

Steinmetz and State

Water-Power Development

BECAUSE a man is a great engineer or inventor it does not follow that he is a great statesman or artist. Rarely is it given a man to excel in more than one calling. Charles P. Steinmetz, for example, is a great engineer. The electrical industry respects and admires his engineering skill and proficiency; in fact, there are few that the electrical engineering fraternity holds so high in its esteem. But every informed engineer knows that Steinmetz is a socialist and that because of his socialistic utterances he was obliged to flee his native land and seek this haven of religious and political freedom. The world admires, even though it may not follow, a man of deep convictions, so long as he is sincere. Of Steinmetz's political sincerity there can be no doubt. The best and most convincing proof is the fact that he has clung to his political beliefs through bitter and relentless persecution. Of such stuff the martyrs and heroes of all ages have been made.

This year Steinmetz is a candidate for state engineer and surveyor on the ballot of the American Labor party, a composite of the Socialist and Farmer-Labor parties of New York. While he is eminently fitted for such a post, it is a foregone conclusion that he will run a bad third, so that his candidacy need not give the electrical industry any concern. What does cause the electric light and power industry grief, however, is to have a man of Steinmetz's standing and reputation publicly state that "as state engineer I shall be able to accomplish something in developing for all the people the abundant natural resources of our state, and more particularly the great water powers which now are running to waste, but which developed could operate all the industries and railroads and bring electric light and power to every home."

In the case of New York no state engineer, not even Steinmetz, could accomplish this without radical changes in the law. The electric light and power industry has

not been remiss in its obligation to develop the water powers of the state whenever and wherever it was economically possible to do so. The stumbling block has been the law and not the industry, and any intimation, even by innuendo, that the industry has been slack does it a wrong. Steinmetz's utterances at this time, however, have a more far-reaching effect than this. At the present time state ownership of water powers is being combated in California, and one can readily imagine with what glee the proponents of state ownership will welcome such an utterance from a man of the high standing in the electrical industry attained by Steinmetz. The general public will not differentiate between Steinmetz the engineer and Steinmetz the politician, and hence unwittingly Steinmetz will bring hurt to his industry. We cannot believe that he knowingly or willingly intends any such thing. He himself has contributed so much toward its upbuilding that he would be one of the last to wish to help to tear it down, and we feel sure that had this phase of the situation entered his consciousness his public statement would have been greatly modified.

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