

LAFOLLETTE'S RECORD SHOWS HE'S FOR BIG BIZ

Makes Pledge to Stand by That Record

By JAY LOVESTONE.
(Second Article.)

"LaFollette talks ten times as radical as he actually votes. How many truly radical measures has he ever introduced or even supported on the floor of the Senate? In fact, LaFollette's radicalism has been evident more in opposition than in support. . . . Unless you class the Railroad Valuation Act—one of the best legislative things that has ever happened to the railroads—or the Seaman's Act as radical, his name is identified nationally with scarcely a single law that truly goes to extreme.

"And most of the legislation he promoted in Wisconsin is no longer classed as radical."

LaFollette a Safety Valve.

This is the way LaFollette was sized up several months ago to Aaron Hardy Ulm, the correspondent of the reactionary Barron's Financial Weekly, by one who has been working intimately with the Wisconsin Senator in many of his advocacies.

The above estimate of LaFollette is, in the main, accepted not only by the rankest conservatives but also by some of "Battling Bob's" supporters. We are told by the well-known Richard Barry in Hearst's International of August, 1922, that the reactionary Senator Moses of New Hampshire, now high in the councils of Coolidge, said to him of LaFollette:

"I disagree with his later policies, but I am frank to say it would be a grave error for Wisconsin herself to defeat LaFollette. . . ."

Barry then goes on to say that a New York supporter, after hearing

(Continued on page 3)

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(Continued from page 1.)

what Moses said, added: "He is our safety valve. Where else is a commanding figure, who, while scrupulous about law and order, yet points the hopeful way to political revolution?"

And the noted Washington observer, William Hard, who has had a chance to see LaFollette in action for many years thus characterized the Wisconsin Senator as he was, departing for Europe last year:

"LaFollette, it is noted, has introduced no bills for vast governmental corporations for the buying and selling of farm products. . . . He has seen many such bills introduced by radical senators and by progressive senators and even (as in the case of Senator Gooding) by conservative senators. He himself has given his name to none of them."

Capitalists on Bob's Program.

For more than three decades LaFollette has been massing his batteries against the "combined power of the private monopoly system over the political and economic life of the American people." During all these years the Wisconsin senator has looked upon John Sherman, author of the Sherman Anti-Trust Act, as his god. Even in his July 4th letter accepting the presidential nomination by the Progressive Conference, LaFollette spoke of Sherman as "The clearest-visioned republican statesman of his time" and called the Sherman Law, enacted by a republican congress in 1890, "the most effective weapon that the ingenuity of man could devise against the power of monopoly."

At the last national convention of the republican party held in Cleveland on June 10th, Congressman Henry Allen Cooper, leader of the Wisconsin delegation, pointed out that those who have been branding the LaFollette program radical had better keep in mind the fact that of the thirty-one planks offered by his state since 1908 no less than twenty-six have been enacted into law. Eleven of the thirteen planks proposed by LaFollette in 1908 are now law. Fifteen of the eighteen proposals submitted by

LaFollette in 1912 have since been written into the federal statutes. Among these may be mentioned the enlargement of the powers of the Interstate Commerce Commission, the physical valuation of railroads, direct election of senators and regulation of telephones and telegraph.

And Senator LaFollette makes sure to tell the world in his "Autobiography" that his progressive movement "is essentially a safe and sane one for the public and for all legitimate business."

In accepting the presidential nomination at Cleveland LaFollette further declared: "I am a candidate upon the basis of my public record, as a member of the House of Representatives, as Governor of Wisconsin, and as a member of the United States Senate. I shall stand upon that record exactly as it is written, and shall give my support only to such progressive principles and policies as are in harmony with it."

On this basis only we will take apart the warp and woof of the fabric of LaFollette's record.

For Business Interests.

Ever since LaFollette has won his place in the political sun of this country, the very head and front of his activities summed themselves up in an insistence on the evils of uncontrolled big business stifling free competition, on the alarming results of the hobgoblin of monopoly.

But what LaFollette is really trying to do is to foster business, "honest, legitimate business" of course. All the Wisconsin Senator wants today or has ever before wanted, is to make business safe and stable by removing its "evils." Preparing for his 1912 campaign to win the republican presidential nomination "Battling Bob" declared in "LaFollette's Weekly" of October 28, 1911:

"Industrial corporations should by affirmative legislative enactment be given definite rules of conduct by which business shall be made safe and stable, while at the same time the interests of the public shall be fully safeguarded. We seek constructive legislation, not destructive litigation."

Clarifying his position toward the

capitalist interests, LaFollette said a few weeks later in his Weekly of December 2, 1911:

"The Wisconsin Plan is not to harass but to foster legitimate business. Legitimate business suffers quite as much as does the public from the depredations of the financial pirates who have so boldly domineered the seas of industry in this country for a dozen years and more. Wisconsin has outlawed the Captain Kidds of business; but she has laid the hands of protection and encouragement upon the honest investor."

In a special statement issued by Senator LaFollette on January 10, 1924, relative to his railroad bill to amend the interstate commerce laws, we find the following illuminating evidence of the Wisconsin Senator's strong belief in the continuation of the present system of the private ownership of capital whereby the working class is exploited:

"In accordance with the recommendation of the Interstate Commerce Commission in its report December 1, 1923, I have provided that after a rate base has been established it shall be kept up to date by adding the amount of additional net investments prudently made in the property

"The amendments which I offer are based upon the principle that the private owners of the railroads are entitled to be reimbursed for the actual cost of the services they performed and to be paid a fair return upon the money which they have prudently invested in property now devoted to public service. Just compensations for services, reimbursement of expenses and a fair interest on capital employed, should be paid those who devote work on property to public service, but no more."

Stands for Private Ownership.

Here we have it. LaFollette insists that society should pay tribute to the owners of the railroads for their mere ownership which he calls "devoting work on property to public service." This is precisely what the most ardent defender of the railway and other big business interests want. The only point of difference between LaFollette and the champions of the

big capitalist interests is as to the amount to be paid to the private owners of capital, to the private owners of the means of production and exchange socially used.

LaFollette and the most reactionary capitalists are agreed that capital should be privately owned. Both agree that this ownership entitles the owners to an income which, of course, is produced by those who work, by those who invest labor-power in production, by the working class. Their difference is only over what constitutes a "just, legitimate" amount that the capitalist owners should take from the products of the workers.

Proud of Big Profits for Wisconsin Capitalists.

On more than one occasion has Senator LaFollette taken great pride in the fact that under his program the owners of public utilities, the big business interests, have been reaping a harvest of handsome profits.

Paying tribute to his own achievements in railroad regulation while he was governor of Wisconsin, LaFollette declared in 1905:

"The rates charged on traffic in Wisconsin on the whole yield a gross income to the railroads greatly above the amounts required for all operating expenses, for the maintenance of property and for a fair interest on profit on the cost of the roads."

Then in his 1912 campaign bible, entitled "Progressive Wisconsin," we find that LaFollette, then, as now, aspiring for the presidency as a progressive, was boasting over the beneficial effects his program has had on the biggest employing class interests in Wisconsin. We quote:

"There has not been a railroad company, important or minor, in the state that has not had an increase of profits, both gross and net, and this increase has been greater than that which the mere natural growth of the state would account for. . . . The confidential reports of the railroads to the Wisconsin state authorities show, as utterly convincing testimony of the effect of Wisconsin regulation, that two of the biggest railroads in the country experienced a decrease of

earnings in the country at large during the year July 30, 1911, and that these same two roads produced substantial increase of the net earnings of those parts of their systems lying within Wisconsin.

"What has been the effect of this regulation on the business of the public utilities? Officials of these concerns made the same prophecies that the railway men did, asserting that business would be ruined. Many of them are now transacting unprecedented volumes of business, all of them are enjoying increased earnings. The securities of those companies have increased in substantial value and investments in them, particularly by small investors and by the smaller banks, has gone to the point where it betrays a healthy confidence."

In an interview especially given to the Saturday Evening Post of July 8, 1911, further light on what the LaFollette program means to business interests is shed by the following question and answer:

Q. "And what happened industrially after you had effected your legislative reforms in Wisconsin?"

A. (LaFollette)—"From 1905 to 1910 the total operating revenue received from all sources by the railroads in Wisconsin increased fifteen millions, while the reductions on freight rates on interstate business amounted to nearly one million dollars. During the same period the total deposits in the commercial and savings banks of Wisconsin increased fifty-one per cent. Yes, Wisconsin is prosperous—railroads are prosperous; the public utilities of the state, which are regulated, are prosperous."

This is the "Wisconsin Idea" applied. This is the program that Mr. LaFollette holds out to the workers and farmers today as the source of their hope, as the road to their freedom from the railroad capitalists, the shipping magnates, the capitalist owners of public utilities—the exploiting class. This is Wisconsin, the "Model Commonwealth," that LaFollette would have the workers and dispossessed farmers extend thruout the country.