

ADDRESS TO WEWOKA WOMEN'S BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL
CLUB JANUARY 8th, 1936. "FAIRER DISTRIBUTION OF
WEALTH.

You have asked me to talk to you upon the subject of "Fairer Distribution of Wealth". I ask you, what do you mean by wealth? If you mean money, then I say, that is not wealth but in fact a poor substitute for wealth. If you use the word in the broader sense to include moneys and properties, then I say that the distribution of wealth is a matter of personal effort. Wealth, in reality, is that which feeds us, clothes us and shelters us. The possession of those commodities in abundance is wealth. However, the modern conception of wealth is money with which to buy cars and gasoline, to give parties and purchase excitement and enjoyment. The disposition to work is the greatest wealth, for with work all things worth while are accomplished; nothing of any importance was ever accomplished without a great amount of labor. The possession of wealth in this day and time is desired more for the purpose of affording us exemption from work, than otherwise. Did we, in fact, desire wealth sufficiently strong to strive for it; give up the social and friendly affairs of life; deny ourselves the things that we want, but in fact do not need; sacrifice our health and the opportunity to enjoy sleep; be ever and continually up and after the almighty dollar, we would acquire wealth. One would find but little opposition, but little competition, for there will be a great many others who will not make the necessary sacrifice, and you will find the field very much to yourselves. But what I fear is the greatest hinderance to a more equal distribution of the wealth of the world is the desire to have it without striving for it. The best distributor of wealth is thrift. How many of us, in fact practice thrift? We mortgage the future of our lives and efforts to obtain those things that we want but do not necessarily need. And those of the least wealth are the greatest offenders. Those who complain the most about the distribution of wealth are the ones who spend their earnings in riotous living; the man who takes the money that should be laid aside or expended upon necessities of the family and purchases intoxicants, for instance. Now, I ask you in all seriousness, is not the question in most every one's mind; how shall we obtain the things that we want and need without taking out

time from our pleasures to obtain them? We think that if we had plenty of money to spend an ample leisure to enjoy it we would be satisfied and happy, when, in fact, that state of affairs would fall upon our hands quickly. There is no question about it, the one thing that we can do that affords us the greatest satisfaction is to work at some gainful or constructive pursuit. To feel at the end of the day that we have commenced a task and completed it satisfactorily. The most successful man or woman in this life of ours are those who maintain a small home, are blessed with good health and sufficient energy and ambition to provide for it, and are free from the terrors and anxiety of either great wealth ^{or} ~~of~~ abject poverty. The acquisition of great wealth is a great toil; its possession a great terror for fear of its loss and its loss the greatest of tribulations and sorrow. For with the loss goes a loss of false pride, the cruelest and most damaging wound to the mind. The man or woman who is contented with their position in life, free from the torment of pretention, is the wealthiest citizen in the land.

But I judge that what you have in mind in asking one to discuss the question presented is more or less political. If that is what you have in mind then I say to you that all ^{any} ~~the~~ government is required to afford to its citizen is AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY to acquire wealth. It is not the function of government to provide us with wealth or a competence, or find us a job., In the curious nature of things that must, and ever shall be, dependent upon the resourcefulness of the individual.

Some have more adaptability along this line; some being more desirous, acquire a faculty for the acquisition of wealth, by labor and strife. Some being more abundantly provided by nature with an understanding, a knowledge of the minds and nature of their fellow men, a conscientious desire to do a good job, or a natural disposition toward work and thrift, will make the greatest success along their chosen line. While others who are careless, thriftless and have an overwhelming disposition toward indolence will be denied the things they so much desire and are unwilling to forcefully pursue.

Now, we are confronted in this land with a condition where a few possess great wealth and the many possess none. It is that condition, no doubt, that you have in mind.

That is a condition that should not exist., At least the top end of it, the few who possess the really great wealth of the country. The other end of it, the end where abject poverty prevails, is one that will continue so long as men and women refuse to labor and strive for a competence. Or so long as people will permit those to be born into the world that are mentally unfit to care for themselves. So long as that element of our society is permitted to increase in such formidable numbers, the problem of caring for them will remain. We care for our brute stock by providing them shelter and food, but we utilize them, they give something in return, Milk, food, service or enjoyment,. But the feeble minded that are conspicuously taking their place in this land, are a complete loss. We grade our herds to make them better fitted for the purposes for which they are intended, but we ungraciously and criminally neglect the grading and protection of our fellow man. In this way civilization is clearly disserved.

Undoubtedly, the unforgivable sin, so often spoken of by the ministers of our land, is that of bringing children into life without being absolutely certain that they will come free from mental diseases or the curses of blood and social disease. I can think of no greater crime against nature, society and civilization than that of bringing into this life a baby that is destined to suffer more than the ordinary normal being of this life is required to suffer. What a selfish, pitiful, ignorant crime. What untold agonies have resulted from the careless disregard of this one thing! What pitiful beings have been dumped upon the world to suffer; absolutely unfit to care for themselves, provide the most meager sustenance for themselves; and yet equipped to propagate its kind to an unlimited degree. As long as this condition, and these things, are permitted to exist that long will the problem of caring for them be upon the remainder of society; those members that make for progress and civilization. Yet we are permitting unfit people to bring into the world a multitude, who in ten thousand years could not bring a helpful thought or a constructive idea to civilization, to progress or to society. And we do this and then ask why wealth is not distributed to them.

So we must conclude that that end of society is hopeless unless some means ~~has~~ been found and employed to remedy the conditions spoken of, and that is a matter of elimination. Or, until such time as we have found means to imbue that class of people with a desire to work.

Now, let us turn to the other class, the class that possesses the great wealth of the land. We find them mostly, men who have made a life study of handling moneys. Who have made a life work of acquiring wealth. Are they to be censured for accomplishing that thing which the greater portion of our population would do, if they had the ability? I don't believe fairness will allow us to do so. So, we must confess, it is not the men who are at fault but ourselves who take but little interest in governmental affairs, that might correct the condition. Just recently we had submitted to us all the question of raising two and half million dollars in this state to care for the needy. The burden of the tax necessary to finance that large issue will, of necessity, be borne by such people as are assembled here. A class that can ill afford to divide their meager, hard earned funds with any one. Yet a paltry ten per cent of the voters of this state were the only ones sufficiently interested to go to the polls and assert their opinion. No matter what that opinion, whether for or against, it was a duty that every good citizen should have performed. So if we neglect to take a part in government, if we neglect to study the questions and the men of public life, we have no right to complain against whatever takes place. Through our indolence and lack of interest we allow conditions to be fastened upon us that is all together within our own hands and our own determination.

I lay it down as a fact that no one man through the honest efforts of business, aside from inventing some needed utility, striking it rich in oil on discovering a gold mine, can acquire a fortune of millions of dollars in a life time. So then, you ask, how comes it that there are so many millionaires? That is because government fails and refuses to destroy combines and monopolies. A Corporation within itself is a combine. The very purpose for which it is used, in the most cases, is to protect against individual responsibility. Now, these men who have acquired great fortunes have done so through the manipulation of corporations.

Foolish men and women throughout the land entrust their hard earned savings into the hands of the managers and managing officers of corporations. The utmost they can rightfully expect in return is an interest of seven per cent. But they look forward to an increase in the value of the stock. They really want something for nothing, they want the men who are managing the corporation to labor sufficiently well or contrive sufficiently shrewdly to increase the value of their stock. Now, this is asking too much of human nature, and especially of those whose object it is to make and acquire wealth for themselves. There is no desire on the part of the managers of the average corporation to make money for the stock holders. But ^{it} is the desire of those parties to take the millions entrusted to their care and supervision by the stock buyers of the land and handle it so that it will make money for the management. The stockholder is not at hand, there is no personal touch, he is but a stockholder, but the boys who are running the concern come in contact with each other and through friendship and policy manipulate the funds in their hands for their own personal gain.

Let me show you how it is done, just one instance, of course there are many, so many that I could not take time to inform you of them. Take a large oil corporation. Its president and managing officers form other smaller corporations that sell pipe, and oil field equipment and supplies. These smaller corporations are owned principally by the management of the big corporation. The price of pipe is expected to go down within the month. To the several divisions of the large corporation throughout the United States pipe is shipped in great quantities at the high price, charged to the big corporation or its subsidiaries. The stock holders of the large corporation pay for high priced pipe, in many instances unneeded, and the managing officers reap the benefits through the dividends of the lesser corporation which they own. The stock holders are gipped. In this manner and hundreds of other ways, the men at the head of the great corporations grow rich. If there is a loss coming on, those at the head of the concern are the first to know of it and they take to cover, but the stock holder out in the forks of the creek is un-advised and when the concern goes under, he is left holding the sack. And yet countless hundreds of thousands of our citizens throughout the land continue this foolish practice.

Corporations have been necessary in the past to further the interests of progress in our country. And at the present time there is need for corporations in public utilities. But the need for corporations in private business has long since passed, if, in fact it ever existed. The corporations with their pooled wealth of the thousands of stockholders throughout the land are in position to purchase commodities at much reduced figures over the individual merchant or business man. Therefore it is but a question of time until the individual business man is put out of business. He cannot compete with the accumulated wealth of the corporations. And yet what we need in this land right now are a multitude of small shop owners, small manufactories and small farmers, scattered throughout the land. The corporation has gone into all avenues of business and driven the individual out. Even the butter and the milk that we use to purchase from our farmer friends, we now purchase from a corporation, which because of its added facilities for transacting business can bring it to your home expeditiously and upon short notice. That is just one instance, there are many that could be named. To the same extent that the corporation embeds itself in the business of a community, just to that same extent is the individual restricted in his efforts to accumulate a competence. The chain store corporation can buy and sell at a less cost than your individual can buy. But, you say that is a saving to the buying public. Not if the buying public is placed in a position where it cannot legitimately and profitably carry on any business with which to buy. And furthermore the several communities of the nations should manage to keep their purchasing power at home, the money, and where it gets into the hands of the corporation it immediately is transferred to the larger centers, the great cities, principal New York City, where all the finance of the nation is gradually gathering. This prevents an adequate distribution of wealth. It restricts the avenues of effort of the boys and girls coming out of the schools of the land. They don't know which way to turn. Eventually they end up by working for some corporation where the chances of advancement are not one in a thousand, and for the rest of their lives they work as hired slaves.

Now there is another thing that contributes to the accumulation of great wealth in the hands of those who are already wealthy. And this is what I mean by combines. These men at the head of big business, usually corporations, are in a position, because of the conveniences they are able to provide for themselves, to get together on some given movement on almost ^{at} a moments notice. And they are shrewd enough to get together for their own advantage. They hire the highest priced lawyers and specialists throughout the land to scheme for them and prosper their business. One of them gets an idea. It is generally some piece of legislation that will redound to their business interests. He knows that he cannot get this matter through himself so he immediately gets in communication with the business heads of other big business and corporations. He explains his thought, a conference is had. It is deemed a wise piece of legislation for that particular line of business. It will help to eliminate some unwary competitor. So they pool some funds for the purpose of placing a lobby in the halls of congress or with the state legislature. They hire the most skillful men, the most pleasing, diplomatic personalities. He goes before the committees and explains his idea of the proposed legislation. He attracts their attention to it from the business man's viewpoint. Explains how it is expected to help that particular class of business. The argument is plausible and well thought out. The representative has had no opportunity or time to study the ultimate results concealed so far back in the actual details of the business represented by the lobbyist. It is interesting and seems but just and right to the unwary and generally ignorant representative. He proposes and passes the scheme and thereby gives a special privilege and an advantage to that particular aggregation of business men. I could tell you of a hundred special privileges that corporations of this state possess that you, and the average citizen, does not have. He uses this legislation to club others out of his way, and so the combine is made firmer.

But this is not the only means they have, there are many others, I will just call your attention to one more. Being able to get together and having the brains to do it, the bigger concerns get in touch with each other and fix prices. If there be some concern goes out in the way it goes out of the picture,

of the picture, until they have the entire matter in their own hands, then they raise the prices and the buying public must pay. To this same extent the equitable distribution of wealth to the average citizen, in proportion to his ability to make, is denied.

If there is to be a more just and equitable distribution of the wealth of the land among those who are worthy, who work and save, then the opportunity must be afforded them to get into profitable businesses for themselves. It can never come about by the forty million wage and salary earners of the United States slaving for combines and corporations whose chief concern is to arrange matters so that it will immediately get back the earnings of these workers into its own coffers. Take the corporations and the combines out of the business fabric of the country and the individual boy and girl, coming out of the schools of the land and looking over the business prospects afforded him, can find a multitude of small businesses awaiting his management, if he be industrious, thrifty and careful. I say to you, and it is too long a story to go into detail about, that until the big business of the country is deprived of its multitude of advantages and privileges, there is but little likelihood of a "Fairer Distribution of Wealth" even if all of our citizens all at once get thrifty, industrious and willing to work. But in the main, until there is a revival in this country of the desire to work, there cannot be any better distribution of wealth than you find at the present time.

So, My friends, in my judgment your first duty to yourselves and to your country is to take an interest in the selection of competent, capable and experienced men and women in public life. Not the friend of the happy and wellmet, should be your choice, but the one who will best serve you in public office. That you can only determine upon a full investigation, and it is your duty as a citizens to always make that investigation before you cast your vote. Otherwise the vote is not only futile but is downright harmful. You are the government, you are the people. The affairs of the government and the regulation of business is rightly in your hands. If you, and such as you throughout the land, do not take enough interest in your own affairs to go out and vote and vote intelligently, then you have no right to complain of the actions of that government.