

CURRENT TOPICS

NO PUBLIC MEASURE ever met with a more sensational turn than that given to the Hepburn rate bill when the management of that measure was taken from a representative of the majority party and placed in the hands of a representative of the minority. Referring to the situation the Washington correspondent for the New York World says: "The tangle is worse than any that has existed in the senate in recent years, and the situation is without parallel. It is inevitable, if the bill passes, as it was reported, that it, a Roosevelt measure, will give the democrats whatever prestige there may be in the new law. Furthermore the republicans in the senate are split into warring and ugly factions over the matter."

THE COMMITTEE agreed to report the Hepburn bill subject to amendment by a vote of eight to five. Those voting in favor of the bill were Tillman, McLaurin, Carmack, Foster and Newlands, democrats, and Cullom, Dolliver and Clapp, republicans. Those voting against the measure were Elkins, Aldrich, Kean, Foraker and Crane, republicans. It was then proposed by Senator Aldrich that Senator Elkins be authorized to report the bill. Senators Tillman and Dolliver objected, saying that the bill should be reported by one of its friends and not by an enemy. Mr. Aldrich then said that he would substitute the name of Tillman for that of Senator Elkins. He said that inasmuch as the bill had been reported by democratic votes it was proper that a member of that party should take charge of it in the senate. Senator Elkins nominated Dolliver to make the report, but Senator Tillman was chosen by a vote of five to three, Senators Tillman, Dolliver and Foster not voting. Aldrich, Kean, Foraker, Crane and McLaurin, four republicans and one democrat, voted for Senator Tillman. Senators Elkins, Clapp and Newlands, two republicans and one democrat, voted for Dolliver.

SENATOR TILLMAN accepted the assignment gracefully, saying: "It is a rather unexpected and ridiculous situation. If there is any idea of making it a farce, with me as the clown, those who imagine I am not going to fight for an effective railroad bill are way off their base. I certainly am not going to lend myself to any scheme of side-tracking or undermining the efforts to get corrective legislation. This is a democratic proposition, and the president has lent his great influence to it. And I hope that he will continue to do so. The democrats in the house supported the bill unanimously, and I believe the democrats in the senate will do likewise. I hope there will be enough patriots in the republican party to help us pass it." Senator Tillman reported the bill Monday, February 26.

WILLIAM NELSON CROMWELL, who was charged with wielding mysterious power in connection with the Panama canal, appeared before the canal committee and was closely questioned by Senator Morgan of Alabama. Mr. Cromwell admitted receiving \$200,000 from the Panama Canal company and Senator Morgan sought to have him explain what he had done to entitle him to that money. Mr. Cromwell said that he could not state what portion of it represented payment for each of the several services he had performed. He declined to explain his relations with the new Panama Canal company as its private counsel, but he said that he had not received one dollar from that company; that when he got through he would render his bill; that it would be a substantial one, and would be paid. Senator Morgan asked Mr. Cromwell to describe the relations between the government and J. P. Morgan & Co., by which the \$40,000,000 paid for the canal was deposited with the Morgan banking house. The witness declined to make any explanation on that line. On the following day the examination of Mr. Cromwell was resumed, and Senator Morgan put question after question to him, but the witness refused to answer. Senator Morgan said: "It is the most remarkable case of lock-jaw I ever encountered." Senator Morgan insisted upon a ruling as to whether the witness should be required to answer. Senators Morgan and Tallaferrero voted in

favor of requiring the witness to answer, but Senators Kitteridge, Dryden, Ankeny and Millard voted against the proposition. It developed that Cromwell was also fiscal agent for the republic of Panama, and he said that he had received no salary from that republic for his services. He explained that he rendered these services "because of my broad instinct of good nature, which has prompted me to do so much for this cause, and for the further reason that I have more money than I know what to do with, unfortunately."

JOHN BURNS, the first representative of labor that has ever held an office in the British cabinet, has written for the New York Independent an interesting article relating to municipal ownership. Mr. Burns says: "Cheap, popular, publicly owned rapid transit is the best way to dispose of the ghettos of poverty, the slums of misery and the alsatias of vice." He declares that municipal ownership as tried in Great Britain is a success; that in that system there is no one to offer bribes because there is nothing to sell, that the occupation of the thief has gone because the receiver has disappeared. He says that it is an incontestable fact that under municipal ownership in Great Britain roads are better, the staff more loyal because more contented, and the amazing cheapness of traction is proved by the fact that the average fare of electric car passengers in London is under two cents, while more than 50,000,000 of people ride as one-cent passengers. He declares: "The effect on housing has been the disappearance in ten years of 80,000 one-room tenements, a corresponding increase in larger tenements and a diversion to common parks and healths of the women and children, who by traction alone, without injury or loss to anyone, now secure, as an everyday right, what, through company ownership and dear fares, was an occasional and fatiguing privilege."

"BOSSISM AND MONOPOLY" is the latest work by Thomas Carl Spelling whose acute legal mind was displayed in his previous works, "Trust and Monopolies," "Law of Private Corporations," "New Trial Appellate Practice," etc. Mr. Spelling begins his present work by a careful analysis of the government's power to control corporations. His opening sentence is the keynote to the entire work: "There is no law of congress or of any state against, nor are there any positive common law rules inimical to, mere monopoly." The writer holds that the Sherman anti-trust law goes as far as it can constitutionally in providing a check upon trusts and combinations, and he concludes that many of the proposed amendments would, if adopted, be declared unconstitutional by the supreme court. He says that the government's power is limited to the prevention of combinations in restraint of trade between the states and that all the supreme court decisions show that the government has no power to prevent monopoly. Mr. Spelling says that in view of these decisions further interference by congress is impossible without a constitutional amendment, and he is of the opinion that it would be easier to secure the election of a sufficient number of senators and representatives to institute government ownership of the means of transportation than to secure the consent of the requisite number of states to an amendment conferring upon congress far-reaching powers over corporations.

THIS LEADS MR. SPELLING to the following conclusion: "It is the opinion of the writer that there are no dangerous or oppressive industrial monopolies that could not be rendered harmless by absolute government control of rates for transportation and modifications of tariff duties; that mere combinations of capital with a view to economy of production and administration would be so far controlled by competition, in the absence of rebates, protective tariffs, and other special privileges, that the monopoly evil in them would soon disappear." He adds that government ownership of transportation is the only way to secure absolute government control of rates and declares that when the government acquires the railways it should acquire the coal also, for a monopoly of fuel in private hands would be dangerous to commercial interests of all kinds.

The overthrow of the bosses, contends the author, must precede monopoly's overthrow, and the bosses can never be overthrown as long as blind partisanship is the guide of those who belong to the great parties. He says that the voters should take control of the parties and should see to it that the great corporations do not make deals with the party leaders of all parties. He believes that if the voters grapple resolutely with the evil of bossism they will overthrow it.

MR. SPELLING POINTS out that the most oppressive of all the trusts is the railway trust and he says that three-fourths of the people favor public ownership. Mr. Spelling believes that if the voters determine to secure public ownership they can force their leaders to favor that policy or retire from politics. Once the railways are under public control, the reign of bossism will cease. The way will be made easy to secure other reforms. He says that in itself government ownership of the trunk lines and state ownership of the local lines would tend to destroy monopoly, but contends that the complete destruction of all artificial monopolies can be wrought and competition restored by the withdrawal of special privileges. If monopolies remain, all, perhaps, will be natural monopolies, and these the government should own or control. In this connection the author writes: "And so with corrupt party machines, by which is meant all so-called party organizations under control of bosses, these can be easily reached and converted into agencies for the destruction of monopoly rule and the introduction of an era of government ownership of every enterprise which, whether in private hands or in the hands of the government, can be used to tax the general public in the form of freights, fares and rates. * * * Let the voter adopt, to a limited extent, the tactics of the boss. If a party is going his way, he should get aboard and ride, as in the case of a street car. But suppose it is going the other way? Would he not be a fool to ride in it, even though he paid no fare."

FOR THE OVERTHROW of the bosses Mr. Spelling suggests the direct primary as the best instrument at the disposal of the voters. By the direct primary legislators can be instructed as to the popular choice for United States senator. If the people would take control of affairs from the great corporations they must control the senate, which is the bulwark of special privilege and monopoly. Mr. Spelling has no faith in rate regulation, holding that it is a mere makeshift. He says that the interstate commerce commission can be vested with little more power than it now possesses; that the railways will break the new law as easily as they have broken the old law, and the responsible officials will go unpunished in the future as in the past. Mr. Spelling's book contains an exposition of political and economic conditions in the United States at the present time, and the writer, who states that he was for a number of years very conservative in his ideas, advocates drastic remedies.

A LARGE NUMBER of New Yorkers, many of them opposed to municipal ownership and some of whom have recently protested against municipal ownership literature as "an attack upon the interests of the country" have found it necessary to make organized opposition to what they call the "traction trust" in New York City. A number of these gentlemen formed an organization the purpose of which is described by Mr. Ivins, recently the republican candidate for mayor of New York, as being for the purpose of protecting the people of Gotham from the impositions which the members of this particular organization feel, will surely follow in the event that "the traction trust" is completed. Mr. Ivins says that according to the "traction trust's" program the people of New York will be absolutely at the trust's mercy. He says that his organization will endeavor to demonstrate to the people that the city should have certain rights which are not contemplated in the "traction trust's" program, and he makes it plain not only that his organization will fight that program to the bitter end, but also that the schemes of this "traction trust" spells disaster to the best interests of the people of New York.