Notes: New dealers

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The New Dealers:

One trouble with the New Dealers, certain it is, that they regard themselves as the first of their line. Now if we were to accept them at the valuation that Tugwell puts on them in his address of April 22nd as steadfast believers in democracy - and for the life of me I cannot see that they have done anything they claim. I do not see why what they have attempted to do is so far away from what we have been doing off and on for the last fifty years. Scrape down to the bone the New Deal activities, attempt to restore our balance first between agriculture and industry and for fifty years it has been clear that that balance was destroyed by a protective tariff on manufactured goods, sometimes a prohibitive tariff, was increasing. There has been a Revolution in the prohibitive tariff from the start. As wise a man as David Wells said after the thing was thoroughly entrenched, "This is a Revolution and it means another Revolution."

The most drastic thing the country has to do is to restore this balance and if there is any other way of doing it and preserving anything like the democratic principles I do not see it. This is one of the most undemocratic and things. The protective tariff is contrary in its workings
to the democratic theorem. It places one group at a disadvantage to another and always has.

The disgruntled farmers of the '80's always included in their list of grievances, "They knew they were being swindled." I dare to tell them that the manufacturers bringing in workers were producing consumers to buy wheat and corn. All of which was true, but not enough to balance the tax in the interest of the manufacturers he was getting. He had a privilege and there was nothing in the set-up that balanced it for agriculture. What the New Deal has tried to do for agriculture is to restore this balance, but it is a temporary conditions of restoration, as far as I can see, and until the imports of foreign trade are made equal for all we will have this bad balance and while you may tip the scales with one device or another for a time there is nothing permanent in it.

The attack on the privileged part of our productive world is no new thing. The railroad was the chief sinner, and those who suffered from it early began to call for some kind of a Federal control and we are not having any louder shrieks from any quarter now than in control railroads with an interference with their democratic principles than you had than. Follow the violent distress that greeted the first attempt at the Interstate Commerce Bill - protests from not only
the dyed in the wool but from intelligent sources. (See notes)

When the Interstate Commerce Bill came in many a mind it was the beginning of socialism, the Government interfering with private business. And Tugwell talks about the reaction which he thinks is now in full cry. It was more than reaction that followed the Interstate Commerce Bill, it was a refusal to conform and a refusal to conform of some of the greatest offenders which took the Supreme Court of the United States to put a stop to. That is, the Standard Oil Company persistently took rebates up to 1911.

When the Steel Trust was formed Judge Gary had to make a mints tooth investigation of his subsidiaries to make sure that the rebates which he wanted the railroads not to give and the companies not to push were not in force. Reaction is always lively. And in the case of the Interstate Commerce Bill it looked quite as socialistic, and was so declared, as anything the New Deal has yet done.

When you come to analyze what the Government is doing now for agriculture is it any more, indeed as much as what it did for the railroads? Take those blocks of land, those rights of way, that extraordinary wealth by which they bribed the railroads to go ahead into unknown territory daring expeditions which were none too sure would
work out, at least in the day of those who were daring to make the road. Now put these enormous sums into the limitations of crops as fifty years ago was putting into enormous resources for the encouragement of we may say for those the railroads are bribed to the farmer. It was only way to get him into the wild territories. (Quote Hill)

That is, the Government has had a weather eye on business and has put in its finger. It saw what was a Civil War, but industrial Revolution carried on by a portion of the United States Government, a termination to upset the situation of the whole South, to take away its advantage in slave labor, a doubtful advantage which probably in fifty years induced the whole South that slave labor was expensive labor. Something in the way that in later years the experiment has produced intelligent industry that cheap wages meant high cost. The Civil War was an industrial Revolution and a much more serious one than anything in the N.R.A. For after all what does the NRA pretend to do? It pretends to insist on a living wage. For years now that living wage has been neglected by necessity of successful industry at leaders. (Quote Arthur Williams) It is doing what Mr. Williams contended and though there were plenty of followers in the industrial world of his time. It destroys child labor. But consider child labor.
A few years ago it was a great old man who said, 'We have gotten down to something like 25,000 children in our factories according to Abbott, where once there were 1,000 thousand. The attempt to force co-operative bargaining. It never yet has been possible to make men work together by law. It is possible by experiment and persuasion, by peaceful negotiation to make them do it. When the NRA seemed to lean to one form of labor organization, apparently because that was the largest and so the easiest to regulate, force. It came to the thing which was utterly contrary to the sentiment and the nature of people. Co-operate - Yes. Negotiate - Yes. Labor Boards - by all means. But let them be according to the genius and the workers and the management. It is the spreading of the spirit of co-operation in which the New Deal can work to the best effect. And there Mr. Roosevelt has been of infinite value. He has comprehended that it was not by force but by arbitration that the thing must stand and that our great need in the labor world was to keep men recognizing the mutual interest in an industrial enterprise—how essential each factor is to the other and that it only can be by a mutual consent based on the most careful examination that you can really adjust wages, hours, and conditions.