

its municipal plants rather than risk the corrupting and extortionate methods of franchise corporations.

“CHARACTERISTICALLY REPUBLICAN”

A republican newspaper published at Lincoln, Neb., refers to the platform adopted by the Ohio republican convention and the speech delivered by Secretary Taft as “characteristically republican.”

But what is “characteristically republican?”

Is it the party's silence on railroad rate legislation during three successive national campaigns or the adoption by Mr. Roosevelt of the plan offered in those campaigns by the democratic party?

Is it the sneers which republican editors and leaders gave to the suggestion in the Kansas City platform that trusts should be subjected to federal license or the adoption of that suggestion by the republican administration?

Is it the refusal to enforce the criminal clause of the Sherman anti-trust law as has been urged by democrats for eight years, or more, or the recent acts on the part of the republican adminis-

tration, showing a disposition to apply the democratic remedy?

Is it “let well enough alone” or “stand pat” on the tariff question or is it buying where one may buy the cheapest in order to avoid the impositions of the tariff barons?

Some things are doubtless “characteristically republican,” but one is a bit perplexed when he observes that upon every act where the republican administration finds popular applause it has departed from the policies which have been generally regarded as “characteristically republican” and has planted itself upon democratic ground.

BRANCH BANKING

The Nebraska Bankers' Association adopted a resolution opposing branch banking, and the Wall Street Journal unanimously says that “the Nebraska bankers have taken a stand that it is quite natural for country bankers to occupy.” The Journal describes the situation as it would exist under branch banking in this way:

If a system of branch banking were adopted in this country it would mean the elimination of the independent country banker. We would then have a few great banks in a few of the great cities, and these banks would have a

multitude of branches distributed through the country. These branches would have local managers, whose standing and power and ability to perform valuable service for the localities in which they were placed would be far less than the standing and power of the country bankers today.

Then the Journal adds: “It is a question whether the advantages of the concentration which would be produced by a system of branch banking would compensate for this loss of a class of independent bankers.”

It may be difficult for the bankers who are to be transformed from independent business men into trust employes to discover “the advantages of concentration.” Even in the light of the Journal's very mild description of the results to flow from the adoption of the branch banking plan it is plain that public interests would suffer under a system in which the banking power of the country was confined to a coterie of men.

The Bear Mouth bandit who attempted to hold up a train single-handed and was badly beaten up in the attempt, made a mistake in the method of his procedure. He should have effected a merger.

REAR ADMIRAL MELVILLE'S OPINION

Rear Admiral Melville, of the United States navy, recently delivered an address before a meeting of the American Academy of Political and Social Science at Philadelphia. His address is interesting for several reasons. In the first place he gives his views upon the cost of maintaining a navy. He declares that it is now costing the government about two thousand dollars annually for the support of each sailor. He declares that we have acquired three inheritances within the past eight years “each of which is likely to prove a Pandora's Box of evils and disappointments to this nation.” The first is the Philippine Islands, the second the Panama canal, and the third “our attempt to practically assume the receivership of republics whose treasuries are empty as a result of intolerable national business and administrative methods.”

He advocates first, the “preparation of plans for the immediate abandonment at the slightest possible financial loss, of every distant possession that is likely to require a fleet to defend it.”

Second, “The improvement of the channels leading to all ship-building plants, naval stations, and maritime distributing ports.”

Third, “The building of a fleet of large and fast colliers, so that in time of war practically all the coal required for naval operations distant from our own shores would be available for immediate shipment to the place where most needed.”

Fourth, “The rehabilitation of all navy yards to a condition where it would be possible, in case of necessity, to build any type of war ship at any one of these stations.”

Fifth, “The enactment into law of a statute providing that the elect of the graduates of the Technichal Institution who have successfully undertaken a course of instruction satisfactory to the

navy department, shall be appointed as acting midshipmen, and shall after two years of service at sea have the opportunity of competing with the regular graduates of the naval academy for commission in the naval service, thereby providing a reserve of naval officers for emergency purposes.”

Sixth, “The establishment of a naval reserve, and the appropriation of an amount sufficient to send all members of this naval reserve to sea in naval vessels for at least a month of every year.”

Seventh, “The restoration of our merchant marine.” (He says that in view of our existing relative naval strength it would subserve our military, commercial and national interests to stop building battleships and devote all or a portion of the money thus saved to placing upon the ocean a merchant marine that would help us to secure a greater trade of the world, and which, in case of war would prove a military auxiliary only one less removed in importance than the battleship itself.)

Eighth, “The recognition of the fact that the modern navy is an engineering one, and that the training of both officers and men should be more technical in character. The time spent by apprentices and landsmen on sailing vessels is practically wasted.”

Ninth, “The purchase from Denmark, France and England, of all their West India possessions or the trading if possible of the Philippines for the same, so that none of these islands could be used as a base of operation by a possible enemy against either the Isthmian canal or our southern coast.”

The admiral in conclusion again insists that we should give up distant foreign possessions “which we could not hold in time of war against any possible enemy.”

As his views are the views of a navy officer they naturally look toward the building up of a still larger navy. At the same time they are important because of the emphasis which he places upon the danger, merely from a military standpoint, of holding the Philippines. They are a source of weakness to our country rather than a source of strength. It is necessary for our own protection that we should enforce the Monroe doctrine, and thus prevent the acquisition of South American territory by European governments. It would also be wise for us to acquire, whenever convenient, the little islands in the West Indies now owned by European nations, and it would be easier to acquire these islands if we would agree to make the inhabitants citizens and not merely colonists.

While Admiral Melville is correct in pointing out the weakness entailed upon our country by the holding of distant possessions, he is mistaken in assuming that the building of an Isthmian canal or the enforcement of the Monroe doctrine compels us to have a large navy. The purchase of the islands in the West Indies from Denmark, England and France, would still further lessen the necessity for a large navy.

The admiral's suggestion in regard to the building of merchant ships rather than battleships is worthy of consideration. The Commoner some months ago presented a similar suggestion and insisted that merchant vessels, owned by the government, could be used for the extension of commerce in time of peace and for transports in time of war. Money spent on these vessels would be much more valuable to the country than the same amount of money spent in battleships. The Commoner has already pointed out the objections to selling or trading the Philippines to some other nation. They are entitled to independence.

MR. ROOSEVELT AS A FREE TRADER

Ultra-protectionists have never felt that they could at all times depend upon Mr. Roosevelt. They know what many people have forgotten, that at one time—and not so very many years ago, either—Mr. Roosevelt was one of the conspicuous members of the New York Free Trade league. When he resigned from membership in that body he wrote that he was “a republican first and a free trader afterward.” Some of the ultra-protectionists doubtless suspect that Mr. Roosevelt feels very much at home in the position taken through Secretary Taft's free trade order. They remember that when Mr. Roosevelt wrote the “Life of Thomas H. Benton” he had something to say concerning protection. On pages 66 and 67 of that book will be found the following: “The vote on the protective tariff law of 1828 furnished another illustration of the solidarity of the west. New England had abandoned her free trade position since 1824 and the north went strongly for the new tariff; the southern seacoast states, except Louisiana, opposed it bitterly; and the bill

was carried by the support of the western states, both the free and the slave. This tariff bill was the first of the immediate irritating causes which induced South Carolina to go into the nullification movement. Benton's attitude on the measure was that of a good many other men who, in their public capacity, are obliged to appear as protectionists, but who lack his frankness in stating their reasons. He utterly disbelieved in and was opposed to the principles of the bill, but as it had bid for and secured the interest of Missouri by a heavy duty on lead, he felt himself forced to support it; and he so announced his position. He simply went with his state precisely as did Webster. The latter in following Massachusetts' change of front and supporting the tariff of 1828, turned a full and complete somersault. Neither the one nor the other was to blame. Free traders are apt to look at the tariff from a sentimental standpoint, but it is in reality purely a business matter, and should be decided solely on the grounds of expediency. Political economists have pretty generally agreed that protection is vicious in

theory and harmful in practice; but if the majority of the people interested wish it, and it affects only themselves there is no earthly reason why they should not be allowed to try the experiment to their heart's content. The trouble is that it rarely does affect only themselves; and in 1828, the evil was peculiarly aggravating on account of the unequal way in which the proposed law would affect different sections. It purported to benefit the rest of the country, but it undoubtedly worked real injury to the planter states and there is small ground for wonder that the irritation over it in the region so affected should have been intense.”

Perhaps Mr. Roosevelt has never changed his views on this subject. His position may have been like “that of a good many other men who, in their public capacity, are obliged to appear as protectionists.” Perhaps Mr. Roosevelt has all along believed with the political economists who, according to Mr. Roosevelt himself, have “pretty generally agreed that protection is vicious in theory and harmful in practice.”