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THE night before the day fixed for the American Elections SYDNEY GREENBIE, Special Assistant to the American Minister in New Zealand and representative of the Office of War Information, gave the last of his four talks on the American people to the W.E.A. His subject was the politicians of America.

By the courtesy of Mr. Greenbie, the notes of these talks were passed on to "The Listener" for publication. Here are the main points of the final address.

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AMERICA is passing through a crisis of another election. This is the 40th time we have gone through it. We have in this way elected 31 different presidents. What sort of political system is it that methodically upsets the machinery of government at such set periods without regard to the question of whether the particular government in office is good or bad? Who are the personalities that handle this Government? What effect does this constant change have on the attitude of the people to political power and their own rights and interests? Are there any subterfuges by which dishonest people can ride into power? Could Fascism develop under a system where local bosses might grasp for power and rule with an iron hand? Do petty dictatorships prevail? These and some other issues we shall try briefly to consider to-night.

No Hereditary Power

In order to understand this, one must have a picture of the history of America clearly in view. America is a land where hereditary power was banished a century and a half ago. In most other lands, it is accepted as a fact that power belongs to those who hold it. No one in olden times seemed to bother much about how this power was obtained. A man went out with a sword and a few followers and fought for his power. He became a lord and nobody thereafter questioned his right to power, prestige and property. But in America it was from the first decreed that the ruler ruled only with the consent of the governed.

However, it soon became a question whether that power would remain in the hands of the people. We delegate that power to our leaders, but many leaders are constantly snatching at power, gaining it, and fighting to hang on to it. But note: though power-snatchers frequently get it, their rights to it are seldom legalised, less often accepted, and always challenged. This snatching of power developed a system known as "Bossism." Its most typical example is Tammany. We have our bosses, our political pirates. We submit to them for a time, but eventually they are brought to book. Crookedness in politics is forever with us, but we do not accept it. We give it no titles, no obeisance, and we are continually fighting it. This makes for a fluidity and a confusion in our political life.

But for the most part we have had far greater and more numerous good men at the head of our politics than we

PIRATES AREN'T HONoured IN AMERICA

There Is Often Political Graft and "Bossism" But Power Is Never Hereditary

have had crooks. For behind our political leaders there is always the power of the individual voter. These great masses of people have formed themselves into parties for the protection and advancement of their interest. Every reading of American history shows that any party which has neglected the man who works with his hands has disintegrated. Without the vote of the common man, no party can hope to remain in power. When the Federalists at the beginning of the Republic forgot the worker, the worker joined up with the

or buy it outright, but you could not command it. And so they lost to the Democratic Party. For the same reason, the Republicans lost their control of twelve years at the time of the Depression. With the collapse of business and the Depression, the people reasserted themselves and the Democratic Party came into power. To-day, both are fighting for power on the promises of jobs and guarantees against unemployment.

A Glance at the Leaders

Let us then for a moment look at some of the men who have led America

personally any President of the United States. The President can be impeached, yet only one president has ever been brought up for impeachment, and impeachment proceedings fell by the way because there were no real grounds for them. No president of the United States has ridden his way into power. Several soldiers have gained eminence through war. But in each case the hero has returned from war and has been put through the regular process of being elected to power. He has never snatched power. We have had an outstanding series of profoundly great personalities—



ABE LINCOLN
.... "took them out of chaos"



THEODORE ROOSEVELT
.... he pursued vice



MAYOR FIORELLO H. LA GUARDIA
"A little fire fighter"

farmers and the Federalists' Party went to pieces. When the new party, later known as the Democratic Party of Jefferson and Jackson, made the fatal mistake of letting the slave-holders antagonise the free labour of the industrial north, it too went to pieces. The disgruntled in all ranks ganged up on the landed aristocracy and formed the Republican Party. These radicals soon found a leader in Abraham Lincoln, who took them out of the chaos resulting from the struggle between free labour and slave labour. This led to the liberation of the slave and the strengthening of the free.

Half a century later, the Republican Party, which had begun as the party of the labouring classes, forgot its origins. It was more than warned by such political bosses and president-makers as Mark Hanna. He was one of the most ruthless of political pirates, but he went on the theory that business and labour had to work together. He himself was a coal baron. But he used every device he could command, from open bribery and easy distribution of money, to get votes and power. Yet Hanna never lost sight of the fact that labour was numerically greater and had to be placated. So he upbraided the coal barons in words that burn the pages to this day. If they did not know where their power came from he was going to tell them. But the Republican Party did not heed Hanna. It forgot that you had to wheedle the vote

through the century and a half of political democracy, and see what kind of politicians they are. The leader of any political group in America must be a group diplomat. He has no guaranteed following, such as a feudal lord did, of people bound to him by hierarchy and a code of loyalties amounting to religion. He controls his people by the simple device of controlling their personal interests. Often this political leader is a Boss, a ruthless grafter. But he often comes up against a man of power and idealism, who sends him to gaol. The very man who put Senator Harry Truman in Congress, making it possible for Truman to become Vice-President with presidential possibilities, that man, Prendergast, went to gaol for the misuse of his power.

President Theodore Roosevelt gained his greatest prominence as Police Commissioner of New York, pursuing vice. President Franklin Roosevelt added the finishing touch to his home-stretch to the presidency by the ousting of Jimmy Walker, Mayor of New York City, for too close association with corruption. Thomas Dewey, the Republican candidate, gained his national prominence as District Attorney, fighting the gangsters and their petty pirates.

So it is significant that while some men, achieving the highest office in America, have been weak and negative, and sometimes the tools of special interests, no scandal has ever involved

Washington, Jefferson, Jackson, Lincoln, Wilson, Roosevelt; men of calibre, apart from their eminence as president; men of great idealism.

We have of course had our incompetent, our ambitious, our unreliable and dishonest leaders, but no notable personalities of whom our country need be ashamed.

Some Governors

Now let us take some examples of some of the governors of our States, who are lesser political figures in American life. Each governor is elected in his own State by popular vote. He is the administrator of all the affairs of his own State. The power of the States is still supreme in America, and the clash of States, rights and Federal rights is perennial. The problem of keeping a vast territory with differing economic interests inter-related is a difficult one. The problem of States preserving their buying power and their production, and yet selling freely among the 48 States, is intricate. Social customs, social conditions vary from State to State. Each State is jealous of its power and its rights. While these governors have no direct power in Federal affairs, their influence is tremendous, and more often than not the choice for presidency falls to the governor of some prominent State.

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