

La Follette's

WEEKLY MAGAZINE

VOL. I.

JANUARY 9, 1909

NO. 1

Claiming Our Privilege to Serve

THE first word of LA FOLLETTE'S WEEKLY MAGAZINE to its readers is one of grateful appreciation that there are so many thousands of them. Our second word is an acknowledgment of responsibility. Fortunately there is no room for doubt as to the duty devolving upon us. The conditions which have called this magazine into being determine its work.

LA FOLLETTE'S will be a magazine of progress, social, intellectual, institutional. Moreover, it will be Progressive in the more distinctly political sense.

It is founded in the belief that it can aid in making our government represent with more fidelity the will of the people.

In the course of every attempt to establish or develop free government a struggle between Special Privilege and Equal Rights is inevitable. An acute phase of this struggle has come upon us suddenly. Engrossed in material development we have neglected that of our institutions. A continent of vast richness absorbed us. Our growth was half blind. Open-eyed at last, we were startled to find our great industrial organizations in control of politics, government and natural resources. They manage conventions, make platforms, dictate legislation. They rule through the very men elected to represent the people.

Ten years of investigation and exposure have disclosed corruption in municipal, state and national government without parallel in modern history.

We have made great progress. The people now understand. For the representative who betrays, they feel only contempt. But they know that back of the bad representatives in municipal, state and national government stands special privilege, the real enemy of their institutions, fortified with the greatest wealth and power ever massed for the control of government.

The battle is just on. It is young yet. It will be the longest and hardest ever fought for Democracy. In other lands, the people have lost. Here we shall win. It is a glorious privilege to live in this time, and have a free hand in this fight for government by the people.

LA FOLLETTE'S and the strong men and women who will contribute their best thought and best word to make it, come into this contest with high courage and good cheer. We shall hit as hard as we can, giving and taking blows for the cause with joy in our hearts.

We shall have no strife with individuals *as individuals*. If they serve special interests, to the injury of the public, they are enemies of the public. Against them as enemies of the public we shall make war.

With the political fortunes of officials and candidates we shall have no concern except as they affect the public welfare. *Who* represents the people in public office is not important. *How* they are represented is vital.

This magazine recognizes as its chief task that of aiding in winning back for the people the complete power over government,—national, state and municipal,—which has been lost to them by the encroachments of party machines, corporate and unincorporated monopolies, and by the rapid growth of immense populations.

LA FOLLETTE'S will speak the truth. No eminence of position in party or government shall protect a servant of the people from deserved criticism; and its approval will be gladly given to all who commend themselves to it by brave and right action in any party or place.

Men and measures are both important. This magazine will discuss measures and political parties and policies impartially and fearlessly. It will not shrink from making estimates of men and will from time to time call the roll in order to disclose the exact position of those who are true and those who are false to public interest.

It is not enough to overthrow the political power of special interests. In the struggle for self-government throughout the Nation every progressive movement will be critically observed and supported on merit. Constructive legislation wherever enacted will be so discussed as to give an intelligent conception of the actual progress made in the supremely difficult task of embodying progressive ideas and ideals in laws and institutions. We hope to be useful in constructive work, as well as in destructive criti-

cism. We aim to be practical in our suggestions. We shall be just to every interest. Property rights are safe. The constitution guarantees security—a security which unanimous public opinion in America approves and supports.

We shall make mistakes. We assert no claim to infallibility. It is not expected that our readers will agree with all we have to say. But the cooperation necessary to permanent progress can be secured only through intelligent discussion. We hope that this magazine may help to stimulate discussion and thought to the end that out of it shall come better things into the life of this nation.

We have tried to suggest the principles which will control LA FOLLETTE'S. We are not satisfied with this first number. We hope to be better and better pleased with succeeding issues, but we shall try to be not quite satisfied, so that improvement may be constant. We expect to make this a magazine which the whole family will greet with pleasure and which shall give a complete knowledge of all the news worth remembering and some insight into most questions worthy of study.

We are quite aware of the fact that the course we shall follow throws us directly across the path of many powerful organizations, political, financial and industrial, which, with only here and there a halt, have crushed all opposition in the race for Big Business. We voluntarily assume the risk—one to which we are not unaccustomed. From those to whom this declaration is a declaration of war we ask no other construction of it. To the people whose interests it is our ambition to serve, we make the sole promise that so far as LA FOLLETTE'S can open it to you, "ye shall know the truth, and the truth [we devoutly hope] shall make you free."

Is Labor to be "Protected"?

IF there were anything needed to clinch the argument for a tariff commission of experts, it is the controversy between Andrew Carnegie, the bondholder, and Judge Gary, the chairman, of the steel corporation.

Gary gave the tariff committee carefully prepared figures of the cost of production of pig iron and steel in this country and in Europe, and Carnegie laughed his figures to scorn.

What we want is to take Gary at his word and open up his books to experts so that Congress and the people can decide between Gary and Carnegie.

Gary pictures the steel corporation as a big, fond brother, throwing its loving arms about its weak competitors, who would be ruined by re-

duction of the tariff. Neither Gary nor Carnegie calls attention to the conditions of labor in their powerful combination, for whose protection against the pauper labor of Europe the tariff is supported. First under Carnegie and afterwards under Gary, trade unionism was smashed, and then the hours were lengthened, Sunday work was extended, and speeding up to the limit of exertion was reduced to a system, until men are working twelve hours a day, seven days a week, and twenty-four hours at a stretch every other Sunday.

If this is the necessary fruit of protection, it might be better to admit free of duty the pig iron of England whose "pauper" labor works only eight hours a day. If the steel corporation worked its thousands of employees under the humane conditions of its British competitors, it might possibly need a tariff to protect it against the increased cost.

A tariff commission would enlighten us on this important side of the question, and might suggest some way by which "protection to American labor" would cease to be a mockery in the steel business, and the blessings of the tariff would be passed along from Carnegie and Gary to their dear workmen.

Amend the Wisconsin Rate Law

IN the early stages of the Wisconsin rate law, its strongest friends believed that it should provide against any increase in an existing rate in case of a protest until after hearing and decision by the Commission. No such safeguard was incorporated in the bill, but experience has shown its necessity.

The Interstate Commerce law is similarly defective, and the Federal Commission has urged its amendment. The difficulties encountered in securing action in the public interest on rate law amendments in the United States Senate are suggested elsewhere.

It is to be hoped that this defect in the Wisconsin law may be promptly remedied. The disastrous effects resulting from arbitrary and excessive advances in rates, without remedy until after they are in operation, are plainly manifest. The lumber interests of the Northwest were paralyzed last year by such imposition of rates which were practically prohibitory. Wisconsin should promptly lead in the right way, and other states and Congress should follow.

Existing rates are always those which the railroads have themselves established, and no sound reason can be given for sudden advances in them without notice or hearing.