

WASHINGTON LETTER

Washington, February 4.—Nearly all the republican politicians of note who have been heard to express themselves here seem to have reached the conclusion that President Roosevelt meant what he said on the night of the last national election. He then declared in terms most emphatic that under no circumstances would he again be a candidate for the high office he holds. That statement was purposely given to the press on the night of the election, it will be recalled, and was sent all over the civilized world by the regular news associations, in addition to being handled by many of the special correspondents.

But it has taken some time to beat it into the heads of many of the leading republicans that the president really meant what he said. Thousands have insisted that if pressure is brought to bear upon our present executive he would yield, and even right now in some of the states organizations are known to be at work to start a general movement to nominate Mr. Roosevelt again next year and give him the opportunity of accepting or declining. In justice to the president let it be said strongly that no encouragement has come from him. In a noted gathering here not many weeks ago the president made a speech. It was, outside of a few very witty sayings, a mighty positive talk. The reference to his own nomination for another term was exceptionally positive and to the point. Since that speech was made Mr. Roosevelt has been questioned closely by some of the most prominent republican senators who have called upon him at the White house. He has repeated in strong language that even if the next republican national convention were to unanimously tender him a nomination he would be compelled to refuse it. His position appears at this writing to be so clear that it is a well known fact in legislative and political circles at the capital of the nation that the avowed and receptive candidates, or at least their friends in the republican party, have since been extremely active in trying to win the lead in the big race of next year.

So far in advance of the election it is difficult to obtain an accurate idea as to the man who has the best chance. Most people are inclined to the belief at this writing that Vice-President Fairbanks has a slight advantage, because it is well known that for the past two years he has had a strong organization backing him. A lot of literature in his interest has been sent out. It is said to be of decidedly an attractive sort. The vice-president is a man of considerable wealth, and no confidence is violated in saying that he is willing to put up the cash for legitimate campaign work. The vice-president belongs to a school of politics that believes in spending the cash if results are to follow. His knowledge of politics was gained in a state where they get to work in earnest if they want to accomplish a purpose.

One thing in favor of Mr. Fairbanks is that to all appearances he will have the "Hoosier" delegation solidly at his back if he is living when the convention meets next year. The western politicians generally say that no other Indiana man is in his way to compete for the republican nomination. And it is no secret even hidden by Mr. Fairbanks himself that he would be as remarked in certain sections of the country, "powerfully glad" to capture the prize.

Opinions differ as to whether or not the influence of the administration will be thrown in favor of any candidate. Some are certain that the administration will have a choice before the time rolls around for the election of delegations. People of that way of thinking talk as if Secretary Taft is apt to be the choice of President Roosevelt, and his strongest associates, supposed to be able to wield sufficient influence to name the delegations from a number of states. Others contend that as Mr. Roosevelt has enjoyed all the honors politically he will keep his hands off and permit the republicans to find their own candidate. But the former class will tell you that a mighty game is going on and all over the country to pick a candidate and frame a platform not in accordance with the policies of this administration, and for this reason it is the opinion of most well informed men that Mr. Roosevelt would like to have a candidate, should he be elected, who would carry out the reforms which he claims he has inaugurated. Of course, it should be borne in mind that the greater part of the reforms for which the present administration is given credit were copied from the democratic platforms promulgated in several campaigns. Some things have gone on within recent months that would make what is called "mighty interesting reading" if they could be published. But they can't be published, for the utterances were at dinners given at private residences. People of prominence, however, are given to loquacity, and they have been rehearsing the matters discussed. In a nut shell President Roosevelt does not want the policies of his administration repudiated by the next congress. It is

understood that if there is any danger of a combination being formed he is just as likely as not to call an extra session of the Sixtieth congress. Scarcely a senator or representative wants an extra session. This is particularly true of the republicans. On account of the lively part he has taken in the proceedings one might suppose that Senator LaFollette, of Wisconsin, would welcome an extra session; but he tells me that he hopes there will be none. His idea is that it would be better to postpone the struggle between the corporations and the people until the regular session.

There is a fear among republicans that President Roosevelt will give them a surprise by calling an extra session. This congress is doing, as the daily reports will show, very little outside of passing the regular appropriation bills. As is well known Mr. Roosevelt wishes a number of treaties called up for action. One relates to affairs in Santo Domingo. There are others by which some of the shining lights in the republican party would stave off tariff reform by bringing about reciprocity with favored nations. Legislators commonly called "standpatters" would like to have these treaties ratified. They think that if they were gotten out of the way the high protective tariff would not be disturbed. But from conversations with the men who have it in their power to block all attempts at tariff reform in the near future it is evident they fear that President Roosevelt may spring a surprise upon them and call an extra session in the spring of the Sixtieth congress unless they take action upon these so-called reciprocity treaties.

The ship subsidy proposition is still having a hard time in the house of representatives. Its fate is uncertain, very uncertain. The indications just now are that the scheme is beaten. On this question the republicans have been fighting among themselves. The democrats, with but few exceptions are against any form of subsidy. From what they say they are going to do their utmost to beat any bill the republicans may bring in. The short session of this congress is drawing to a close, and if the republicans expect to help the corporations urging ship subsidies they will have to be mighty quick about it.

ALFRED J. STOFER.

LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE

E. L. Trotter, Bonham, Texas—In the river and waterways improvement congress the other day Representative Ransdell of Louisiana tried to reflect upon the idea of government ownership of railways by calling attention to how the government had neglected the improvement of the rivers of the country, thereby demonstrating its incapacity to handle the transportation question. Now is it not a fact that the failure of congress to properly care for the navigable streams of the country is due to railroad influence?

Commoner Reader.—Congress is asked to build a "Dreadnaught." Why build more battleships to be placed in charge of broken down captains? Congress had much better pass the Personnel bill which calls for a saving of near a million a year and place our present ships in charge of officers in their prime. But Senator Hale will likely say no unless his ship subsidy bill first passes as he thinks Harriman & Co. should be taken care of.

Reuben Johnson, Northumberland, Pa.—The author of the article on page 5, Commoner of August 3, 1906, stating that the act of March 14, 1900, tied up the public debt for thirty years, could not have read the act carefully, as section 11 says "that the two percentum bonds to be issued under said act shall be numbered consecutively in the order of their issue, and when payment is made the last number shall be paid first;" hence should there be a bond issued in the year 1930 the government could not pay any of them until 1960.

In a recent issue of The Commoner this paragraph appeared: "Really it would seem that if the railroads impose a fine on shippers who delay in unloading cars, the shippers should be allowed to impose a fine on a road that delays cars that the shippers are anxious to unload."

Referring to the above paragraph, a Madison, North Carolina, reader of The Commoner says: "The above clipping from The Commoner is the first expression we have seen given to the real railroad issue—editorial or otherwise—and this being the vital question between shippers and railroads it has puzzled us that newspapers and legislators have all ignored it for thus long. The fact that we could not discover one word in regard to reciprocal interstate demurrage in the recent railway rate legislation convinced us no real relief was intended. As matters stand many states have 'demurrage' laws—all, so far as we can see, made and executed solely in the interests of the roads—as they are able to collect demurrage

at local stations under the state law—even though the cars were loaded out of the state, yet the shippers can collect nothing if delayed five times normal time in transit because state laws do not cover. In this state we have a reciprocal law—but as ninety per cent of the car lot shipments are interstate and all demurrage on cars by shippers not unloading is local—the law operates—as was its purpose, solely against the shipper and for the railways. The lack of facilities and the car shortage and all the troubles shippers are now "up against" is caused by this one thing—lack of dispatch of cars and shipments in transit, because as the matter stands it costs the railways nothing to delay shipments—hence when complaints are made and investigations requested no effort is made to find the agents or trainmen responsible for the delay and discipline them; whereas if all demurrage was reciprocal the cause would be ferreted out in each case and a remedy attempted. This writer knows by experience that the movement of thousands of cars is left entirely to the discretion and the pleasure—and often of the merest whim of petty \$40 and \$50 a month agents and of conductors handling local freight trains and these two often differ as to unimportant rulings regarding movements of certain traffic and cars stand indefinitely on tracks—both empty and loaded—when shippers who may be only one station away cannot get their consignments or get cars to load. Give us interstate reciprocal demurrage, which is only the most common kind of justice and the only 'square deal' and the shortage of cars and equipment will become a dead issue."

John M. Nichols, Dyersburg, Tenn.—There are so many ways of defeating the popular will that it is difficult to get it fairly and fully expressed. In one way or another, generally through popular local men, many representatives of the trust are elected to offices, high and low, and manage by skillful manipulation to have laws passed favorable to them or good laws so emasculated as to make them utterly worthless. It is for the people to remedy this, and it can be done by electing men only to office who are in no way connected with, or under the control of corporations, and this rule must be applied to the primaries as well as the general elections. The trusts must be eliminated from any control of the party machinery or else the party will be controlled by them. I wish you and The Commoner both success in the great work you have in hand.

H. M. West, Creston, Ia.—I notice in issue of January 11 that it was "not an apple" but "a lemon." Now we don't want to think quite so badly of Mother Eve. It was "a banana." So says Clavigero vid. Conquest of Mexico, (Prescott) ch. V, p. 111, foot note. The dangerous knowledge gained seems to have been "That man could live without work."

LAUGHIN'EST BABY

Laughin'est, kickin'est, squirm'nest kid!
Laughin'est, kickin'est, baby!
I'll bet angels loved you—I know that they did!—
Before they gave me you; may be
They didn't shed tears when they told you good-bye,

It may be they didn't, perhaps angels don't cry;
If they didn't they couldn't, I know that was why,
I know that was why, oh, my baby.

I'll bet when the stork started out with his load
All heaven was worried and sighing,
And with you from paradise 'way down the road
The angels were swooping and flying.
I'll bet they came with you as far as they dared,
I'll bet the most careless one of them all cared,
I'll bet they felt lonely as backward they fared,
Their eyes on their white plumage drying.

I'll bet heaven wasn't what it was before,
Before they had brought you to me, dear;
Yea, heaven was sad when you left heaven's door,
But the earth was as glad as could be, dear;
And I, oh, you kickin'est, squirm'nest elf!
My love for you fills every uttermost shelf
Of my heart, and your mother loves you some herself—
Now kick and goo goo in your glee, dear!

I think at least one angel didn't go back,
Just couldn't bear to go back knowing
The bleakness and gloom of the heavenward track
Without any you on it going
Along, so she watches, invisible sprite,
Beside where you're sleeping by day and by night;
When you dimple she's kissing you, oh, you sweet mite!
With your hands stretched to me pink and glowing.

—J. M. Lewis, in Houston Post.