

Dual Ownership vs. Federal Ownership

The successful management of the railroad systems of the country during the war is quite sure to furnish a final and conclusive argument in favor of government ownership and it is worth while, therefore, to consider the large questions involved in government ownership. While the President's authority over the railroads is a war power and will terminate with the end of the war, the lessons learned are not likely to be forgotten.

The growth of sentiment in favor of public ownership is due in large part to three things. First, to the economic advantages to be found in the elimination of watered stock and of the waste caused by the duplication of roads between competing points. Second, to the resistance offered by railroad managers to efforts at effective legislation. Third, to the corrupting influence of the railroads, not only upon legislators and other officials, but also upon young men who, in their ambition to secure lucrative railroad positions, separate themselves from the mass of the people, and use their influence to shield the railroads from needed supervision.

The country has been passing through the same experience with railroad corporations that cities have had with franchise-holding corporations, and are being driven to government ownership as a matter of self protection. The war has simply made more plain the evils inseparably connected with private ownership, just as it has made more clear the necessity for the abolition of the saloon. While the war lasts unity of management is necessary; and there is no time for careful consideration of the questions which must be weighed before a permanent system can be decided upon.

Believing that government ownership and operation of railroads will be the natural outcome of the President's action in taking over the management of the railroads during the war. I venture to outline a plan which will, in my judgment, give to the nation all the advantages which can be derived from federal ownership and operation of all the roads, and, at the same time, avoid the dangers involved in such federal ownership, viz.: A dual plan under which the federal government will own and operate a system of trunk lines running into every state (and except in the case of border states through the states) with the states owning the local lines.

The ownership and operation of all lines by the federal government would not only enormously increase the number of employees directed from Washington, but would go far toward obliterating state lines.

Our nation has been described as "an indissoluble union of indestructible states," and no better description has been given. If the state is to remain "indestructible" its activities should be increased rather than diminished. The ownership of intra-state lines by the states would greatly strengthen the positions of the states without in the least lessening the advantages of government ownership and operation of the railroads.

Each state, having access to a federal trunk line connecting it with every other state, would be able to collect all merchandise intended for other markets and to forward it on a trunk line for distribution in other states or in foreign countries, and it would also be able to take from the trunk lines merchandise from without the state and distribute it to any point within its borders.

This independence would put it in position to deal advantageously with neighbor states and such states would find it to their mutual advantage to arrange for shipment over local lines meeting at state boundaries. In Europe independent nations are able to join in traffic arrangements in spite of differences in government and even in language; how much easier it ought to be for our states to act in harmony.

The dual plan has three advantages over the plan involving the federal ownership of all lines. First, the federal investment would be very much less. It would cost a very large sum to purchase, even at a just price, all the railroads of the United States. The dual plan would limit

the investment to the amount necessary to buy or build a system of trunk lines.

Second, the dual plan would accommodate itself to public sentiment in the various states. In some sections of the country the sentiment in favor of government ownership is much stronger than in other sections. The dual plan would permit the government ownership of local lines in states desiring it, while states not ready for government ownership could leave the local lines in the hands of private corporations as they now are. Privately owned local lines being able to connect with a federal trunk line would have an outlet for freight and passenger traffic and be set free from the coercion which has been a considerable factor in the consolidation of railroad systems.

Third, the ownership and operation of local lines by the several states would give an opportunity for greater initiative and for a comparison of ideas which would be helpful in perfecting railroad operation.

If it is contended that federal ownership of all lines is necessary in time of war, a sufficient answer is found in the right of congress to reserve to the President in time of war the same authority over state systems that he now has over railroad corporations.

W. J. BRYAN.

LIBERTY BONDS SHOULD BE PROTECTED

On another page will be found an editorial suggestion copied from the Sacramento Bee. Brother McClatchey is right. The Liberty Bonds should be protected—not by making it unlawful to sell such bonds below par, as a bill introduced in congress provided—but by making them redeemable upon notice, like the war saving certificates. To prohibit their sale below par would be likely to discourage subscriptions to future issues; while a law providing for redemption on notice would increase the demand for them.

These bonds, while a good investment, are taken more as a matter of patriotism than as a matter of business, and the government should protect those who come to its rescue.

IT MAKES ONE SMILE

A Russian paper is either guilty of a bit of humor or it has discovered something quite funny, namely, a copy of instructions given by the German government to the officials who selected men to treat with the Russian representatives. They are told to select only "serious minded men with control of facial muscles." A wise precaution, for it is difficult for any one to keep from smiling when he reads the terms proposed by the German government.

NEW YORK LEARNS A LESSON

On another page will be found an interesting news item from New York to the effect that Mayor-elect Hylan has secured from Gov. Whitman a promise to support a measure requiring the publication of campaign contributions FIVE DAYS BEFORE THE ELECTION. Thus is another democratic policy vindicated. It was the enormous fund spent in behalf of candidate Mitchel that aroused the public. New York is learning.

THE PRESIDENT SAVES SUFFRAGE

The President's endorsement of the suffrage amendment saved the day. He brought to the support of the movement enough wavering democrats to carry the amendment "over the top." It was a great victory for a great cause.

Mr. Roosevelt's attack on the President for not urging universal military training as a permanent policy is either an evidence of a personal hatred that outweighs his patriotism, or it proves that he wants to establish here the militarism that has made Germany the Esau among the nations.

With The new issue of \$5 baby bonds everybody can start in to saving for Uncle Sam without having to worry over his bank account. These bear an interest rate of 4.42 per cent and give a chance to the humblest of us to invest in some really profitable patriotism.

If we are to judge by the rapacity of some of our well known profiteers, they are of the opinion that there is something to all this talk about the second coming of the kingdom of the Lord after the war. They belong to that race of men that believe in getting while the getting's good.

New Custodians of the Ark

The submission of the federal amendment is a very serious thing; it brings the country to the threshold of national prohibition—we are soon to have a saloonless land. But, serious as the situation is, the booze makers are adding a touch of comedy to it—they have seized upon the doctrine of state's rights, and are carrying it as a sort of "Ark of the Covenant." What a sight—the master of the vat and the manipulator of the still acting as the self-appointed custodians of the sacred symbols of the commonwealth, while the subsidized newspaper joins the bar bum, the bloat, and sots in guttural applause.

And these representatives of the drink traffic are the very people who have for a generation trampled upon the rights of every unit, large and small, that has opposed the saloon. They now seek refuge in the state, but it is only a few years ago that they opposed (on the ground that it was unconstitutional) the Webb-Kenyon law which made it possible for each state to control the sale and use of liquor within its borders.

It was this same crowd that glorified the county unit in order to defeat state prohibition in Texas and Kentucky—The same crowd that, under a fraudulent plea for home rule, urged town or township option as against county option in Ohio, Indiana and Michigan—the same crowd that opposed even town option in New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

They are as dishonest in their pretended solicitude for state's rights today as they were when they championed smaller units—their only real solicitude is for themselves and for the money they make out of their business.

But they are no longer able to deceive—their methods have been exposed.

The southern democrats, the special champions of state's rights, led the fight for submission; Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Mississippi, Florida and Arkansas voted solidly for submission. More than two-thirds of the democrats in congress voted in the affirmation, as did a still larger percentage of the southern democrats in both senate and house. Opposition to national prohibition is strongest where the state's rights doctrine is weakest, and weakest where that doctrine is strongest—in other words, opposition to prohibition is, as a rule, in proportion to the number of breweries and distilleries, not in proportion to attachment to the rights of the states. Those who most appreciate the state's part in our governmental machinery are least willing to allow the honorable doctrine of state's rights to be used to shield the saloon from the rising wrath of the people.

W. J. BRYAN.

The announcement that whisky-making has stopped at the distilleries would seem to indicate that the race of gents who rejoiced in their ability to keep them working nights has really winked out.

"No more secret treaties" is a mighty good peace plank, and "freedom of the seas" is nearly as good. These two conditions, with "reduction of armaments," will come near insuring peace.

AN ANALYSIS OF MR. BRYAN

On another page will be found an editorial from the Lewiston (Me.) Journal entitled, "Col. Bryan in Lewiston." It was written by a brother of the late Hon. Nelson Dingley who gave his name to the tariff law which preceded the Aldrich tariff law. Editor Dingley is the dean of the journalistic corps in the United States, being the oldest, or rather the longest, in continuous editorial work.

The tone of Editor Dingley's editorial is so frankly friendly and his candor so delightful, that his analysis is reproduced entire for the benefit of the readers of The Commoner. I can not endorse all that he says—especially his contrasts and comparisons—but am grateful that one who looks at public questions from the protectionist's viewpoint should find so much to commend and be so tolerant of that which he can not commend. It is very generous praise to come from a political opponent.

W. J. BRYAN.