

JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER, THE IMMUNE

John D. Rockefeller gives to the Cleveland (Ohio) Plain Dealer an interview, in which Mr. Rockefeller makes a plea for immunity to the trust system to which he refers as "business interests." Mr. Rockefeller says that criticism of these large business concerns merely injures American commerce, and "checks our development instead of furthering it."

It was to be expected that Mr. Rockefeller, the head of the Standard Oil trust, would rush to the defense of the beef trust and to the defense of the trust system generally. So what he says on this line is not particularly interesting or instructive, because it is all based upon the false premise that a trust represents legitimate business.

The most interesting portion of Mr. Rockefeller's interview is that wherein he refers to the unsuccessful efforts of the Missouri authorities to serve a writ of subpoena upon the Standard Oil chief. Upon that point Mr. Rockefeller says:

"While I was in active business I used to always respond. But now, I am not in a position to give this inquiring people the information they want. They know that as well as I do. If they really want information it is other men they should summon, the men who have the information they want. They know that also. So I am reluctantly compelled to conclude that it is notoriety they want rather than information. I yield to no man in respect for law, but I am unable to see where the little notoriety an inquisitor might get from putting me on the stand would

serve the ends of justice. So I avoid the ordeal, with its exhaustion, when I can, and preserve my strength and quiet."

"While I was in active business I used to always respond!" Now that was very good of Mr. Rockefeller, chief of the Standard Oil trust, to "always respond" to a writ representing the majesty of the law, and commanding him to appear and testify.

But Mr. Rockefeller explains that in the one instance when he did not respond, he knew the authorities merely wanted to obtain a little notoriety.

"I yield to no man in respect for law" says Mr. Rockefeller, but it is different when he suspects that all the authorities want is notoriety. Then as he explains: "So I avoid the ordeal with its exhaustion, when I can, and preserve my strength and quiet." And he did avoid the ordeal; he dodged the officers of the law and remained in hiding until the inquiry for which his testimony was desired had been adjourned.

What farces these Rockefeller preachments! He says: "I yield to no man in respect for law," but his business concern has violated nearly every law upon the statute books, and in this very interview he shows that he has no respect whatever for law. He is to be the judge, when writs issued under the law, are to be obeyed. If, in his view, the officer who caused the writ to be issued, is a notoriety seeker, then Rockefeller "avoids the ordeal." If, in Rockefeller's opinion, it would not be well for "public interests" that the writ be obeyed, Rockefeller disobeys. And so he is the judge; he is exempt from legal process, just as his powerful monopoly has been exempt from prosecution.

The penitentiaries are filled with men who

would have been glad if, in the presence of a warrant for their arrest, they could have "avoided the ordeal with its exhaustion and preserved their strength and quiet."

Note the tone employed by this man, the richest private individual in the world, in discussing writs issued under authority of law! What a mighty contempt he shows for such writs—when they are directed at his influential person!

There are men, some of whom have been beneficiaries of Rockefeller's bounty, and others of whom have had their eyes blinded to the truth, who will applaud such statements.

How different it is when the shoe is on the other foot. How quick the Rockefellers are to condemn the workingmen for even the slightest infraction of an injunction issued in the interest of a powerful corporation. In these cases we hear from the Rockefellers much about the majesty of the law; in these cases we are told that the workingman who ignores or violates, even in the smallest degree, a writ of injunction, is an anarchist. But when it comes to John D. Rockefeller, he may ignore the orders of a magistrate; he may "avoid the ordeal;" he may "preserve his strength and quiet;" he may flee to the wilderness with officers in hot pursuit, and remain in hiding until the inquiry is closed; he may then return to his Sunday school preachments and to his newspaper interviews, to his subsidized professors and his sycophantic admirers, to tell them of his love for the law, his respect for authority, and his over-weening anxiety for the good of his fellow man!

Now, honest, is it a compliment to the intelligence of the men of today, that such twaddle as this is offered for serious consideration?

A GROSVENOR HARD TIMES CLAIM

G. Clay, a Mexico, Mo., reader, writes: "General Grosvenor, speaking at our chautauqua, said that low tariff and hard times are found co-existing throughout our history—always found together. Without any dates he supported this statement by the usual old stock-in-trade argument of the protectionist. Is he right?"

General Grosvenor is mistaken. The reason he did not give the dates, is that the dates would have confounded him. The truth is that every panic since the civil war originated under republican rule and developed under republican legislation.

The great panic which gave "Black Friday" to history occurred during the month of September, 1869, when the republican party was in power.

The great panic marked by the failure of Jay Cooke & Co., occurred in September, 1873. Then the republican party was in power and eleven months prior to the beginning of that panic that party had been re-elected to power.

The "panic of 1893" began long prior to that year and, indeed, long prior to the presidential election of 1892; and it is a fact, although republican orators and republican organs try to forget it, that the so-called panic of 1893 began and played its greatest havoc under that famous tariff law known as the McKinley bill.

It may be well for Commoner readers to keep readily at hand some of the facts and figures relating to this question.

The republican party was restored to power March 4, 1889.

The McKinley tariff bill became a law October 6, 1890, and remained in effect until August 27, 1894.

The Wilson tariff law, enacted by a democratic congress went into effect August 27, 1894.

If any one will take the trouble to examine the republican campaign text-book for 1904, pages 125, 126 and 127 he will find considerable space devoted to a statement of business disasters from July 18, 1893, until November 13, 1894. The republican managers expected their readers to remember that the Cleveland administration was inaugurated March 4, 1893, and that all these disasters occurred under democratic administration; but they expected their readers to forget that the republican tariff law was in force up to August 27, 1894, or covering more than twelve months of the sixteen months period of business

disasters as described by the republican book.

In their references to the panic of 1893 republican orators and organs habitually overlook the date when the McKinley law ceased and the Wilson law went into effect. But when in their tariff discussions they are required to face the fact that that panic played its greatest havoc during the life of the republican tariff law they answer that it was the anticipation of tariff legislation growing out of democratic victory in 1892 which brought on these business disasters. For this reason in their list of business disasters they place July 18, 1893 as marking the beginning of that great panic.

Let it be remembered that the McKinley tariff bill became a law October 6, 1890, and that the first indications of the so called panic of 1893-4 were given November 11, 1890. A LITTLE MORE THAN THIRTY DAYS AFTER THE MCKINLEY TARIFF BILL BECAME A LAW. From that date the panic raged.

The Harrison administration was inaugurated March 4, 1889, and when the first indications of this panic were given President Harrison had not exhausted the half of the term for which he was elected. It is admitted by everyone familiar with the facts that President Harrison's administration had plates prepared for the bonds and Mr. Harrison's secretary of the treasury made a visit to New York for the purpose of negotiating the bond deal. He was wired by Mr. Harrison to return to Washington. Mr. Harrison said that he had concluded not to have any bond issues under his administration and in order to avoid the stigma the Harrison administration warded off the bond issue and unloaded it on the incoming Cleveland administration.

It may not be out of place to point out that when the democratic administration surrendered the reins of government, March 4, 1889, there was in the federal treasury the largest surplus in history. When the republican party went out of power, March 4, 1893, there was a large deficit and the incoming administration was finally persuaded to make the bond issues which its republican predecessor had at one time thought to be necessary, but had skillfully avoided.

The claim that the business disasters of the period referred to were due to the popular fear of tariff legislation to be enacted by democrats is, as has been said, met by the fact that this panic began two years prior to the presidential election

The following will serve as reminders on this point:

November 11, 1890, the reports showed financial distress in New York. The New York clearing house association voted its certificates to banks in need of assistance.

The Boston clearing house association did the same thing November 17. Barker Bros. & Co., big bankers in Philadelphia, suspended at that time, with liabilities placed at \$5,000,000.

November 19, 1890, there was a run on the Citizens' Savings bank of New York, and a receiver was appointed for the North River bank.

November 22, 1890, the United Rolling Stock company of Chicago assigned, with liabilities at \$6,851,000.

November 28, 1890, B. K. Jamieson & Co., the Philadelphia bankers, failed, with liabilities at \$2,000,000.

December 6, 1890, the Oliver iron and steel mills of Pittsburg shut down, discharging 2,000 employes. On the same date the cotton firm of Myer & Co., of New Orleans failed, with liabilities at \$2,000,000.

January 3, 1891, the Scottdale rolling mills and pike works and the Charlotte furnace and coke works in Pennsylvania closed, throwing 10,000 employes out of work.

January 18, 1891, the American National bank at Kansas City suspended, with liabilities at \$2,250,000.

May 8, 1891, the Spring Garden National bank at Philadelphia closed its doors, and the Pennsylvania Safe Deposit and Trust company made an assignment.

The Homestead strike and other strikes during 1892, and prior to election day, are well remembered by the people.

The record discloses that the first indications of the so called panic of 1893 were given November 11, 1890, a little more than thirty days after the McKinley tariff bill became a law. From that date the panic raged, and while its effects were felt for several years it reached its worst stage in 1893, and during the early days of 1894, during all of which time the republican tariff law was in effect.

The late Thomas B. Reed after his retirement from the speakership delivered a speech in New York in which he said: "Another thing which led this whole country into the error of 1892 was the history of the last thirty years.

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