch Abidor.

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