Ford Hall Forum Folks newsletter, vol. 1, no. 6, 02/02/1913

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WHO ARE THE FOLKS?

The amazing thing to me about the Ford Hall meetings is the wide variety of people whom they deeply interest. They were established primarily for the benefit of people who do not go to church. It has proved almost impossible to keep the church people out altogether. Some of them will come in spite of all we can do and hundreds of others regret exceedingly that they cannot come.

In planning our programs, our first consideration is for the working class, so-called. But I find employer after employer who is delighted with the spirit and scope of our meetings. We keep constantly in mind the person of ordinary development in mind and character as we choose the subjects for discussion. But I find among our regular attendants and most enthusiastic friends, teachers and professors and professional people generally. Our meetings are, of course, intended for the layman but there ls hardly a night when we do not have a half-dozen ministers in the audience and often many more. We were quite doubtful at first whether we could interest the Jews in our meetings, At least a third of the audience is made up of Jews every Sunday night and they contribute a larger proportion than that to the interest and enthusiasm of the meetings.

I doubt if more than a small fraction of our audience belong to the Socialist Party but they are so enthusiastic and have so many sympathizers who are willing to go part way with them that it sometimes seems as though the great majority were Socialists.

Shocking as it may seem to some good people who have never attended one of our meetings, we have in our audience every night a very considerable group of anarchists who take themselves just as seriously as any churchman I ever met. They even claim Jesus as their model man.

It would seem as if quite a large proportion of the Ford Hall folks were agnostics or atheists but it may be that they are like the Socialists in being more in evidence than their orthodox neighbors. In the churches, the congregations are two-thirds women. At Ford Hall, the audience is never less than two-thirds men and frequently the proportion of men is still larger.

There are always negroes in our meetings and generally a Japanese or two while a fortnight ago we had, besides the speaker of the evening, Dr. Yamei Kim, three or four Chinese women and several Chinese men.

This conglomeration of humanity might make you think of the "happy family" at the circus but ours is really a happy family all the time, and we certainly enjoy going to the Ford Hall meetings quite as much as the small boy enjoys going to the circus.

NEXT SUNDAY'S SPEAKER.

On February 9, Edward A. Filene comes to us to discuss "The Growing Pains of Democracy." Mr. Filene is one of those rare souls who believes in doing rather than in talking (he is so averse to personal publicity that we cannot here show his photograph as is our custom), but no man who tries to do in these days can fail to be confronted by certain arresting facts. Some of these have so deeply impressed themselves upon Boston's most public-spirited merchant that he desires to call them to your attention. His will be a significant evening at Ford Hall.

PLANS FOR THE BIRTHDAY.

Things are coming along splendidly for our anniversary on February 23. Mrs. Lionel Marks (Josephine Preston Peabody) will be with us to read her poem, "The Singing Man," and that brilliant Baptist, Rev. O. P. Gilford, D. D., of Brookline, is to give the address of the evening, his topic being "The Social Value of Free Speech." Lots of other good things, too!
FATHER RYAN, of the Catholic Seminary of St. Paul, Minn., speaking on labor questions in Ford Hall, says: "Injustice of employers begets injustice on the part of their employees—violence breeds violence." Evidently, Father Ryan of Lawrence, is not a graduate of the Catholic University.

THE PRAYER.

(Preceding Mr. Fels' Address.)

Our hearts are made glad, our Father, through the fellowship we have with men of fortune and with men of privilege, who are spending and working to bring about changes in our every day life such as will make it impossible for some men to grow rich at the expense of others. We pray Thee to give us more men of large accomplishments and ample resources who are determined to find the way by which more people will have justice and fewer people will need charity. We pray Thee to remove the scales from the eyes of those who are blinded by their own comfort and to give great blessing and deep satisfaction to those who have no wealth and who have not been mindful of the heavenly vision which Thou hast vouchsafed to them. Amen.

"JUST TAXATION THE HOPE OF THE WORLD."

(Address of Joseph Fels at the Ford Hall Meetings, January 26, 1913.)

Mr. Chairman and Ladies and Gentlemen. I always put the ladies first because the women already rule us and are going to help us rule the world. (Applause and laughter.)

You have been good enough to invite me to come here and talk to you on "Just Taxation, the Hope of the World." I do not believe any five words could be much truer than these five, when we look around us and see the poverty, misery and brutality that belong to the common people of America, of Canada, of Great Britain, of Germany, of France, and of every other country in the world, where there is riches. I have been caught in the meshes of this tremendous struggle for equal freedom; for equal opportunity among men and for special privilege to none (applause) and so I go about the world, perhaps today in Boston, perhaps three weeks hence in Argentina, I go about the world, I say, preaching this great doctrine of equal freedom among men. And I do it impartial, as I have been many, many men before me, to stretch out my hand to those people who haven't even got a defense, as I have, against want—an unearned increment—and I have come to believe myself that I am a part and parcel of the common people of the world and not of the special privilege class. (Applause.) To me it is entirely in keeping with good sound reason, that there are anarchists, I. W.'s, syndicalists and other malcontents everywhere. They take one name in one country and another name in another country but they all point to the same thing; they all point to the fact that there is special privilege for the few and that want for the many arises out of that special privilege.

Now I do not know as to whether I have ever given you an account of the way I look at all or not; perhaps I have but it will bear repetition for the audiences change from week to week, month to month and year to year. So I will say that if you want to get rid of dogs in Boston, you tax dogs. You put a tax of $20 on some two-legged dogs. (Applause.) You place this tax upon dogs in Boston with the intention of wiping out the dogs—and dogs disappear. And so if we wanted to get rid of houses and furniture and income and the things that men and women use, we would lay a tax on them and they would disappear as houses do disappear or rather do not come to life—it amounts to the same thing.

I happened to be in the state of Missouri from the 18th of October until the day of election, November 5th. I went out there to fight what I called a foreclosed hope at the time; I was fighting for the Single Tax. (Laughter.) While trying to find out where the weak-kneed gentlemen were I dropped into Kansas City and into a large club there which had voted against the Board of Trade, consisting of 800 or 900 members, big, nice, smooth, oily looking chaps (laughter)—telephone people, and the railway people and the merchants and the big representatives of the mining interests and things of that kind. Six months before a taxation league had put it up before these chaps as to whether they were in favor or not of amending the constitution—a measure permitting Home Rule which would ultimately end in the Single Tax, and these gentlemen had appointed a committee promptly to consider this, intending to make a report to the gentlemen of the club by and by. The committee consisted of three large land owners, as I understood, and they shipped the land owners, making five of a kind. And these gentlemen had
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right to tamper with is that which has been created by all of us. Now, that being the case, we may well do without taxation on everything else except land values.

I got back, three weeks ago, from a town in Texas. The place is Houston. It is supposed to have at least a population of about 120,000 people who think highly of it. Other people, especially people living in Galveston, which is 60 miles away, think it has only about 90,000. (Laughter.) I think it has about 90,000. It is perhaps the most prosperous city in the United States. There is more real down-right business and industry in Houston than in any other city that I have ever been in in the United States. And all this has been largely caused by one man. This man is a little taller than I am (laugh), almost as bald (laugh), and only half as wide. (Laughter.) He began his job some 18 years ago—having become a follower of the economic philosophy of Henry George—and 12 years ago he bought what is now four blocks of ground within the city limits of Houston and put up a sign, "This property cost $390 per plot. It is for sale for $5000 per plot and it will be held until such time as it realizes $5000 per plot. That seemed very foolish, didn't it? He then proceeded to put up a log cabin—they built it with their own hands, back of this sign, and they used this log cabin every day until I came there, three weeks ago, for meetings of Single Tax men who believed in the economic philosophy of Henry George. I said during my recent visit, "Why don't you repair that sign? Why it can hardly be read, one corner of it has been blown away by the wind. It has passed its day of usefulness." He said, "I have had an offer for $4500 on my last plot. The fellow is coming up by and by and will pay me $5000," and he had already sold off four of the plots for $20,000. About two years ago this same man, Joseph Pusteriza, invited the citizens of Houston to appoint him commissioner of taxes. Think of that. Then he proceeded to remove all the taxation from every bit of personal property in Houston. He took off all taxation from all banks, stocks, etc., and he furthermore removed 75 per cent. of taxes from all buildings in Houston and then he went and found a scientific lot of fellows who knew how to assess land, who could find out just exactly what land was worth whether it would be in Houston or in Paris or in Palestine. And then he got

been considering this amendment for five and one-half months when I came along and I invited the Commercial Club to invite me to address them. (Laughter.) The secretary was good enough to get permission and so, two days after I got there, I stood before 350 of these nice, oily gentlemen and the very first thing I did after looking at them was to say: "There are between 300 and 400 men in this room and if there is any man amongst these 300 men that is not a liar, let him stand up." (Laughter.) No one stood.

I then hastened to say to them: "My friends, the reason I called every man in this room a liar is because, under the same circumstances, I would be a liar myself. I am the tax collector—the man who is after the thing that belongs to you and does not belong to him, comes to you and asks, 'How much money have you got invested in your business?' you say to him 'It is not any of your business'. (Laughter.) The next question is 'What kind of business have you done since the first of last January' and then 'What are your gross profits?' All of which is none of their business. Naturally you lie in your answers.' But if a simple question of finance about what belonged to them could make every one of these 550 men liars, what effect must such questions have on the men themselves and on their children who are to come after them?

I tell you the only thing that the government has any right at all to take for its support is everything that is created by all the people; and that everything is land value. You cannot make it any larger, you cannot make it any smaller, though I do know of instances where land owners tried to steal it. (Laughter.) As it cannot be made larger or smaller, I think you must such questions have on the men themselves and on their children who are to come after them?

Now to what extent can we go in this tremendously civilized world of ours? To what extent can we go to prevent the few from swallowing the many? Well, I claim that the presence of people in Boston is the only thing that gives any value at all to the land in Haymarket. I claim, tax coding the case, that the land values of Boston are sufficient to pay all public expenses of Boston, no matter how heavy they may become. I also claim that the only thing Government has any
FATHER RYAN, of the Catholic Seminary of St. Paul, Minn., speaking on labor questions in Ford Hall, says: "Injustice of employers begets injustice on the part of their employees—violence breeds violence." Evidently that elevate down as mater.) But creation tax ment store afford to in up and down out, and me feasible and floor, why s 30 i make it just other end o this end? ( You see w way would c come for exa street railway and a land v every steame of the Unite tioned on th country who fit it gets fro And so also the water, if rate compan lights, and privilege that sonal activ should be put you no people in Bon any people in cause you wo next door to much as the building. Did you ev happen whe When the lan to build a hon later—I don't in because he dor, but he li lar and when shed digging the foundation to have the st muson comp ished, the brie the concrete in and then com carpenters, the fitters and ph men and w would go to w one of these m had to orig and every one o and if it he them (in babies have re and for stockin for knick-knack
In the United States, there have been struggles in Oregon, in the state of California, all with a view to having Single Tax put into operation; and the little state of Rhode Island, which is about big enough to hold together, has already had the courage to establish colonies all through China having in mind to keep for the people all the land values that the people create.

In Germany over 100 cities have a measure of the Single Tax already in operation. In the last political campaign we had struggles in Oregon, in the state of Missouri and in the state of California, all with a view to having Single Tax put into operation; and the little state of Rhode Island, which is about big enough to hold together, has already had the courage to establish colonies all through China having in mind to keep for the people all the land values that the people create.

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FATHER RYAN, of the Catholic Seminary of St. Paul, Minn., speaking on labor questions in Ford Hall, says:

"Injustice of employers begets injustice on the part of their employees—violence breeds violence." Evidently
The State's Attorney is preaching vengeance sophistically intemperately.

The three men sit in the cage, two protesting mute; the third ignorant of the language, staring mystified; on trial for his life he sits for hours understanding no word of his accusers.

They have been deprived of freedom for months they have been examined, have testified, have been cross-examined, have heard witnesses; but who is on trial today?

Is it not the Commonwealth of Massachusetts?

The State's Attorney has finished. There remains only the charge of the judge.

"According to the precedent of Massachusetts law a prisoner may be heard in his own behalf before the judge charges the jury. Does one of these prisoners desire to speak?"

The counsel of the prisoners urge them to let the case rest, but they cannot be silent.

Joseph Ettor rises, rotund, genial, but at this moment not smiling.

The room is now filled; the doors are choked with spectators; the air is thick, but pulses beat as on mountain tops; even the weary jury is roused.

Ettor penetrates the sophistry of the State's Attorney with one keen thrust.

The prisoners are not being tried for their acts, but for their philosophy. No acts have been proved and the philosophy has been misrepresented.

He is not there to apologize. If he is responsible for the death of a woman, he should sit in the electric chair.

No perjury; no compromise; no condemnation of the prisoner's philosophy and pity for the prisoner.

Though it invites the severest penalty he must stand there and proclaim the right of all men to the full product of their labor. He came to Massachusetts as Kosciusko and Pulaski had come; he is ready to give his life for others if necessary.

He is not a foreigner, but he and his Italian-born comrades are the citizens and prophets of the commonwealth of the world. Their death will not delay the coming of this commonwealth.

On the day that they die half a million sympathizers will rise.

In a hushed voice the court officer, be in the blue, with brass buttons, says sotto voce, " Didn't Joe do well?"

Who but the prosecution could doubt that Massachusetts is on trial?

"Does one of the other prisoners wish to speak?" asks the judge.

Yes, Giovannitti will also be heard. It is well.

He wins at once attention and sympathy. He is still more intense, and speaks with some difficulty—his first speech in English.

Ettor commanded by logic, vigor and sincerity. Giovannitti appeals by his delicate profile, his gentle voice, his excitement.

What are the sacred traditions of Massachusetts that are being upheld in this trial?

Are they the traditions of witch-burning Salem, or those of the Boston tea-party that overthrew tyrants?

Are they the traditions of the respectable mob that dragged Garrison around by a noose, or those of the triumphant abolitionists?

He also is not there to plead for mercy, but to protest against punishment for holding the philosophy that unites the class-conscious workers of the world.

He, too, will have no compromise. All or nothing.

He can face death for his faith, as Socrates did, as Jesus did, as the mediaeval martyrs did; but he is no martyr.

He and Ettor are responsible for their proved words; but Caruso, his poor comrade Caruso, cannot speak English; he has a wife, he is ignorant, surely he cannot be held responsible.

(Even the experienced court officer and the sophisticated reporter blink hard).

On his mother's knee he had learned of the oppressors of Rome and Italy.

He had come to the Republic to find freedom, and found—Lawrence.

If this proved to be his last speech it would be one of prophecy, of that fraternity of the future for which he would still work if he were set free.

Ettor and Giovannitti have addressed the twelve men of Massachusetts; but all must have seen, they saw, a listening world, a world of superficial prejudices and misunderstandings, but a world of latent sympathy and humanity.

The next day the judge delivers his...
FATHER RYAN, of the Catholic Seminary of St. Paul, Minn., speaking on labor questions in Ford Hall, says: "Injustice of employers begets injustice on the part of their employees—violence breeds violence. Evidently ...

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charge, precise, exhaustive, discriminating, dispassionate.
The day after, the jury returns its verdict. The twelve men of Massachusetts have acquitted the commonwealth of Massachusetts.

"Hear ye, hear ye!"
"God bless the Commonwealth of Massachusetts!"

Copyright, 1913, by Charles Zueblin. Published by the Boston School of Social Science.

Copies of the above poem at five cents each may be had upon application to Miss Louise Green, 154 Newbury St., Boston.

FROM OUR MAIL BOX.

"Please send me three sets of Ford Hall Folks for which I enclosed $1.50. Usually, I shall buy the paper at the meetings but, on account of illness in the family, I have not been able to attend for a month now. The paper will help make this up to me."

"I received Ford Hall Folks. Please enclose my check herewith for $5, for which please send me five (5) copies of Ford Hall Folks for ten weeks, and at the expiration of that time, please send Ford Hall Folks just the same, with bill. This little journal should have the support of every thinking man. A little later I hope to be able to increase my subscription."

January 17, 1913.

My Dear Jack London:
I love to go to Ford Hall because I learn there—and there only—what the late William James meant when he wrote his great chapter on the Common Folks. I have lived in Boston for three years and the Ford Hall meetings are the only ones in Boston with power enough to draw me away from my own very comfortable home on Sunday nights. I love Ford Hall because I find preached in it the great Gospel of Neighborliness—the philosophy of love. And, if you must have the whole truth, I love to go there because its people are close to the earth, and contact with them makes me understand what is meant by the old mythological tale of the man whose strength was renewed every time he touched the ground.

But I start to tell you about William James and his tribute to the real heroes of the world—the men and women who are doing their daily work in a neighborly, helpful way. "On freight trains, on the decks of vessels, in cattle yards and mines," says James—"on lumber rafts, among the firemen and the policemen, the demand for courage is incessant every day of the year, somewhere, in human nature in extremis for you. And wherever a scythe, an ax, a pick, or a shovel is wld you have it sweating and aching and with its powers of patient endurance racked to the utmost under the length of hours of the strain.

What I have found at Ford Hall may be found in this next paragraph: "As I awoke to all this idealized heroic life around me," continues Prof. James, "the scales seemed to fall from my eyes; and a wave of sympathy greater than anything I had ever before felt with the common life of common men began to fill my soul. It began to seem as if virtue with bony hands and dirty skin were the only virtue genuine and vital enough to take account of. Every other virtue poses; none is absolutely unconscious and simple, and unexpectant of decoration or recognition, like this. These are our soldiers, thought I, these our sustainers, these the very parents of our virtue."

I have lived on a dollar a week, slept in a drygoods box, spent a winter in the north country in a room through the walls of which filtered the snow, worn paper in my shoes because I couldn't afford new soles, worn patch-covered clothes—well, I've managed to live on five dollars a week in a strange town, and, although I've fought my way to a better income, I cannot quite escape from the feeling that nowhere in Boston is there a spiritual home for me that is more mine than Ford Hall. To learn the art of seeing the world through the eyes of others is to know often the joy that must have been in the heart of Columbus when he discovered our land. Ford Hall gives us opportunities to experience this joy—and will continue to do so while that great neighbor, George W. Coleman, conducts the meetings."

THOMAS DREIBR.. Y

The first "woman movement" was Eve's gesture when she reached for the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge—a movement symbolic of the entire subsequent woman's movement of the world. For the will to pass beyond established bounds has constantly been the motive of her conscious as well as of her subconscious quest—Ellen Key.