

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

President Roosevelt sent his annual message to congress Monday, December 5. The message may be summarized as follows:

Summary

Reference to the trust question is similar to the former references made to that same question by Mr. Roosevelt.

Referring to capital and labor, the president recommends that the employers' liability law be amended and strengthened. He cautions the people's representatives to guard against undue extravagance. He laments the frequency of railroad accidents and recommends the law requiring the block-signal system. He promises to deal with the Colorado mining strike in a special message, reporting the investigation made by the bureau of labor. He suggests that the insurance business be brought within the purview of the department of commerce and labor. He says that the railroad rebate should be abolished, whether the railroad or shippers is to blame. He pleads that the city of Washington be cleaned up and made a model municipality, and recommends a number of improvements in the local laws for the District of Columbia. Among other things he says that it is very desirable that women should not work in factories, and suggests the advisability of establishing public playgrounds. He advises that some form of corporal punishment be provided for wife-beaters and offenders of that class. On the subject of race suicide, the president says: "If a race does not have plenty of children, or if the children do not grow up, or, if when they grow up, they are unhealthy in body and stunted or vicious in mind, then that race is decadent." The president speaks lightly of the irrigation law and says that it is found to be remarkably complete and effective. He urges that the forest service should be put under the department of agriculture. He pleads that the "noble and beautiful creatures which by their presence add such distinct character to the American wilderness be provided for under the game preserves law." For the advancement of our relations with the Indians he suggests that a field assistant to the commissioner of Indian affairs be provided for. He recommends that the limits of Yellowstone Park be extended southward. He commends the Jamestown tri-centennial exposition to the favorable consideration of congress. He suggests that salaries should be substituted for fees in the consular department. He declares that a national quarantine law is desirable. He insists that twice as much matter be printed in the public printing office as is necessary. He declares that every silver dollar should be redeemable in gold at the option of the holder and that congress should seriously consider the retirement of the greenback. He points out that no person of an unworthy type should be admitted to this country, that naturalization laws should be revised, that new and more stringent laws against bribery and corruption in federal elections should be enacted; that some provision should be made to guard against "the law's delay" in courts. He recommends that the governor of Hawaii be given power to remove all officials appointed under him. He declares that other nations need not fear the United States as long as other nations behave themselves, but adds that chronic wrong-doing might force the United States to exercise an international police power. He pleads for the enlargement of the navy. Referring to the Philippines he says that it is better to give them good schools, good roads, and good railroads, than

a legislature. Referring to the government's foreign policy he says that peace based on the power to make war is desirable.

Capital and Labor

Referring to "organized capital and organized labor," the president says that everyone appreciates the subject's importance. He says that the peculiar form of our government with its division of authority between the nation and several states, is undoubtedly responsible for much of the difficulty of meeting with adequate legislation the new problems presented by the total change in industrial conditions on this continent during the last half century. He says that in many cases it has proved to be practically impossible to get unanimity of wise action among the various states on these subjects and "from the very nature of the case, this is especially true of the laws affecting the employment of capital in huge masses." Continuing on this subject he says:

"With regard to labor the problem is no less important, but it is simpler. As long as the states retain the primary control of the police power the circumstances must be altogether extreme which require interference by the federal authorities, whether in the way of safeguarding the rights of labor or in the way of seeing that wrong is not done by unruly persons who shield themselves behind the name of labor. If there is resistance to the federal courts, interference with the mails, or interstate commerce, or molestation of federal property, or if the state authorities in some crisis which they are unable to face call for help, then the federal government may interfere; but though such interference may be caused by a condition of things arising out of trouble connected with some question of labor the interference itself simply takes the form of restoring order without regard to the questions which have caused the breach of order—for to keep order is a primary duty and in a time of disorder and violence all other questions sink into abeyance until order has been restored. In the District of Columbia and in the territories the federal law covers the entire field of government; but the labor question is only acute in populous centers of commerce, manufactures, or mining.

Nevertheless, both in the enactment and in the enforcement of the law the federal government when within its restricted sphere should set an example to the state governments, especially in a matter so vital as this affecting labor. I believe it is often necessary, and even where not necessary it is yet often wise, that there should be organization of labor in order better to secure the rights of the individual wage-worker. All encouragement should be given to any such organization, so long as it is conducted with a due and decent regard for the rights of others. There are in this country some labor unions which have habitually, and other labor unions which have often, been among the most effective agents in working for good citizenship and for uplifting the condition of those whose welfare should be closest to our hearts. But when any labor union seeks improper ends, or seeks to achieve proper ends by improper means, all good citizens and more especially all honorable public servants must oppose the wrongdoing as resolutely as they would oppose the wrongdoing of any great corporation. Of course any violence, brutality or corruption, should not for one moment be tolerated. Wageworkers have an entire right to organize and by all peaceful and honorable means to endeavor to

persuade their fellows to join them in organization. They have a legal right, which, according to the circumstances, may or may not be a moral right, to refuse to work in company with men who decline to join their organizations. They have under no circumstances the right to commit violence upon those, whether capitalists or wage-workers, who refuse to support their organizations, or who side with those with whom they are at odds; for mob rule is intolerable in any form."

Employers' Liability

The president adds: "The wage-workers are peculiarly entitled to the protection and the encouragement of the law. From the very nature of their occupation railroad men for instance, are liable to be maimed in doing the legitimate work of their occupation, unless the railroad companies are required by law to make ample provision for their safety. The administration has been zealous in enforcing the existing laws for this purpose. That law should be amended and strengthened. Wherever the national government has power there should be a stringent employers' liability law, which should apply to the government itself where the government is an employer of labor.

"In my message to the fifty-seventh congress, at its second session, I urged the passage of an employer's liability law for the District of Columbia. I now renew that recommendation and further recommend that the congress appoint a commission to make a comprehensive study of employer's liability with the view of extending the provisions of a great and constitutional law to all employments within the scope of federal power."

The president says that medals of honor should be provided to cover cases of conspicuous bravery and self-sacrifice in the saving of life in private employments on something the same order as the government recognizes heroism on the part of those persons who endanger their lives in endeavoring to save life on the sea.

Railroad Accidents

Referring to the increase in the number of railroad accidents, the president says: "The ever-increasing casualty list upon our railroads is a matter of grave public concern, and urgently calls for action by the congress. In the matter of speed and comfort of railway travel our railroads give at least as good service as those of any other nation, and there is no reason why this service should not also be as safe as human ingenuity can make it. Many of our leading roads have been foremost in the adoption of the most approved safeguards for the protection of travelers and employes, yet the list of clearly avoidable accidents continues unduly large. The passage of a law requiring the adoption of a block-signal system has been proposed to congress. I earnestly concur in that recommendation, and would also point out to the congress the urgent need of legislation in the interest of the public safety limiting the hours of labor for railroad employes in train service upon railroads engaged in interstate state commerce, and providing that only trained and experienced persons be employed in positions of responsibility connected with the operation of trains. Of course nothing can ever prevent accidents caused by human weakness or misconduct; and there should be drastic punishment for any railroad employe, whether officer or man, who by issuance of wrong orders or by disobedience of orders causes disaster. The law of 1901, requiring interstate railroads to make monthly reports of all accidents to passengers

and employes on duty, should also be amended so as to empower the government to make a personal investigation, through proper officers, of all accidents involving loss of life which seem to require investigation, with a requirement that the results of such investigation be made public.

"The safety-appliance law, as amended by the act of March 2, 1903, has proved beneficial to railway employes, and in order that its provisions may be properly carried out, the force of inspectors provided for by appropriation should be largely increased. This service is analogous to the steamboat inspection service, and deals with even more important interests. It has passed the experimental stage and demonstrated its utility, and should receive generous recognition by the congress."

Unions in the Federal Service

Referring to union labor in the federal service, the president says: "There is no objection to employes of the government forming or belonging to unions; but the government can neither discriminate for nor discriminate against non-union men who are in its employment, or who seek to be employed under it. Moreover, it is a very grave impropriety for government employes to band themselves together for the purpose of extorting improperly high salaries from the government. Especially is this true of those within the classified service. The letter carriers, both municipal and rural, are as a whole an excellent body of public servants. They should be amply paid. But their payment must be obtained by arguing their claims fairly and honorably before the congress, and not by banding together for the defeat of those congressmen who refuse to give promises which they can not in conscience give. The administration has already taken steps to prevent and punish abuses of this nature; but it will be wise for the congress to supplement this action by legislation.

"Much can be done by the government in labor matters merely by giving publicity to certain conditions. The bureau of labor has done excellent work of this kind in many different directions. I shall shortly lay before you in a special message the full report of the investigation of the bureau of labor into the Colorado mining strike in which certain evil forces, which are more or less at work everywhere under the conditions of modern industrialism, became startlingly prominent. It is greatly to be wished that the department of commerce and labor, through the labor bureau, should compile and arrange for the congress a list of the labor laws of the various states, and should be given the means to investigate and report to the congress upon the labor conditions in the manufacturing and mining regions throughout the country, both as to wages, as to hours of labor, as to the labor of women and children, and as to the effect in the various labor centers of immigration from abroad."

Child Labor

Referring to child labor, the president says: "In this investigation special attention should be paid to the conditions of child labor and child-labor legislation in the several states. Such an investigation must necessarily take into account many of the problems with which this question of child labor is connected. These problems can be actually met, in most cases, only by the state themselves; but the lack of proper legislation in one state in such a matter as child labor often renders it excessively difficult to establish protective restriction upon the work in another state having the same indus-

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