WILL A NEW POLITICAL PARTY COME INTO BEING AS A RESULT OF THE PRESENT CRISIS IN THIS COUNTRY?

RESULTS most important to the future of the nation will inevitably follow the agitation over the high prices of the necessaries of life, which has swept the whole country during the past two or three months. Nevertheless, it is quite likely that the outcome will be very different from what is expected by people who see in it nothing more than an effort to obtain regulation of abuses through legislation, or to use the boycott as a weapon to overcome the trusts. Were it nothing more than this, the prediction of those pessimists who assert that such agitations in this country are apt to be but short-lived flurries would very likely be justified by the event, but the present movement is deeper and broader and more significant than any political or labor upheaval. It reaches farther down into the heart,—and also deeper into the pockets,—of the American people, and the final result, although it may be long deferred, will inevitably be the gaining of some real knowledge of life and its conditions, which is all that is needed to solve the problem of happy, normal living and the proper relation of productive work to the general progress of the nation.

There is no doubt as to the responsibility of the artificial conditions with which we have surrounded ourselves, for the present feeling of strain, anxiety and discontent that has come to be the prevailing mental attitude of most of us. We are slowly coming to recognize this, and with the American people the realization that a state of things exists which ought to be remedied, is sure to bring with it an effort to find the remedy in one way or another. As the United States has developed political, sociological and economic conditions, it has brought into existence three groups of people. Up to the beginning of the present agitation, politicians and economists have recognized only two, and in fact only two have to any great extent been conscious of their existence. The first and most important has comprised the manufacturing, mechanical or laboring interests. The second is the agricultural class, including all people actively engaged in producing things from the soil. The history of politics, and nearly all the business activities in this country, shows that these groups have had almost the entire consideration of the thinkers and the talkers. Very definitely, however, we see today, behind this vital discussion over the increased cost of the necessities of life, the appearance of a third group of people,—a group made up of those whose incomes tend to remain fixed; whose remuneration is, in most cases, termed “salary.”

The salaried man or woman is the one who is in the position to know best the measure of any increase in the cost of living. Heretofore political parties have come and gone, and they have made ad-
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Justments in political and economic conditions, but not in the interest of the salary earners. This group, in fact, did not recognize itself at all as a group, and hence could not make any impression on politicians or even the theories of economists. When it seemed necessary to rearrange political conditions, the great industries have always had ample consideration, and so have the wage earners,—the laborers. The latter have always been told that if the price of materials went up, their wages would go up also. The agricultural interests of the country have also had their wishes considered. The result of these changes has inevitably been to raise the money cost of the necessaries of life. The distinguishing quality of salaries, as discriminated from wages, is that they tend to remain fixed and to respond but sluggishly, if at all, to any changes in political conditions. A professor gets so many thousand dollars, and an assistant professor so many hundred less; a bookkeeper so much per week; a shoe clerk so much; a cash girl so much, and so on. Merchants count these among their fixed charges in estimating the costs of their business, and this gives a good idea of the general attitude toward them.

This great group of salaried people, which includes one-third of the entire population, is really what we mean when we refer to the "ultimate consumer" out of whose pocket must be paid the greater part of the cost of maintaining our whole industrial organization, and who therefore feels more strongly than any other the pinch of the increased cost of living. He feels it all the more because the conventions of his class call for a standard of living higher than that of the laborer, and more complex than that of the farmer. The laborer can live as cheaply as he must; the farmer can reduce his personal expenses, and those of his family, to suit his income, but as a rule the salaried worker must live up to certain conventions of dress and surroundings, at peril of forfeiting his chance to earn a living. And if he should forfeit this chance, and should find the market for what he has to offer so crowded that it is difficult to get another chance, he has absolutely nowhere to turn and, unless he happens to have been so exceptionally fortunate as to have been able, out of his salary, to make provision for the future, he has no resources to fall back upon.

Perhaps it is because of the uncertainty and anxiety incident to earning a living that this class has evinced so little sense of solidarity. It is made up of individualists, who for the most part are preoccupied with their own affairs and anxieties and who make no effort to act in concert with others whose interests are identical with their own, and so make themselves felt as a power in the nation. This inaction has inevitably resulted in the conditions that exist today. In spite of the increased cost of living, wages are high; the farmer has had bumper crops, which he is selling at good prices; the manufacturer has found his protecting wall but little reduced by tariff revision, and the only person who has received no benefits from the Government, the political parties or Providence, is the salaried man. It is, of course, difficult to draw any definite line between salaried people and the so-called wage earners, but all those who have separated themselves from productive or creative labor and who seem to serve, in one way or another, just as中间men to pass on things from producer to consumer, would seem to come in this class, which is made up almost entirely of city dwellers, and is therefore helpless in the hands of those who control the supplies upon which life depends.

As this group of people includes the vast majority of the brain workers of the nation, it is amazing that they have taken so little thought of their own condition, and have been so indifferent concerning any effort to devise a means for its amelioration. Manufacturers and business men have always protected themselves; for they have always banded together to study the conditions which confronted them and to devise some means of coping with them.
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The farmers have done the same thing, and their organizations are nearly as complete and effective as those of the manufacturers. Labor unions, as we all know, have made themselves a factor to be reckoned with, and even unskilled laborers, who congregate at the corner saloon day in and day out, discuss political questions as bearing upon their own interests, and use to the utmost of their ability the power given them by the franchise.

But the salaried worker apparently has not even considered his defenseless position in the body politic. In many cases he does not even take the trouble to cast his vote, regarding politics as something entirely outside of his sphere of action, if not as something which it would contaminate him to dabble with. In fact, he thinks it rather smart and fastidious to play golf on Election Day, and is inclined to boast of the fact that he does not consider it worth while to cast his vote. The strange part of it is that he pays the penalty without seeing that it is a penalty, and grumbles at oppressive conditions without making any special effort to remedy them. It may be said, in explanation of the lack of any united action by this group of people, that they are by nature, and as a result of the conditions under which they live, extremely conservative. It does not breed much manhood, or any great inclination to take up new ventures, for a man to be dependent for his life and the life of his loved ones, upon a few dollars in an envelope passed to him each week by someone else. But while this conservatism and timidity offers an explanation of the passivity of the salary earner, it is hardly an excuse, and until this great group of citizens achieves a vital class consciousness commensurate with its numerical power as well as its brain power, it will inevitably suffer from abuses which, through sheer inertia, it allows to exist.

Whether or not the agitation over the increased cost of living is destined to produce permanent results in the way of legislative and industrial reform, there are unmistakable signs that it is already producing a most significant effect upon these people. They are beginning to think seriously upon the fact that every ounce of food they eat is taxed heavily by extravagant methods in transportation, and people living in the suburbs are realizing that in the price of a pound of meat or a bushel of potatoes must be figured the cost of sending it—perhaps from his own neighborhood—into the city, paying possibly a certain amount for storage and finally another price for transportation from the city back to the local grocery store. In short, he is beginning to realize the tremendous waste that goes on in all departments of American life, from the careless and extravagant methods of cooking in his own kitchen, and the slipshod fashion of ordering each day's supplies over the telephone or from the butcher's or grocer's man who calls at the door for orders, up to the suppressing or destroying of thousands of tons of needed supplies in order that the prices may be kept up to a point where they will bring inordinate profits to the men who are able to control them.

And when once the brain workers really begin to think seriously of these problems and to study means to solve them, we shall see what has been accomplished by the present upheaval. From thinking over these things individually with an earnest desire to help in bringing about better conditions, it is but a step to the formation of clubs and organizations for the study of domestic and political economy, and then will come such associations as the Consumers' League in England, which buys what is needed by its members directly from the producers and pays only a fair price, or the Vooruit of Belgium, which began with a little association of laborers who, under the pinch of dire necessity, banded together to make the bread which they could not afford to buy, and which now is a tremendous cooperative concern importing wheat from America in its own ships, buying all supplies in the most economical way, and speaking with no uncertain voice in the councils of those who direct the affairs of the nation.
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All great movements rise from small beginnings. Were we to suggest the formation, at the outset, of a great national party made up of this enormous and hitherto unrecognized element in the population, it would probably end with a flash in the pan. But if each group of salaried workers who dwell together as neighbors in some suburb of a great city were to organize for the purpose of finding some practical way to lower the cost of living, we venture to predict that the movement would grow like Jonah’s gourd, and that before we knew it we would have a country-wide application of the idea that lies at the foundation of the English Consumers’ League. And, once given this class consciousness of common interests and a realization of what can be done through organization, we will have among us a party so strong that, if it presented a solid front against any abuse or corruption, no power of fraud or chicanery could stand against it. It would be a party of the people, born with a vigorous and live issue in its hand, and the great political parties that now rule this country would find themselves in imminent peril before the straightforward action of this mighty mass of people, awakened through need to a realization that their interests differ from those of the producing and manufacturing classes, and standing ready to insist upon a sounder basis for our industrial and commercial expansion as well as our legislation.

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STOPPING in Macbeth’s second gallery during the exhibition of Paul Dougherty’s marine painting, there was a sense of clamor. The booming of the surf sounded about your ears and the war of the waves striking the rocky coast of Cornwall smote upon your senses. You were no longer there to consider technique, handling of light (although both were wonderful), to hunt for mannerisms (in order to “understand” Mr. Dougherty’s “vogue”) or to say pert things about the “use of blue” or “less sentiment.” Some critics may have been able to hold to their serious business purpose in this room of sea and spray and sunlight and mist; but you would say that a man who had made the great ocean alive under his brush, had saturated that ocean with sunlight or drowned it in shadows, who had seemingly caught up the sea, and by Nature’s own miracle scattered it in fine transparent mist up to the sky, transparent and hovering, or held it suspended in a cloud of spray, detached, quivering, a ghost of a wave, that such a man, you would hold, could paint,—paint until your brain responded with the same poignant joy that Nature herself wrings from you when she moves in her mysterious ways toward beauty. There were many marines exhibited; probably you may not recall a single title. I do not. But you will never forget the tenderness of the moonlight dripping through the silent night-water of one canvas or the glory of the sun sinking to the depths of the water in another. Nature has witheld no moods, not the most intimate, from this lover of the sea. In the paintings shown at this exhibit Mr. Dougherty has done that fine and splendid thing in art,—he has used his work, not to swell the store of pictures in the world, but to convey to you the rapture of his own impression of the spell of the moment. I doubt, if you follow his work, that you will miss one ecstasy which has flooded his heart out on the fierce rockbound coast of Cornwall; so keen is his vision, so sensitive his power of response that his paintings are records for you of what life held for him while he used brush and paint to show the wonder. Just how this has been done must be left to other more serious critics. For myself, I still have the thrill and the joy of that seabound, remote room, with the sound in my ears of the great waters washing the Cornish coast.

IN the recent exhibition of Wilhelm Funk’s portraits at Scott & Fowles Gallery, there was the usual immediate