

## THE GOOD TRUSTS AND THE BAD TRUSTS

Mr. Roosevelt and other republican leaders have repeatedly said that there are good trusts and bad trusts, but none of them have ever undertaken to point out the "good trusts."

The Minneapolis Journal, a republican paper, in an editorial printed in its issue of September 29, had something to say on the "good and bad trusts" subject and explained, "Little corporations are good and bad, and so are big ones."

After reading this editorial, John Dunham wrote to the Journal, asking: "Will you kindly give me the names of half a dozen good trusts and half a dozen bad ones through the columns of your paper?"

This question has been submitted to many republican newspapers throughout the country, but they have invariably dodged it. The Minneapolis Journal, however, met the question in a straight forward way. It reproduced Mr. Dunham's letter and referred to him as being "evidently a gentleman who prefers concrete instances to abstract generalizations." Then the Journal bluntly admitted "THIS QUESTION IS CERTAINLY A POSER."

The Journal editorial is so remarkable, coming as it does from a republican newspaper, that it is worthy of reproduction. The Journal says:

It is easy enough to say that big corporations are good and bad, just as little ones are. It is quite within the realm of the probable that a big corporation may be beneficently managed as it is within the realm of certainty that small corporations are managed in a good way.

But when it comes to picking out the good trusts, we confess that the task is no easy one. If the question were applied merely to big corporations, without regard to whether

they constitute trusts, there might not be great difficulty in picking six good ones, but to find six trusts that are good is something that staggers us.

The truth is, there is a bad side to every trust. The United States Steel corporation is generally regarded as a good trust in the sense that it does not try to crush what competition it has, that it maintains a fair price for ore, that it keeps lake freights at living rates and in that it does not practice extortion. As a steady agent for the iron and steel industry of the United States, it performs a very valuable service. But when we reflect that J. Pierpont Morgan and associates made \$56,000,000 in financing the trust, on an investment of \$25,000,000, and the water in the capitalization is estimated at \$500,000,000, we cannot pronounce this trust altogether good. The Standard Oil company would be classed as a good trust by many people. It has greatly reduced the price and improved the quality of illuminating oil. It is doubtful if the price would be so low as it is today if there were a dozen competing companies. But, viewing the oil trust from the standpoint of its extinct competitors, it shows up in a bad light. Its great army of hired men have taken the places that would have been filled by a great many small businesses with independent men at the head of them, and its employees are probably worse off than they would be with independent companies in the field.

Every trust we can think of has a good and bad side. We frankly confess our inability to pick out six good ones. Probably no two people would agree on such a group, unless they were preferred stockholders in each of the six.

But then it is true that every forward step in the world's history has its bad as well as its good side. The introduction of machinery is generally held to be good, yet it has brought the keenest suffering to thousands and millions. So far it has appeared to most people that mere bigness of a corporation is inevitably associated with badness. This may be merely because the evils of a corporation are more impressive in proportion as the corporation's size is impressive.

But between the trusts which almost all the people hold to be bad, the acknowledged capacity and opportunity of all trusts to work enormous evils and the widespread popular apprehension that such opportunity and capacity will be used, there is abundant reason why patriotic citizens should insist upon some form of effective public control of trusts. Unrestrained, they are a menace to the republic. In effect, it makes little difference whether they are good or bad. We do not want them to master us. A perfect monarch could undoubtedly give the United States a far better government than we have today, in the sense of superior performance of governmental functions, but all Americans would prefer an imperfect republic to a perfect monarchy. This nation is based upon the sovereignty of the people. That sovereignty is no longer in danger on the political side, but it may be assailed on the industrial side.

It makes little difference to a free man in what way his liberty is menaced. He will defend himself against all encroachments. The American people will not permit their liberties to be curtailed by trusts any more than by despots.

but he is carrying out in the Philippine islands a policy which denies the theory of self-government—a policy that is identical with that pursued by the English government in this country prior to the American revolution.

While the rumor above referred to ought not to have deceived any one, it was reported with elaboration and emphasis by the republican papers which, being unable to defend imperialism, are seeking an excuse for avoiding it. The readers of The Commoner need not be told that the report was false in total, but they may be interested to know that the Anti-Imperialist league has circulated more than half a million pamphlets and leaflets during the past year. It has sent out nearly 120,000 copies of Senator Hoar's speech, and has circulated 20,000 copies of Mr. Carmack's recent article, from which the following is quoted:

Andrew Carnegie says in the May North American Review: "We prohibited the reading of the Declaration of Independence in the Philippines last Fourth of July. To the incredulous reader let me repeat this fact. It is on record and acknowledged by our officials. We can imagine the first thought of so good a man as Judge Taft, and so good an American as he has been hitherto, when this was suggested to him:

"Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" But, alas, we did it.

"We are engaged in work which requires suppression of American ideas hitherto held sacred. If the republican candidate for the presidency, even if it were President Roosevelt himself, popular as he is, could be taxed with having approved this next Fourth of July, he would probably be defeated in the next campaign. Were I of the democratic party, I should base the campaign largely upon this order, and ask the people if they wished a president capable of suppressing the reading of the Declaration of Independence in any part of the world."

The league has rendered valuable service to the cause of free government and is not deceived by unauthorized promises made by some of the subordinate officials. The republican party is repeating on this question its policy on other public questions.

### Mitchell Defends the Strikers.

On another page will be found a defense of the anthracite coal strikers and a presentation of their cause by Mr. Mitchell, the president of the united mine workers. His statement is a reply to President Baer, who seems to be acting as spokes-

man for the mine owners. Mr. Mitchell's argument is calm, clear and convincing. He has shown ability and good judgment in the manner in which he has exposed the half-truths relied upon by members of the anthracite coal trust. No impartial reader can fail to recognize the justice of the claim made by the strikers, and Mr. Mitchell has rendered his own people a great service in thus bringing the facts to the attention of the public.

Mr. Mitchell rightly declares that the fight is as much for the next generation as for the miners themselves, and every lover of his country must sympathize with the miners in their effort to protect the rising generation from a toil that not only stunts their bodies, but deprives them of that opportunity for intellectual improvement which is the birthright of every American citizen.

### A Difficult Task.

The Kansas City Journal insists that "the trust question is undeveloped," and says that "the logic is that the question should be taken out of politics." It will be difficult for the Journal to convince the consumers of the country that the trust question is undeveloped. Every time a man looks into his coal bin, every time he goes to the grocery store or the butcher shop, he is confronted by the trust question in a thoroughly developed condition. No wonder the representatives of a party which derives its campaign funds from the trusts and under whose administration trusts have multiplied and thrived should plead that the question be taken out of politics.

### Force Them to Answer.

A candidate for congress should be willing to answer any question concerning his position on public questions. The congressional candidate who is not willing to take the people into his confidence is unworthy of the confidence of the people. A bill known as "The Fowler Currency Bill" has been introduced into the house of representatives and recommended for passage by the republican majority of the committee on banking and currency. This bill provides for the establishment of branch banks, for a bank currency based on the assets of the bank and for making the silver dollar redeemable in gold at the demand of the holder of the silver.

An asset currency is but a new phase of the old "wildcat currency" and the branch bank system but another phase of the old United States bank. The branch bank scheme is nothing more nor less than an attempt to organize a great banking trust with headquarters in New York with

branches in all parts of the country. The bill has the indorsement of the republican majority of the house committee on banking and currency and is advocated by leading republicans.

Every candidate for congress should be willing to tell whether he favors or opposes the Fowler currency bill. The candidate who says he has not studied the bill is incompetent to fill the office to which he aspires.

The question, "Do you favor enacting into law the Fowler currency bill?" should be put to every republican candidate for congress. Let democratic newspapers and populist newspapers carry the following at the head of their editorial columns; addressed to the republican candidate in their particular districts:

"Mr. ———, do you favor enacting into law the Fowler currency bill?"

The man who insists that the money question is dead has not read and digested the Fowler bill. The congressional aspirant who is not willing to go on record for or against that bill is unworthy of confidence and should not receive the support of thinking men.

### What Now?

Several weeks ago the Chicago Record-Herald called upon the national leaders of the republican party to "think carefully over the situation." This republican paper said that the action of the republican convention of Iowa was "as clearly prophetic as anything merely human can be." The Record-Herald added:

On the one hand there are the democrats, who are nearly united in the demand for tariff revision and for the denial of a tariff for the benefit of monopoly. On the other are those western republicans who are equally insistent on the same points, though their method of revision would not be so drastic. Now if "no revision" should be the continuing decree of a republican congress under a republican administration, how will the sentiment for revision that has been cultivated in both parties work out? Manifestly, through republican defections to a democratic success. The demands of western republicans must be recognized and granted as a condition essential to the supremacy of that party.

Now that the national leaders of the party have concluded to reject the demands of the western republicans, what will the Record-Herald say? Will there be "republican defections to a democratic success?"

Will that refusal destroy the supremacy of the republican party?