

CURRENT TOPICS

SENATOR LaFOLLETTE spoke in behalf of railroad rate legislation in the senate. The Wisconsin senator was not given close attention by the senate as a whole. Indeed, newspaper dispatches say that some of the senators deliberately vacated their seats. But the public generally paid considerable attention to the LaFollette speech. Senator LaFollette contended that congress has the authority to control transportation both as to the character of the service and the charges. He said the obligation rests upon the government to exercise that power. He said that the opponents to rate legislation pretending to be fearful of an unconstitutional measure really desired provisions that would provide delay and thus defeat justice. He declared that he would support the Bailey amendment, and then urged the importance of further amending the bill. He suggested that it should be provided that the interstate commerce commission ascertain the value of the railroad property of the United States in order to give the commission a basis upon which to fix reasonable compensation for the transportation of freight and passengers. He said that the railroads of the country were capitalized at more than thirteen billion dollars, while the actual investment does not greatly exceed five billion dollars. He said that more than seven billion dollars of water had been injected into railroad securities, that this was a fraud and a swindle upon the people, and that the government was under no obligation to recognize the fixed value. He said that the railroads collect more than \$4,000,000 annually in over-charges for the purpose of paying interest and dividends upon this fictitious capital.

IN CONCLUDING HIS SPEECH Mr. LaFollette gave to his colleagues this startling reminder: "It does not lie in the power of any or all of the magazines of the country or of the press—great as it is—to destroy, without justification, the confidence of the people in the American congress. Neither can any one man on earth, whatever his position or power, alter the settled convictions of the intelligent citizenship of this country when it is grounded on fact and experience. It rests solely with the United States senate to fix and maintain its own reputation for fidelity to public trust. It will be judged by the record. It cannot repose in security upon its exalted position and the glorious heritages of its traditions. It is worse than folly to feel, or to profess to feel, indifference with respect to public judgment. If public confidence is wanting in the congress it is not of hasty growth, it is not the product of 'jaundiced journalism.' It is the result of years of disappointment and defeat. It is the outgrowth of a quarter of a century of keen, discriminating study of public questions, public records and the lives of public men. Our responsibility is great, our duty is plain."

SAMUEL GOMPERS, president of the American Federation of Labor, has written a letter to President Roosevelt citing violations by the federal government of the eight-hour law. Several weeks ago Mr. Roosevelt requested Mr. Gompers to prepare such a statement. The Washington correspondent for the New York World says: "In his letter Mr. Gompers points out that in no single instance has a violation of the eight-hour law ever been rectified by the head of a government department. He refers the president to a mass of correspondence between himself and the president and the secretaries of war and the treasury regarding violation of the law in 1903 by contractors in constructing a dam in the Ohio river in working their men ten hours a day. He says he reported this violation to the president in a letter which was acknowledged by Secretary Loeb, but it was eight months before he received a reply. Among the violations of law cited by Mr. Gompers are: The Penn Bridge company, while doing government work in the Norfolk navy yard; contractors at the Charleston, S. C., navy yard; contractors erecting buildings at League Island navy yard; firemen at Mare Island navy yard; contractors employed on government work at Tybee Island, Ga.; contractors at work on navy dock

buildings at Algiers, La.; work on the Cello canal; the Aetna Construction company, working on dam No. 11, near Wellsville, O.; engineers' department in Louisville and Portland Canal company and firemen at the government hospital for the insane. President Gompers received a letter from the president's secretary today saying the list had been referred to Commissioner of Labor Neill with a request for a full report."

LUTHER BURBANK has written for the May Century an interesting article entitled "The Training of the Human Plant." In this article Mr. Burbank says: "I should not only have the child reared for the first ten years of its life in the open, in close touch with nature, a bare-foot boy with all that implies for physical stamina, but should have him reared in love. Love must be at the basis of all our work for the race; not gush, not mere sentimentality, but abiding love, that which outlasts death. A man who hates plants, or is neglectful of them, or who has other interests beyond them, could no more be a successful plant cultivator than he could turn back the tides of the ocean with his finger tips. The thing is utterly impossible. You can never bring up a child to its best estate without love. God made religion, and man made theology, just as God made the country and man made the town. I have the largest sympathy for religion, and the largest contempt I am capable of for a misleading theology. Give the child nature. Let their souls drink in all that is pure and sweet. Rear them, if possible, amid pleasant surroundings. If they come into the world with souls groping in darkness let them see and feel the light."

UNCLE SAM is not always prompt in the payment of his debts. Of course he is sure, but sometimes he is provokingly "slow." The Louisville (Ky.) Courier-Journal says: "Some foreign countries have become rather impatient at the delay of congress in providing the money to pay claims admitted to be due. So the other day the house committee on claims, at the urgent instance of the state department, authorized a bill to be reported to pay some of these old debts. Some of the claims grew out of a joint protectorate which we undertook over Samoa in 1889 with Great Britain and Germany. We did not get much honor or profit out of this adventure, but we were liable for a share of the expenses and for certain damages incurred. There is also a claim of \$6,000 for damages to a British vessel in Manila harbor in 1900. The Great Northwestern Telegraph company of Canada has a claim of more than \$900,000 for the fouling of its cable by a United States ship. Germany has a claim of \$20,000 under a decision rendered by the king of Sweden, and there are other claims of a similar character. It appears that these claims are admitted to be due, and payable, but congress has neglected to appropriate the money." To this the Houston (Texas) Post adds that there are a large number of claims involving millions of dollars due the states and American citizens which ought to be investigated. The Post says: "Many of these claims grow out of the Civil war, for private property seized by the government; some of them go back to the earliest days of the republic. But they are none the less just because congress has neglected them. It would be distinctly creditable to the government if congress should appoint a committee of senators and representatives to look into all pending claims, and settle those that are just without further delay."

UNDER A RECENT ORDER Secretary Shaw proposed to place at the disposal of national banks desiring to import gold equivalent deposits of government funds upon the deposit, not of government bonds but of bonds authorized as security for savings banks. Commenting upon this departure the New York World says: "This is practically a 'ft of interest on gold in transit to the importing banks. When Secretary Shaw came to the relief of Wall street three years ago by authorizing the use of similar collateral against special government deposits, both the legality and the expediency of his act were sharply challenged. Later an attempt was

made to secure from congress authority to disregard the law covering government deposits. It is a singular circumstance that when Secretary Shaw indulges in these departures from the fixed practice of his department the National City bank is the chief beneficiary. Of the \$12,000,000 in gold now engaged for import \$10,000,000 is destined to that one bank. His first order placed a limit of \$5,000,000 upon these special deposits. Friday he removed the limit and the National City bank ordered a second \$5,000,000 shipment."

NEWSPAPERS AND policyholders generally are now calling upon District Attorney Jerome to proceed against men charged with the appropriation of insurance funds for the use and benefit of the republican party. It will be remembered that Mr. Jerome held that the taking of these insurance funds for political purposes did not constitute larceny. Judge O'Sullivan held to the contrary, saying that they ought to come under the head of larceny, and that the question of "intent" is to be left to the jury. Jerome caused a bench warrant to be issued for George W. Perkins, and the attorneys for Perkins applied to Judge Greenbaum of the superior court for a writ of habeas corpus. Judge Greenbaum sustained Judge O'Sullivan's opinion, and now there is no longer excuse for Mr. Jerome to delay in the prosecution of Perkins, and not only Perkins, but the several other more or less distinguished men who had to do with the absorption by the republican national committee of money belonging to the policyholders.

SOME OF THE eastern newspapers are criticizing Mr. Roosevelt because he denounced Judge Humphrey's decision in the beef trust case as "a miscarriage of justice." The New York World appears to be particularly aggrieved. Referring to Mr. Roosevelt the World says: "He represents the executive department of the federal government, and it is even more improper for him to criticize a court decision than it would be for the courts to denounce his conduct in the discharge of his constitutional duties. Moreover, he has the power to nominate judges. When he criticises a decision does this not serve as a notice to other judges that if they refuse to construe the law in accordance with the president's wishes they need not hope for promotion? We do not assume that Mr. Roosevelt ever intended that such an inference should be drawn from his message. It merely shows that recklessness and carelessness with which he criticises everybody and everything that crosses his path."

SINCE THE GREAT earthquake of April 18, San Francisco has been visited by other earth tremors. These were severe enough to topple over the walls of ruins and to damage the frailer houses. One woman was killed by a falling wall. Many people have left San Francisco, the number being estimated at 60,000. They were offered free transportation by the railroad companies, and along the route wherever the train stopped at meal time they were fed by sympathetic countrymen. The relief work is being systematized and the local committee, aided by the Red Cross society and the war department, is organizing relief measures on a systematic basis. Already the work of rebuilding San Francisco is under way and the people of San Francisco are everywhere being congratulated for their fine courage under the most distressing conditions. Several million dollars in cash and food and clothing have been contributed from all sections of the country, while from every quarter of the globe have come generous offers of assistance.

SAN FRANCISCO will be rebuilt and will, so far as architecture is concerned, doubtless be greatly improved, but some of the losses sustained in the recent earthquake are irreparable. Referring to this point a writer in the New York World says: "There is one class of valuable possessions in which San Francisco was distinctly rich, of which the loss will be irreparable. Such cherished historical landmarks of old Spanish and Mexican days as the Mission