

### Manifesto of American Hierarchy

It is worthy of note that while we have had glowing notices in many papers of the Manifesto of the American Hierarchy the text of the pronouncement seems to have been considered by most journals of less importance than the comments. We have had great difficulty in extracting from the press the leading heads of the Manifesto, and until a fuller and more authoritative report is received we must be satisfied with giving our readers a rough summary. Having condemned the evils of woman and child labor, the Bishops say that it is certain that the present industrial system will last for years, and that private ownership of capital will not be supplanted in the near future. They advocate reform and reconstruction, but not by extreme measures which would only end in greater disorder:—

"The present industrial system in its main outlines will last for a long time. Private ownership of capital will not be supplanted in the near future. We are opposed to Socialism, which would mean bureaucracy, political tyranny, the helplessness of the individual as a factor in the ordering of his own life, and in general social inefficiency and decadence."

As to the main lines of reform they say:—

"The present system stands in grievous need of considerable modification and improvement. Its main defects are three: Enormous inefficiency and waste in the production and distribution of commodities; insufficient incomes for the great majority of wage-earners; and unnecessarily large incomes for a small minority of privileged capitalists. The evils in production and in the distribution of goods would be in great measure abolished by the reforms that have been outlined above."

The remedies suggested are: (1) Universal living wages; (2) Adequate industrial education; (3) Harmonious relations between Capital and Labor on the basis of adequate participation by the former in all the industrial aspects of business management; (4) Elimination of wastes of commodity distribution by co-operative mercantile institutions, and co-operative selling and marketing associations. The Bishops insist that the most urgent reform is to make the wage-earners owners, so that the means of production shall be owned by the majority instead of remaining as at the present time in the hands of the few:—

"The full possibilities of increased production will not be realised so long as the majority of the workers remain mere wage-earners. The majority must become owners, or at least, in part, of the means of production. They can be enabled to reach this stage through co-operative productive societies and co-partnership arrangements. The instruments of production should be owned by individuals, not the State. The second great evil, that of insufficient incomes for the majority of the workers, can be removed only by giving larger incomes. This means not only universal living wages, but the opportunity of obtaining something more than that amount for all who are willing to work hard and faithfully. For the third evil, excessive gains by a small minority of privileged capitalists, the main remedies are prevention of monopolistic control of commodities, adequate Government regulation of such public service monopolies as will remain under private operation, and heavy taxation of incomes, excess profits, and inheritances. Human beings cannot be entrusted with immense opportunities for oppression and extortion that go with the possession of monopolistic power. The poor should be relieved of injurious tax burdens, and the small class of specially privileged capitalists should be compelled to return a part of their unearned gains to society."

### Old and New

In the Manifesto of the American Hierarchy which has aroused so much admiration we have old truths put in a new way to suit the exigencies of the times. In a practical and actual manner the Bishops have taken up the evils which are so plain to the whole world to-day, and side by side with them have suggested remedies which were already to be found waiting for

practical application in the Encyclicals of Leo XIII. The chief cause of the social trouble is the growth of capitalism, already described by Leo as "the concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals, so that a small number of very rich men have been able to lay upon the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself." For four hundred years the growth of this system has gone on unchecked, throwing back into industrial slavery the masses who had just emerged from the tyranny of feudalism. Since the Reformation, Catholic ideals of the dignity of labor and of the worth of manhood have been destroyed in favor of a false individualism on which modern autocracy has been erected. The old guilds were broken up and their revenues appropriated for the private emolument of private persons. The powers of economic legislation passed into the hands of a few people who exploited them for their own advantage. Out of this grew eventually capitalism, and out of the intolerable oppression of the poor grew, by way of a natural reaction, the evils of anarchy and communism. As the first cause and origin of the evils which begot anarchy is capitalism, it is there the reform must begin now. When profiteering is removed we may hope to remove whatever is wrong and harmful in Socialism, but not until then. The war has done exactly nothing to remove the evils. As a matter of fact, it has strengthened the capitalists, who in too many cases made increased riches out of blood-money. The universal discontent in all lands is proof that the lot of the poor has not been improved, and that the politicians have taken no serious steps to improve it. Reform must begin with capitalism, and unfortunately Governments to-day stand for capitalism. When the excesses due to the primary cause of the evils are removed, we may hope to reduce the desperate remedy of communism to sanity and reasonableness. Both extremes are opposed to sound principles. Legitimate rights of property and true liberty for individuals must be safeguarded. All reform must aim at preventing by sound legislation the concentration of wealth in the hands of the few and securing its just distribution, while at the same time maintaining strict principles of distributive justice and charity. Human nature being what it is, it is clear to all Christians that unless the principles of God's eternal laws are at the root of reform there can be no stable improvement, and that the old adage, *Homo homini lupus*—Man is a wolf towards his brotherman—will always be verified. No superficial legislation will help. A drastic reform is needed to save the world, and the suggestions of the American Bishops have given us the broad lines of such a panacea as serious legislators ought to welcome. Three points of the Manifesto seem to be cardinal. First and most fundamental, the prevention of monopolies and the heavy taxation of capitalists aim at breaking down the power of plutocracy. Second, the principle that a constant living wage must be paid to workers aims at removing much of the existing misery. Third, the proposal that gradually the means of production should pass into the ownership of the majority is a helpful idea which ought to ensure the stability of relations between all classes of society. The burden of the reform is thrown on the State, which supposes that the State is a Government for the people and by the people. As long as the Governments remain machines in the interests of the capitalists we shall have to wait for any real progress. It will come in time. It may not come without trouble, but the people are awaking and finding out how they have been hoodwinked. The danger is that the avarice of the rich will blind them until it is too late for peaceful reform.

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