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EDITORIAL

GOV. TAFT A FORERUNNER.

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FROM the day that Gov. Taft took the stand before the Senate Committee on the Philippines, a certain tone was distinguishable, that must have recalled to the memory of students of history sounds once heard in the distant past. His talk on the 15th instant in which he, fresh from exercising in the Philippines the powers of a Governor over a province, opposes the expanding of the Federal Constitution to the Islands, enables one accurately to place the sounds, that his first words had already vaguely recalled to memory. The sounds being once placed, not only does the whole Taftian scene become luminous, but it sheds much light ahead.

To fully understand the one and the other, the following passage of Mommsen, the historian of the Roman commonwealth, will be found aidful:

“By far the most important institution which this epoch [the epoch of foreign conquests] introduced into the Roman commonwealth, and that the same time involved the most decided and fatal deviation from the course hitherto pursued, was the new provincial magistracies. The earlier state-law of Rome knew nothing of tributary subjects: the conquered communities were either sold into slavery, or merged in the Roman commonwealth....But the Carthaginian possessions of Sicily, Sardinia and Spain, as well as the Kingdom of Hiers, had paid tribute and rent to their former masters; if Rome was desirous of retaining these possessions at all, it was in the judgment of the short-sighted the most judicious, and undoubtedly the most convenient, course to administer the new territories entirely in accordance with the rules heretofore observed. According{ly} the Romans simply retained the Carthagino-Hieronian provincial constitution. . . . It was the shirt of Nessus which they inherited from the enemy. . . . It was not practicable for any length of time to be at once republican and king. Playing the part of governors demoralized the Roman ruling class with fearful rapidity. Haughtiness and arrogance towards the provincials were so natural in the circumstances, as scarcely to form matter of reproach against the individual magistrate....And when the provincial magistrates returned home they brought home with them their

bad habits acquired in the provinces.”

If Gov. Taft is a forerunner, can there be any doubt whither we are drifting?

**Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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