

# CURRENT TOPICS

**J**OHAN D. ROCKEFELLER, president of the Standard Oil company, was on the witness stand recently in the city of New York. He appeared as a witness for the defense in the government's suit to dissolve the Standard Oil company. The proceedings were held before Judge Franklin Ferris referee. Rockefeller was examined for two days by John G. Milburn, attorney for the Standard Oil company. He said he began in the oil business in Cleveland in 1860 or 1862, he could not remember the exact date. With a capital of only \$4,000 he continued for ten years when he laid the foundation for the great trust of which he is now the head. He denied that he had any connection with the riots and crimes attributed to the Standard Oil trust by oil historians. He admitted that the railroad companies had given the Standard Oil trust rebates.

**O**N THE THIRD day of John D. Rockefeller's testimony the oil king was cross-examined by the government counsel, Frank B. Kellogg. Mr. Rockefeller stated that the Standard Oil paid dividends in 1907 amounting to \$40,000,000 and that it had earned as much more but that this was added to the company's surplus. Mr. Kellogg stated that the company's surplus now amounts to \$300,000,000. Mr. Kellogg added that during the last year the Standard had earned half a billion dollars. In his testimony Mr. Rockefeller said that the business was "hazardous." Mr. Kellogg asked if he regarded as "hazardous" a business that on an original investment of \$67,000,000 paid dividends amounting to \$591,000,000 and had left a surplus of \$300,000,000. Mr. Rockefeller replied that he did not consider the amount of money made to determine whether the business was hazardous or not. He admitted that he had heard that the Pennsylvania railroad paid the Standard a rebate of twenty cents on each barrel of oil and he said that he may have known of the fact at the time but that he had had nothing to do with the contract.

**O**NE STORY of the hearing is told by the Associated Press in this way: "Mr. Rockefeller asked one of the artists who had been sketching him to let him see the picture. 'I wish I had your talent,' said the richest man in the world, gazing earnestly at the portrait of himself. 'I wish I had yours,' quickly responded the artist. Mr. Rockefeller laughed heartily and extended his hand, which the artist shook, the Standard Oil man saying: 'We ought to pool issues.'"

**I**N HIS TESTIMONY John D. Rockefeller said that in all its dealings with its rivals the Standard Oil trust had treated them "kindly but fairly." From testimony given under oath in various proceedings, the New York World compiles a statement of the "kind" and "fair" way in which the great oil trust has treated its rivals. For instance: "The South Improvement company got a rebate from the railroads, not only on its own oil, but also on the oil of other shippers transported by the roads. In one locality the railroads charged all oil shippers \$1.50 a barrel and turned \$1.06 of that sum over to the South Improvement company. Under this deal the Standard actually paid 44 cents a barrel freight and its rivals \$1.50 a barrel. Though the Rockefeller group controlled at that time but a small part of the shipments, they collected as high as \$3,500,000 a year from their rivals, through the railroads, in the shape of freight rebates. As early as 1875 nearly all the interior petroleum refineries had been thus driven out or forced to sell. According to the late George Rice, of Marietta, O., the oil trust ruined him through a secret agreement with the railroads by which the trust paid 10 cents freight a barrel while he was paying 35. The railroads paid 25 cents out of the 35 to the trust. According to William C. Bishop, of San Francisco, the Standard got an 'emergency' rate in the far west of 90 cents a barrel on oil, as against \$1.25 paid by its rivals. Charles Wright, of Cobleskill, N. Y., peddled oil

that he bought from the Standard for eight cents a gallon. When he bought from the independents for seven cents a gallon, the Standard sent out its own peddler, who distributed the oil on Wright's route for 5½ cents a gallon. The Standard forced the Manhattan Oil company to sell out by buying up the visible supply and boosting the price so that the rival lost millions in carrying out its contracts."

**T**HE MUCH talked-of "labor conference dinner" at the White House has been held, the date set being November 17. The Associated Press report gave the following as the guest list: "From the supreme court there were Justices Holmes and Moody. The cabinet was represented by Secretary James R. Garfield of the interior department and formerly commissioner of corporations, and Secretary Oscar S. Straus of the department of commerce and labor. Others present were: Representative Herbert Parsons, Assistant Secretary of State Bacon, Major General Leonard Wood, Interstate Commerce Commissioner Clarke, Commissioner of Labor Neill, Forester Gifford Pinchot, Henry L. Stinson, United States attorney; T. V. Powderly, formerly at the head of the Knights of Labor; Warren S. Stone, grand chief of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers; John J. Hannahan, grand master of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen; W. S. Carter, grand secretary and treasurer of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen; P. H. Morrissey, grand master of the Railway Trainmen; T. J. Dolan, general secretary-treasurer of the International Brotherhood of Steam Shovel and Dredgemen; A. L. Faulkner, president of the National Window Glass Workers; David Mackay, president of the Building Trades' organization; John T. Towers, secretary-treasurer of the New York State Council of Carpenters; George W. Alger, attorney for labor unions and writer on labor subjects; Edward J. Gavegan, attorney for labor unions; Robert P. Bell, attorney for labor unions, New York; James Bronson Reynolds and Charles H. Scherrill, attorneys; Dr. Lyman Abbott of the Outlook, Lawrence S. Abbott of the Outlook and Ernest H. Abbott of the Outlook."

**O**F THE LABOR leaders present, four, Stone of the Engineers, Hannahan and Carter of the Firemen, and Morrissey of the Trainmen, represent organizations that are not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. It has been a long time since Mr. Powderly, who has held a government position for a decade, was considered in any sense a "labor leader." Dolan is the general secretary-treasurer of the union which admitted William H. Taft to membership because of his help to the comparatively few dredgemen engaged upon the Panama canal. Commissioner Clarke is a member of the Order of Railway Conductors, which organization is not affiliated with the American Federation of Labor. The attorneys present outnumbered the labor men present, and the attorneys and Outlook editors together formed a majority of the "conference." The fact that this "conference" should have been called at a date when the convention of the American Federation of Labor was in session 1,500 miles from Washington has given rise to considerable comment. Samuel Gompers, president of the Federation was not invited to the dinner, and this caused considerable discussion among the delegates to the Federation convention at Denver. John Mitchell of the Mine Workers, James M. Lynch of the printers, Frank Morrison, secretary of the Federation, and other well known and successful labor leaders were conspicuous by their absence from the White House function.

**N**EWSPAPER COMMENT on the "snub" administered to President Gompers by failure to invite him to the conference is interesting. The St. Louis Star says: "President Roosevelt's staging of 'Hamlet' without the prince is destined to fail. Failure to invite the president of the American Federation of Labor to his labor conference dinner was a great mis-

take, no matter how heated was the controversy with him during the campaign, and the associates of the excluded labor leader will probably decline to attend. If it was intended to be a genuine conference with labor leaders, Mr. Gompers should have been invited. If it was intended merely to square himself with union labor, a slight to the foremost labor leader of the country was at the least ill advised. The president had not sufficiently cooled off from the heat of the battle to use good judgment in such a matter, or, on the assumption that Loeb tried to tell him what was right, to accept advice. Impulse is not as unerring as calmly considered judgment, and in that respect there will be a change for the better at the White House next March."

**T**HE NEW YORK Evening Post, which under no stretch of the imagination could be consistently charged with favoring trades unionism, comments thus on the "snub" of Gompers: "That the president is nettled by the attitude of the Gompers-Bryan labor leaders appears clearly from Mr. Loeb's latest bulletin from the White House. The president, it seems, never intended to ask all the prominent labor leaders—only six or eight—and, above all, the public will please take notice that this is in no sense to be an official dinner, but only a private one. And Mr. Loeb concludes: 'It would, of course, be absurd to take any notice of any discussion as to who should or should not be invited to dinner by the president.' Then why dignify the discussion by all this pother? The truth is that the president is angry because John Mitchell, James Duncan, and Daniel J. Keefe have declined to dine at the White House by royal command. Mr. Roosevelt perceives that the whole dinner has come to be regarded as a blow at Mr. Gompers' control of the Federation of Labor. Labor insists, too, that if the president wishes to plot for labor's welfare, he should plot through the president and other leaders of the Federation. The fundamental principle of union labor is working through the union; it is the same principle of being regular that Mr. Roosevelt has illustrated in politics and preached all his life. Why should he complain if the chalice is now commended to his own lips?"

**T**HE MILWAUKEE Sentinel, republican, which strenuously denounced Gompers and his allies for what it called their effort to "deliver the labor vote," expresses the candid opinion that Gompers has turned the tables on the president. The Sentinel says: "We fully expected, and in fact predicted, that the omission of Sam Gompers' name from the invitations of those bidden to the White house 'labor dinner' would result in a shortage of guests. And so it proves. Messrs. Mitchell, Keefe, Duncan, invitees, have sent in their regrets. They are not overfond of Sam; but the effulgence of his labor leadership is undimmed, and therefore consistency compels them to dodge the dinner. If the intending Amphitryon at the White House had displayed as much tact as these men have, President Gompers would have been treated as a labor leader and not as a politician, and been bidden to that 'labor dinner.' If 'labor' is to be dined, why omit the president of the entire organization? Our prediction that the faithful Loeb would be on hand with his 'explanation' is also made good. The patient one explains that the dinner was to be private and not official. A feeble shift. The intent to snub Gompers was plain to all men. It is equally plain that Samuel has turned the tables, and is chuckling at the spectacle of the snubbers snubbed. Taft wouldn't have done it!"

**M**R. AND MRS. BRYAN left recently for a visit to Mexico. A San Antonio, Texas, dispatch follows: "My friends do not require me to prejudice the future, and I shall not take the advice of my opponents on this subject. I shall continue to write and speak in defense of things which I believe to be good for the American people. I hope it may never become neces-