

A Six-Year Term for President

prevent destruction of property, they would not facilitate the introduction of non-union labor. Three hundred Pinkerton constables were brought by water to the works. They were introduced into the state unarmed, but brought arms and ammunition with them packed in boxes. On their way up the river these boxes were unpacked, so that when the force arrived at Homestead in the early morning they were fully armed. News of their coming had preceded them, and a large crowd of strikers were in waiting to prevent their landing, having gone in behind the wall of steel rails. The testimony is conflicting as to which party fired first, but a skirmish ensued with a heavy volley of shots from the strikers, in which seven of the Pinkertons and strikers were killed and many others wounded. The struggle continued two days. On the opposite bank a brass ten-pound cannon was obtained and fired upon the barges. The crowd also attempted to set fire to the barges by pouring burning oil upon the river, and finally the Pinkertons surrendered to the leaders of the Amalgamated Association, and were imprisoned in a rink until evening, when they were got away from the town by rail. On their way to the rink and to the station they were beaten and maltreated in spite of the efforts of the strike leaders to control the crowd, which was largely composed of Slavs, Hungarians, and women. Troops were sent to Homestead by the governor of Pennsylvania and stationed there many weeks, the town being put under martial law. Great severity was displayed. Eleven workmen and spectators were killed in the fights. Some of the leaders were arrested and order was restored; for though the manager, Mr. Frick, was afterward shot at by a Russian named Berkman, this act seems to have been quite independent of the men on the strike. For an unguarded expression of sympathy with Berkman, a private (James) was strung up by his thumbs and flogged. After about six weeks a large number of the strikers returned to work, but a number of new men were subsequently engaged by the company, and many of the strikers did not return. A committee of congress, appointed to investigate the employment of Pinkerton detectives, held an inquiry at Pittsburgh into the circumstances of the strike. The evidence given before them showed that a conviction prevailed among the men, that since the introduction of the McKinley tariff the profits of the company had increased, and that there was, therefore, no occasion for any such reduction of wages as they proposed. Further, the strength of the feeling against the employment of the Pinkerton special constables found general expression. Great excitement over the strike was roused all over the country. Subscriptions were raised by working men to support the strike. Lawyers were sent on to defend the strikers against persecution for using arms to defend their homes against "foreign invasion." The feeling against the Pinkertons ran very high. In Massachusetts an act prohibiting the employment of Pinkerton constables was passed in 1892, and a similar act was passed in New Jersey during the same year."

PRESIDENT TAFT

Mr. Henry Watterson, editor of the Louisville Courier-Journal, says so many good things that it is not surprising that this graceful compliment fell from the Watterson pen:

"President Taft's swan song is that of a sane, sensible, temperate man whose philosophy of life is too optimistic to be reversed by reverses at the polls, and whose sincerity of purpose was never questioned even when the position he occupied as a party leader forced him into unpopular attitudes."

Mr. Watterson has accurately described the attitude of the public toward President Taft. It is indeed gratifying that Americans generally may entertain such a cheerful feeling toward the man whom they have just defeated for the presidency.

A SPECIAL SESSION

The president-elect has wisely decided to call a special session to reduce the tariff. He begins well. His first act will be generally applauded. Some favor reduction by special bills, some prefer a general bill. Why not join the two plans? The bills passed by congress and vetoed might be passed at once, thus giving the people immediate relief and then a general bill might be prepared covering the remaining schedules and making such changes in schedules covered by special bills as now seems desirable. Why not?

The New York World says: In his plea for a single term of six years for the president, Mr. Taft voiced an opinion that has gained many converts since the rise of the third-cup-of-coffee thirst. At Baltimore it was the sense of the democratic national convention that the constitution should be amended so as to make the president ineligible for re-election. Nothing was said about lengthening the term. That four years is a short period in which to work out great policies of government—a favorite argument of the longer-term advocates—may sometimes be true. But where a president within two years of entering office had sacrificed the good-will of the country and persisted in using his power to obstruct the adoption of policies demanded by the people, a six-year term would only mean the denial of the popular will for so much longer time. To make the term of the president cover three congresses might mean that the country would be deprived, through the sole executive veto, of legislation twice approved at national elections. The longer term of six years is offered largely as a concession to those who favor a single term. But toward the end of a six-year term the president might still play party politics for the benefit of his own candidate, as presidents in the past have done for the benefit of themselves or their successors. No administration is likely to keep out of politics, as Mr. Taft seems to imagine, merely because it lasts six years.

The Baltimore platform covers this situation very clearly when it says: "We favor a single presidential term, and to that end urge the adoption of an amendment to the constitution making the president of the United States ineligible to re-election, and we pledge the candidate of this convention to this principle."

In The Commoner of January 30, 1901, Mr. Bryan printed the following editorial: The suggestion made by ex-President Cleveland, to the effect that the presidential term should be extended to six years and the president made ineligible for re-election, has excited discussion. The latter part of the proposition has met with the more cordial reception. There seems to be a wide-spread opinion that a president should be limited to one term in order to prevent his using the first term to secure a re-nomination.

President Jackson suggested this limitation in his first inaugural message.

Mr. Hayes in 1876, in his letter accepting the republican nomination, said:

"The declaration of principles by the Cincinnati convention makes no announcement in favor of a single presidential term. I do not assume to add to that declaration, but believing that the restoration of the civil service to the system established by Washington and followed by the early presidents can be best accomplished by an executive officer who is under no temptation to use the patronage of his office to promote his own re-election, I desire to perform what I regard as a duty in stating now my inflexible purpose, if elected, not to be a candidate for election to a second term."

Mr. Cleveland in his first letter of acceptance stated, in even stronger language, the objections to a second term, saying:

"When an election to office shall be the selection by the voters of one of their number to assume for a time a public trust instead of his dedication to the profession of politics; when the holders of the ballot, quickened by a sense of duty, shall avenge truth betrayed and pledges broken, and when the suffrage shall be altogether free and uncorrupted, the full realization of a government by the people will be at hand. And of the means to this end, no one would, in my judgment, be more effective than an amendment to the constitution disqualifying the president from re-election."

"When we consider the patronage of this great office, the allurements of power, the temptation to retain public place once gained, and, more than all, the availability a party finds in an incumbent whom a horde of office holders, with zeal born of benefits received and fostered by the hope of favors yet to come, stand ready to aid with money and trained political service, we recognize in the eligibility of the president for re-election a most serious danger to that calm, deliberate and intelligent political action which must characterize a government by the people."

Human nature is as yet too frail to withstand the temptation to use for selfish purposes the great patronage of the executive.

If it is argued that a nation might be in such a crisis that it could ill afford a change in the administration, it may be said in reply, first, that the same argument could be made at the close of a second term and, second, that when the nation reaches a condition where only one man out of the whole population is able to assume and properly discharge the duties of the executive it will scarcely be worth saving.

As to the lengthening of the term considerable difference of opinion has developed. The principle affirmative argument is that business interests are disturbed by a presidential election. If this argument is to have a controlling influence we might as well choose the executive for life, or, in order to reduce the disturbance to a minimum, establish an hereditary succession. There are political reasons in favor of the present length which outweigh any business considerations.

Jefferson was an advocate of frequent elections. In a letter written to Samuel Adams, in 1800, he said:

"A government by representatives, elected by the people at short periods, was our object; and our maxim at that day was, 'where annual election ends, tyranny begins;' nor have our departures from it been sanctioned by the happiness of their effects."

Sixteen years later he said:

"The rights of the people to the exercise and fruits of their own industry can never be protected against the selfishness of rulers, not subject to their control at short periods."

The fact that commercial reasons are deemed sufficient with some to justify the surrender of a principle absolutely necessary for the protection of the public shows the dangerous pre-eminence given to money and money making.

To lengthen the presidential term is simply to enlarge the stake for which great interests play. The trusts could increase their campaign contributions fifty per cent if they could secure control of an administration for six years instead of four.

Short terms are necessary not only to protect the people from their public servants but also to moderate disappointment and discontent. The sooner the people can hope for remedy the more patiently do they submit to that which they consider error or injustice.

A four years term is long enough for a good president and too long for a bad one.

The following article appeared in The Commoner May 17, 1912:

Resolutions have been introduced in both senate and house submitting an amendment limiting the president to a single term. They should receive unanimous support. Eighteen years ago Mr. Bryan introduced such a resolution. It read as follows:

"Fifty-third Congress, third session, House Resolution 234. In the House of Representatives, December 6, 1894. Referred to the committee on election of president and vice-president and representatives in congress and ordered to be printed. Mr. Bryan introduced the following joint resolution:

"Proposing an amendment to the constitution making the president ineligible to a second term."

"Resolved by the senate and house of representatives of the United States of America assembled (two-thirds of each house concurring therein), that the following amendment be proposed to the legislatures of the several states, which, when ratified by three-fourths of said legislatures, shall become and be a part of the constitution of the United States, namely: That section one of article two of the constitution be amended by adding after the words 'neither shall any person be eligible to that office who shall not have attained to the age of thirty-five years, and been fourteen years a resident within the United States' the words, 'No person once elected to the presidency shall be thereafter eligible to election to that office.'"

Some prefer a six-year term—in fact, considerable work has been done in favor of a single term of six years. A four-year term is long enough—long enough for a good president and too long for a bad one—but a six-year term with a provision making the president ineligible to re-election would be better