

News Notes and Comments

By BELLE CASE LA FOLLETTE

Elizabeth Evans

ON THE DAY of their execution my daughter Mary wrote me, "I am sad and depressed over Sacco and Vanzetti. * * * Aunt B. must be heart broken." So with each member of our family after the dread deed was done our thoughts and our sympathy were with beloved "Aunt B." How would she bear up under the terrible ordeal. What could we say to comfort her? Nothing.

"Aunt B." is the children's affectionate name for Elizabeth Evans. They adopted it from the Brandeis children when years ago she brought the two families together in bonds of precious friendship. Louis D. Brandeis, now Justice of the United States Supreme Court, was a college chum of Glendower Evans. Since her widowhood Elizabeth Glendower Evans has been one of the Brandeis family, making her home with them a part of each year.

Thus it happened when Sacco and Vanzetti were convicted in 1921 Mrs. Sacco with her two young children was given the privilege of living in the Brandeis home so that she might be near the Dedham jail where her husband was at that time confined awaiting the appeal of his case. In July this summer Mrs. Brandeis wrote me, "Dear Bess is just living in the terrible Sacco-Vanzetti tragedy." The middle of August she wrote again, "Bess is standing up well under this terrific ordeal. She is calm, controlled, wonderfully thoughtful of everybody. She is in town today and will stay until the end."

In the beginning there was nothing personal in Mrs. Evans' championship of the cause of Sacco and Vanzetti. She was not in sympathy with their revolutionary ideas nor with their opposition to the war and evasion of the draft. It was her sense of justice, her loyalty to the traditions of our free institutions that first drew her into the fight. When she discovered that two then unknown aliens, a shoemaker and a fish peddler, were the victims of war prejudice and class hatred she began working with all her zeal, intelligence and financial resources to rescue the two men and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts from the fate that, alas, no power on earth was great enough to avert. For seven years Elizabeth Evans has fought with extraordinary ability and devotion to save these two men from execution for a crime she was convinced they had not committed, and also to save the State of Massachusetts from the guilt of so awful a miscarriage of justice.

While at first her only thought was to secure justice, as time went on she was deeply moved by the human side of the case. The anxiety and suffering of Sacco's young wife; Sacco's longing for work for his skillful hands, for sunshine, for his garden, his rebellion against confinement and idleness, his hunger strike, followed by loss of reason; Vanzetti's struggle to solve the problems of the poor; their letters to her; their dependence and faith all became a part of her daily life.

I have just been reading some of Mrs. Evans' reports of the developments and phases of the case written for our magazine. Probably no one person understood all the facts and legal intricacies of the case as she did. She sat through the thirty-six days of jury trial. When the verdict of murder in the first degree was rendered she says, "I could scarcely credit my senses. * * * It took the wild weeping of Sacco's young wife as they clung together over the 'cage' to convince me that it was real. * * * When all was over we went out dazed at an outcome that seemed beyond credence."

With remarkable insight she analyzes the influences that led to the verdict. "It was a year of anti-alien hysteria; victims were needed to offset a stolen payroll and an atrocious double murder; two non-English speaking Italians were produced—and the rest it seems was done." "Every officer of the law from the lowest to the highest was convinced of the guilt of the accused before the trial was begun." "The unwonted show of force in guarding court house and prisoners" created the impression of "desperate characters capable of any crime." Judge

Thayer's manifest prejudice, his refusal to admit important testimony which furnished the clue to the appearance of "conscious guilt" when arrested, "on which the judge laid stress in his charge which came not far short of a charge to convict."

These were the conditions that caused the jury to render their verdict in spite of the strong proof of alibi, in spite of the proof of hitherto good character, in spite of the fact that the accused were arrested three weeks after the crime in the neighborhood of its committal arranging a public meeting with weapons on their person which the prosecution claimed shot the fatal bullet. Can anyone believe that if they had participated in the famous murder they would not have made their escape and disposed of the evidence of their guilt? No trace of the stolen money has ever been found nor of the automobile and three bandits who took part in the holdup and murder.

Under the law of Massachusetts after that first trial there was no way of getting the facts of the case reviewed in court. Elizabeth Evans would not give up. She organized the defense. She contributed to the limit of her own income. She begged for money. She enlisted her friends. The interest she awakened spread over the world. Others fought bravely, persistently. But except for Elizabeth Evans' inspiration, initiative and resourcefulness Sacco and Vanzetti might have gone to their death long before they did. They would have been martyrs to those who knew them well but they might never have been heard of beyond their own group.

What has been gained, do you ask?

Oswald Garrison Villard has answered that question eloquently, convincingly in *The Nation* of August 31. (Godspeed *The Nation*; what a support and comfort!)

"As for Sacco and Vanzetti, for whom life's fitful fever has now run its course, why grieve for them? Their long agony is over and they were philosophers and students of history enough to know that their sacrifice was worth more to the rationalizing of human life than would have been their release and their return to comparative obscurity. John Brown wrote just before his execution that he was 'worth infinitely more to hang than for any other purpose, * * * The very act which blots out the lives of Sacco and Vanzetti insures their eternity in any social history of the United States. * * *"

Our beloved "Aunt B" well understands the phase of the triumph of the Sacco and Vanzetti case emphasized by the editor of *The Nation*. Personally there can be no greater compensation than the tribute to her in Sacco's letter—the first he ever attempted to write in English:

"I will never forget the generous heart that fights without rest for the liberty of humanity oppressed."

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Mothers' Pensions

IN THE closing days of the Wisconsin Legislature, Governor Zimmerman vetoed a bill relating to Mothers' Pensions which had passed both houses by a large majority. We are indebted to State Senator Howard Tesdale, an unquestioned authority on the subject, for a clear exposition of the facts in the case, which is all that is needed to expose the sophistry of the Governor's veto.

There is no question among thoughtful and experienced persons of the advantage of home care for dependent children over that of the institution. Although the Mothers' Pension system is cheaper, economy is not the primary consideration; it is the welfare of the child.

In 1913 the Mothers' Pension idea was said to have "swept the country like a prairie fire." Even more keenly appreciated today is the inestimable value of a normal life for dependent children. Deprived of relationship with a father, the mother's responsibility to her children is doubled; and how can a woman make a proper home while forced to be away at work to maintain it.

Attention was first focused on this problem in 1909 when President Roosevelt called the

"White House Conference" on the care of dependent children. The conclusion was that "Home life is the highest and finest product of civilization. It is the greatest molding force of mind and character. A child should not be deprived of it except for urgent and compelling reasons."

Illinois passed the first state-wide Mothers' Pension law in 1911, and today 42 states, Hawaii and Alaska have some sort of mothers' aid provision.

The fundamental idea in mothers' pensions is that the financial assistance is a means to an end—preservation of the integrity of family life.

Juvenile courts, welfare agencies, and, naturally, most women's organizations have promoted and supported the idea.

The Children's Bureau considers the most desirable form of mothers' pension the one that does not limit the amount for each family but makes it possible for the amount to be adjusted in proportion to the family resources. Most families have some source of income—relatives, the earnings of older children—and sometimes the fixed sum provided is more than is needed if the family resources are developed. The Children's Bureau reports that many administrative agencies work out family budgets after a careful study of the needs of each family, and says it has been found most economical when family resources are given proper consideration.

The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics and other studies show that the cost of living of workingmen's families is considerably greater than the amount available by law of most States for dependent children. According to the Children's Bureau, \$1,000 may be considered as the amount required for a mother with three children, on the basis of actual expenditures reported by more than 12,000 families in almost 100 cities in the United States in 1918. Yet in 20 of the 42 states having mothers' pensions, the maximum expenditure for a mother and three children amounts to \$480.

With increasing experience the problem is being better understood. The need of skilled workers is being recognized; in some localities home economists are employed to advise mothers in the problems of diet and health.

With the advancement that has been made and the opportunities ahead, it seems most unfortunate that the Governor of Wisconsin should turn a deaf ear to this important work and veto Senator Teasdale's bill which provided only that the State should meet its already-acquired obligations under the law.

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Workers Education

IT WAS with no keen anticipation of pleasure and thrill that I picked up "Script," the Class Book of the University of Wisconsin Summer School for Workers in Industry. A collection of "compositions" written by students in English is not likely to be particularly fascinating reading. I read one after another of the brief stories, sketches, anecdotes and poems with growing astonishment. They were all interesting, most of them exceptionally original, vivid and dramatic, the literary quality amazingly fine.

Who teaches this summer school group, English? I asked. To be entirely frank, I had a suspicion that perhaps the writers of these refreshing compositions have been unduly coached. Nothing of the kind, I was assured. They are the spontaneous expressions of the workers' experience, aspirations and imagination. Oh, is that it? These girls have lived, worked, thought. The discipline, the culture, the maturity of mind comes from contact with realities. That is the advantage these industrial workers have over the writers of ordinary school compositions.

One must read "Script" in its entirety to appreciate the variety and charm of its content. The page of selections which you will find in this number of the Magazine were chosen casually. They do not by any means convey the

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tration as he was fearless and untiring in legislative contests.

Loss of Opportunity

MILLIONS of the farmers knew this and voted for La Follette on election day. But the great mass of American farmers allowed themselves either to be misled by the poison propaganda circulated by the farmers' own enemies and exploiters or were coerced by the threats of the bankers that if Coolidge was not elected their loans would not be renewed. It is probable that no such economic pressure was ever applied by the financial interests during any campaign as was used through the country bankers during the closing weeks of the campaign of 1924. It is easy enough to understand the difficult position in which the farmers were placed when the bankers told them that their notes would not be renewed if Coolidge was not elected. It is no light matter for any man with a family to face such coercive threats. They should have known, however, by practical experience that this was a gigantic bluff, that bankers can exist only by lending money and receiving interest, and that the carrying out of this threat would have pulled down the whole financial and industrial structure around the heads of those who sought to apply it. Their forefathers, who won their freedom at the risk of their lives, would have withstood this pressure and suffered the consequences. But the present generation, softened by modern conditions and misled by false propaganda, surrendered to these threats and obediently voted for Coolidge and Dawes. Thus they lost their greatest opportunity.

It was not necessary for La Follette to be elected to secure justice for agriculture. If he had polled ten million votes and carried a dozen Western states where the tide was running strongly in his favor until the bankers applied their pressure, the reactionary interests of the East would have seen the handwriting on the wall and would have consented to the passage of any legislation that was necessary to pacify the insurgent farmers. With the triumphant election of Coolidge, however, the big business interests felt more than safe, and ever since have laughed at all the threats of the farmers' spokesmen.

Still Have a Chance

DURING the coming year the American farmers will have another opportunity to demonstrate that they are not going to be completely ruined without an effective protest. Congress will meet in December with the Senate deadlocked and with the Congressmen from the agricultural districts of the West holding a complete balance of power in the House of Representatives. This balance of power can be used to compel early consideration not only of the McNary-Haugen bill but of other measures which are necessary to restore the balance between agriculture and industry. This does not necessarily insure the final adoption of these measures because President Coolidge will still have his veto power and unquestionably will not hesitate to apply it. Nevertheless, by the aggressive use of this balance of power the condition of agriculture can be made the paramount issue in the campaign of 1928. With agriculture as the paramount issue, one or the other of the old parties will be forced to nominate a candidate acceptable to the farmers, or if that fails an independent candidate can be put into the field for whom the farmers can, if they will, roll up a protest vote that will compel action.

What is necessary now is an understanding between the farm leaders and their real friends and spokesmen in Congress upon a program which will be fought for to the bitter end not only during the coming session of Congress but throughout the campaign of 1928. By the farm leaders I do not mean those professional representatives of farm organizations who play "peanut politics" in Washington and pull the chestnuts out of the fire for the railroads, the packers and the power trust. I mean those representative farmers of every state to whom their friends and neighbors look for leadership and in whom they have implicit confidence. By the "real friends of the farmers in Congress" I do not mean those politicians who are ready at all times to proclaim their undying affection for the horny-handed son of toil but are always missing when the real fighting begins.

Need Fundamental Program

SUCH a conference should not limit itself to the passage of pious resolutions in favor of the McNary-Haugen bill, but should deal ag-

gressively with such fundamental problems of concern to agriculture as the development of the Western waterways, including the Great Lakes-to-the-Atlantic route, railroad valuation as a basis for rate-making, development of efficient co-operative marketing, reconstruction of the Federal Farm Loan System, and passage of the Norris amendment to the Constitution so that Senators and Representatives may take their seats in Congress before they forget what they were elected for.

A brief constructive program along these lines will command the support of the farmers and forward-looking people of all parties at least as far East as Pennsylvania. It may not be possible to put it through either this session of Congress or the next but it will at least constitute a challenge that will make the powers-that-be sit up and take notice.

When the financial interests of the East become convinced that the farmers are out to "raise more hell and less corn" it will not take them long to decide that the time has come to grant that measure of justice which has been so long denied. They are practical men who know enough to get under cover when the big wind begins to blow from the West.

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impression of talent and gift that comes from reading them all.

And now because I am much in love with the subject I cannot leave it without questioning the conclusions of one of the students in her theme, "Why Workers' Education?"

"In my opinion the purpose of workers' education is to give the workers an intellectual understanding of their daily problems, and to inspire them to stay in the working class, so that they may help to solve those problems intelligently and collectively."

I agree that to strive for understanding of daily problems looking to their intelligent solution is a high purpose in education. But why fear whither education leads? If some of the young women who have been attending the U. W. Summer School for Industrial Workers develop genius for writing, should they hesitate to leave their present occupation to enter the field of literature?

Again I cannot agree when she says:

"There are some who claim that an education without the cultural subjects such as art, music and literature is useless. At this stage of the workers' educational movement it is impossible to expect workers, whose habits have been molded by long hours of monotonous factory work, to get the significance of the beautiful things in life. They will first have to have more leisure, and more assurance as to the steadiness of their jobs."

"Script's" pages are filled with appreciation of the significance of beautiful things in life—nature, music, literature. All history offers examples of genius arising from the workers perhaps more often than the leisure class.

Everlasting grind, constant fear of the loss of job, dwarf body, mind and soul. We need leisure and the wherewithal for growth and enjoyment. Hence the struggle for shorter hours, better pay. Are not the workers' economic problems in the final analysis inseparable from appreciation of the significance of the beautiful things in life?

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Henry Ford's Apology

IT IS with sincere appreciation of the spirit and value of the judgment and conclusions of an old friend of Mr. La Follette's and mine that I give our readers the benefit of his criticism of my reflections on Henry Ford's Apology in our August Magazine.

"August 22, 1927.

"My dear Mrs. La Follette:

"I have just read, in the last LA FOLLETTE'S, your comments on the apology of Henry Ford. Rare were the times I found myself in disagreement with 'Battling Bob' or those expressed in your section of the magazine; but my viewpoint of the apology varies so widely from your own, and my interest in the case is so deep, that I am moved to give expression to a few aspects of it as seen from the angles of my approach. * * *

"My extended and extremely intimate experience with one of the so-called 'co-operative' associations which Aaron Sapiro promoted gives me something of a foundation to judge this phase of the libel suit against Ford, the only phase that has either justification or value in the position taken by the DEARBORN INDEPENDENT. * * * If you have any doubt as to the correctness of this estimate I do not ask you to take my judgment regarding it but to read the record left by Senator Norris while he was chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture; to read the summary of the case against Sapiro as presented by Senator James A. Reed at the opening of the trial; and especially to read the report of the Federal Trade Commission of last year on the Tri-State Tobacco Association. This report of the Commission was, I believe, the work of Huston Thompson. * * *

"It is my judgment that Mr. Ford's experience with the great money power at a critical period influenced him, at least to a considerable extent, in making his attack on the Jews. Recognizing that among leading international bankers are many Jews, he seems to have jumped to the conclusion that the credit monopoly is decidedly a Jewish product that can be controlled only by bringing an indictment against the race. Later Aaron Sapiro and his meteoric flight through the wide agricultural spaces of our country impressed him as concrete evidence of the correctness of his position, and his paper opened fire upon the individual. * * *

"Believing as I do that Mr. Ford really authorized both the first (who, I understand, refused) and the present editor of the paper to make the racial attack; that in arriving at his decision to end the suit through an apology he did not consult the editor or any of his office and field staff, or the lawyers who had made such vast researches into the Sapiro marketing associations, * * * I cannot but feel that his abject capitulation is a gross betrayal of a body of people larger than the Jewish race and to whom Mr. Ford owed infinitely greater allegiance than he owes to any other class outside of his immediate employ. Is it not also quite as stupid to believe than an apology can be made to a whole race as it is to believe it possible to indict a whole race?"

"On reading Mr. Ford's apology my first impression was that he neither wrote nor dictated it, and that impression has deepened. It does not impress me as a message from the heart, as such a message must be to have any value. I do not believe that the attacks his paper made on the Jews injured that race in the least—certainly far less than the reaction of certain Jewish leaders to the apology has injured their own race in the estimation of thinking people. I think as highly of the Jews who are among my friends as I do of friends who have other lineage; but, just as it seems to me reprehensible for a particular church to dogmatically defend an individual for no other reason than that he is a member, so I cannot commend the action of Mr. Ford in helping to make a similar course possible within a race.

"I feel not the slightest unkindness toward Ford. Repeatedly in published articles I have paid tribute to his attitude toward labor, industry, war, profits, the splendid educational outlook represented by the Henry Ford Trade School, his treating the wealth created by himself and his employes as a trust fund in which he has an interest but which is not his personal property, and other phases of the activities that bear his name; and I shall, in the future, be no less ready to commend these concrete evidences of vision and character. But his apology seems to me an error which, if admitted, will vitiate the findings and be an injury to Ford himself as well as to truth. He might have retracted as to his racial blunder and kept himself free to press his legitimate attack on individual exploiters. I am all the more concerned in the matter because of the discouragement the blow brings to progressive leaders, too many of whom decide from time to time that it does not pay to keep up the fight because of lack of support. Huston Thompson is but one of a hundred who might reasonably expect more extended support than he received, and I cannot resist the feeling that Mr. Ford's course has cast a shadow over the valuable work Mr. Thompson did as a Commissioner.

"Sincerely yours,

"O. J. SCHUSTER."