

# CURRENT TOPICS

**S**PEAKING BEFORE the New Jersey Bar Association, David J. Brewer, justice of the United States supreme court, said: "With brass buttons and epaulets becoming more plenty, with constant talk of fighting and inventions of new weapons, this country must watch to prevent its people drifting into dreams of empire that can only lead to disaster. Many wars are simply caused by the political ambitions of men and the love of military action, and we must be careful not to use our great and growing prosperity as an excuse for building new navies and increasing standing armies beyond the point where they are still a mere guard."

**S**ENATOR TAYLOR, of Tennessee, recently enlivened the senate proceedings by telling this story: "Our country had been decimated by war, humiliated by reconstruction and weighed down by the highest tariff taxation this world has ever known, and we were in bad plight. We were in the condition of the good old praying member of the church who was afflicted all at once with every disease in the catalogue. He had rheumatism and aneurism and curvature of the spine and was finally stricken with paralysis; but after months of suffering he got better, and went shambling one evening to prayer meeting. The old preacher rose and said, 'Now, brethren, I want us to have a good time here tonight. I want every one of you to get up and tell what the Lord has done for you. There is Brother Jones, God bless him; he has been afflicted and hasn't been with us for many months. Brother Jones, get up and tell us what the Lord has done for you.' Brother Jones arose and hobbled out in the aisle, and said: 'Well, he's about ruint me.'"

**G**EORGE W. WICKERSHAM, Mr. Taft's attorney general, speaking at Paducah, Ky., said that congress should enact a bill providing for nationally created corporations to carry on interstate corporations. In a later issue The Commoner will reproduce the objections offered by Mr. Bryan to the plan to give the federal government the power of incorporation. In the same speech Mr. Wickersham made a "fifty per cent" suggestion, which, when offered by Mr. Bryan, was laughed at by republican papers. Mr. Wickersham advocated the requirement of a federal license before a corporation organized in one state could do business in another, and he added: "It has seemed to me that an effective method of legislation on this subject would be to enact that no corporation should be licensed to do business within the state if fifty per cent of its capital stock, or upwards was owned or held by any other corporation, domestic or foreign, and that if, at any time after obtaining such a license, more than fifty per cent of the capital stock of such corporation should be acquired by another such corporation license should be ipso facto vacated. The device of holding corporation is the only thing which has made possible the rapid growth of the great trusts, and monopolies, and a prohibition such as that stated would go far toward their destruction."

**R**EFERRING TO the Wickersham speech, the Lincoln (Neb.) Evening News, a republican paper, says: "Mr. Bryan will doubtless take considerable pleasure in reading the speech of Attorney General Wickersham at Paducah the other day, wherein he expounded his remedy for dealing with the trusts. While it differs in some details with that proposed by Bryan, there is enough similarity generally to give ground for the democratic leader declaring it to be democratic doctrine. And that isn't saying anything against it as a good remedy. Mr. Wickersham says that it seemed to him that an effective method of legislation on this subject would be to enact that no corporation should be licensed to do business within a state if fifty per cent of its capital stock or upwards was owned or held by any other corporation, domestic or foreign, and that if, at any time,

more than fifty per cent of the capital stock of such corporation should be acquired by another corporation, the license should be ipso facto vacated. The device of holding companies, he truthfully says, is the one thing which has made possible the rapid growth of the great trusts and monopolies, and, therefore, to destroy that which they have utilized to build themselves up is the only way to topple them over. Mr. Bryan's idea was to get after the trusts whenever they controlled more than fifty per cent of any product by placing those products on the free list. Another doctrine enunciated by Wickersham was to compel corporations doing an interstate business to secure a federal license. Mr. Bryan's plan was a 'license system which will, without abridging the right of each state to create corporations or its right to regulate as it will foreign corporations doing business within its limits, make it necessary for a manufacturing or trading corporation engaged in interstate commerce to take out a federal license before it shall be permitted to control as much as twenty-five per cent of the products in which it deals, the license to protect the public from watered stock and to prohibit the control by such corporation of more than fifty per cent of the total amount of any product consumed in the United States.'

**T**HE NEW YORK Herald is sometimes accepted as authority concerning the "system" secrets. The Washington correspondent for the Herald sends to his paper this dispatch: "While many persons in and out of congress are busy speculating upon who will be the conferees of the house and the senate when the time comes to reconcile the differences between the tariff bill as the house passed it and as the senate has amended it one big fact has escaped attention. The real conferees will be the president, Senator Aldrich and Speaker Cannon. They will counsel together as to the best form in which the bill shall become a law, and their dictum promises to be final, for the reason that the republican party's organization is in control on both sides of the capitol and President Taft is the leader of the party. All are parties to the legislation. Senator Aldrich will determine the personnel of the senate conference committee. Speaker Cannon will do the same for the house. The conferees of each body will do their bidding, and their bidding will be of the character decided upon at conferences among the three men named. All this may sound very elemental, because of the irregularity to which republican policies have been subjected during the last eight years, but it is clear as crystal in the light of the return of the republican organization to power. This return has been described in the Herald at various times since March 4. It began when President Taft refused to assist the insurgents in their fight to defeat Speaker Cannon's re-election. It was emphasized when he threw cold water on their fight against the house rules and when he chose to reach an agreement with Senator Aldrich in support of a corporation tax amendment instead of the income tax advocated by a fusion of insurgent republicans and democrats."

**T**HE ATTITUDE toward the tariff bill of newspapers is described by the New York World in this way: "The leading republican newspapers of the country, like the democratic and independent press, have been practically of one mind in condemning the Aldrich tariff bill. It is the first tariff bill since the civil war which has not had the support of the party press. The McKinley bill and the Dingley bill were accepted unquestioningly as the true party gospel by the republican newspapers at the time, and even the Wilson bill, with all the disappointment it brought to honest advocates of a tariff for revenue, evoked approval from most of the democratic newspapers. But the Aldrich bill is too much for even the most hardened republicans to stomach. Among its most conspicuous critics stand such staunch republican organs as the New York Tribune and the Chicago Tribune. In a survey of the whole newspaper field the Kansas

City Star remarks that the Herald is the only newspaper of importance in New York to uphold the senate finance committee. The Boston Herald and Transcript are dissatisfied. The Philadelphia North American bitterly denounces the betrayal of republican campaign pledges. In Chicago, in addition to the Tribune, the Record-Herald and Evening Post dissent from the Aldrich policy, and even the Inter Ocean, a standpat newspaper, says that the campaign promises of downward revision should be fulfilled. The St. Louis Globe-Democrat, the St. Paul Dispatch and the Minneapolis Star are in arms. On the Pacific coast the Portland Oregonian, the chief republican newspaper of the northwest, has been bitterly attacking the Aldrich bill, and the Spokane Statesman-Review resents that kind of 'tariff revision.' Of the notable exceptions to the general rule are the newspapers of Pittsburg and the Philadelphia Inquirer, an unflinching follower of the republican organization. Mr. Aldrich may consider himself justified as a party leader in working his tariff bill through the senate by shrewd log-rolling tactics, but the open hostility of the republican press from the Atlantic to the Pacific is a fair measure of its unpopularity and of the republican revolt which he treats with contempt."

**T**HE NEW YORK Evening Post makes interesting contribution to the tariff discussion in this way: "The unseeing eyes of Senator Gore of Oklahoma pierce deep into the subtleties and the plain lies of the tariff-boosters. Mr. Dolliver is doing yeoman's work in a good cause; but for wit, for sledge-hammer power, for the gift to make the standpatter feel foolish and ashamed, the senator from Iowa must yield to his colleague from Oklahoma. If any of Aldrich's devoted band have ever been ill at ease in fighting one who is physically their inferior, they have lost that soft sensation. Unequal the match has usually been, but in favor of Oklahoma. Senator Warren had been trying to explain why, under a tariff that makes all things thrive, the number of sheep in the United States had decreased from 63,000,000 in 1903 to 45,000,000 in 1905. The reason was that in 1902, the European wool market was demoralized in consequence of the Boer war of 1899. Senator Gore understood: 'I was left to infer that the reason that the number of sheep decreased in the United States was this: The sheep in South Africa belonged to the International Peace Society; when the black clouds of war were lowering in that region they migrated to the United States; and later on when that cruel war was o'er, when the white-winged angel of peace and the black-winged angel of death hovered over the prostrate form of those stricken republics, those sheep slowly and sorrowfully wended their way back to the green fields, and the pleasant pastures; they trekked their way back to the verdant veldts of the once glorious Transvaal.' Either that, or something else equally reasonable, must have occurred, argued Mr. Gore. In any case, he saw now that 'wool was so cheap in Europe and throughout the world that it stimulated the production of sheep in the United States.'"

**T**HE "MAXIMUM and minimum" feature of the tariff bill as arranged by a republican congress is described by the Council Bluffs (Ia.) Nonpareil, a republican paper, in this way: "When the tariff bill left the house, the proposed maximum and minimum feature was so arranged as frankly to put commercial United States in the attitude of going into the world of trade with a chip on its shoulder, or a big stick in its hand, or both. They were not a few who were quick to suggest that it would be better to go with the glad hand and a lump of sugar. In its application, the maximum and minimum scheme is capable of being turned either way, end for end. It may mean either conciliation or hostility, in trade. As it reached the senate in the Payne bill, it meant the latter clearly and audibly. The minimum duties were to be the standard, with a heavy advance to a maxi-