

"Vote Buying by Good Men"--And This From The Washington Post!

The Washington Post says: "Public opinion is the only force that can effectively legislate in this behalf" (contributions by corporations to political funds). The Post adds:

"Now there is no doubt that public opinion is very much opposed to vote-buying by bad men. The difficulty is that public opinion not only condones, but approves, vote-buying by good men. There's the rub. If good men would cease the practice we would soon put a stop to it by bad men. And this we may be assured of—bad men will buy votes as long as, and no longer than, good men set the example."

This Post editorial should have appeared in the column "Something Doing in the Country."—the space used by the Post to poke fun at country newspapers.

Public opinion has much to do with legislation and the enforcement of law; but public sentiment alone will not provide the remedy for the evil under discussion. When it is known that rich and influential men who violate the law will be punished even as the poor offender is punished; when it is known that prison cells were built for the rich and powerful, as well as for the poor and helpless, who commit crimes, then influential men will hesitate to do wrong.

It is not true that public opinion condones "vote-buying by good men." Good men do not buy votes. Good men do not set this vicious example. The trouble is that men who do buy votes, men who persistently violate the laws of God and man are continually held up by great newspapers as models of good citizenship. The people do not know that these men are engaged in the work of "vote-buying." If they did know the truth—if the Washington Post and other newspapers would only tell them the truth—these men would lose caste very rapidly.

Take, for instance, the case of Chauncey M. Depew. For years he was pointed out by the great newspapers of the country as a model citizen. The editors of these newspapers knew that Mr. Depew was elected to the United States senate to represent a great railroad system, and that, although he had taken an oath to protect public interests, his sole concern was for the special interests of his corporation employers. While many men knew of the disagreeable facts with respect to Depew's service in the senate, the masses remained in ignorance and simply because the editors of the great newspapers of the country were engaged in a systematic effort to build up Depew, where they should have barred his entrance into any office of honor and trust. So soon as Depew's insurance company transactions were made public, his star began to

Now There Will be "Something Doing in the Country."

descend and now it has fallen. The explanation is that the revelations concerning Depew came under such circumstances and with such force that the newspapers spread the revelations before their readers, and the American public found that Depew was not a "good man," but, on the contrary, was entirely untrustworthy. So in the case of former Senator Burton of Kansas. When his wrong doing was exposed by the press generally, Burton was doomed. So with the late Senator Mitchell.

But what about the several men now serving in the United States senate who, while posing as representatives of the people, are known to be the tools of special interests? These men are known by newspaper editors generally. Occasionally we see in the funny columns of some of these newspapers, humorous references to the serious fact that this man is a Standard Oil senator, or that man a railroad senator, or the other man an express company senator. But where is that unanimity of serious action on the part of the American press so conspicuous in the cases of Burton, Depew, Mitchell and others? Why does not the press move against these haughty and influential men, representatives of great corporations and unfaithful to the people they are presumed to serve, with the same vigor employed in the movement against Depew, Burton and Mitchell?

Note the respectful manner in which the editors of some of our great newspapers treat men who, in the senate and house, are known to be more concerned for the protection of special interests than for the public welfare. As a rule these men are of ordinary intelligence. But because of the attention paid them by the great newspapers, their mental capacity is exaggerated; in many cases the people come to regard these men as rich in intellectual endowment and as deserving of a place among the great minds and true characters of history. In many instances these representatives of special interests have serious faults, though they are seldom heard of in the public press. Many of them have eccentricities which, if made known, would not contribute to their popularity. But these are not mentioned.

Note, on the other hand, how some eccentricity or fault of the public man who seeks to do

his duty to the people is presented to the public through the columns of some of our great newspapers. Several years ago Mr. Baker, representative in congress from a Brooklyn district, returned to the railroad companies the passes that had been sent to him, saying that he did not believe he had a right to accept these passes. Mr. Baker was derided and the paragraphers in the daily newspapers habitually poked fun at the Brooklyn representative. The very men who should have been the first to commend him for his brave and courageous stand were the first to make fun of him. Mr. Baker was an earnest man and spoke with deep feeling. In the contemplation of corporate imposition upon the people, he did not have that magnificent poise so easily maintained by men who think that government was created for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many. He spoke earnestly and perhaps it seemed to some that he did not, at all times, display dignity in his oratory. But it seems that he spoke truth, and that whenever his vote was recorded, it was on the side of the public interests as against the special interests. Yet in his later days in congress the newspapers habitually poked fun at him, and those of his associates, who were representatives of the corporations rather than of the people, were emboldened by these newspaper gibes to subject the Brooklyn representative to open sneers and insults on the floor of the house.

When the American people submit continually to wrong, the press is more to blame than any other influence. Whenever the people are placed in possession of the facts, they may be depended upon to move along the lines of common honesty. They have never "condoned vote buying," whether votes were bought by bad men or by the Washington Post's impossible "good men." They depend greatly, however, upon the press for their information; and if, at times, they seem to be giving their approval to "vote buying by good men," it is because they have been kept in ignorance of the vote-buying or other wrong doing perpetrated by those whom they have been taught by the press to regard as "good men."

Bad men will buy votes as long as there are votes to be bought and immunity from punishment to be obtained. Good men have never set an example of "vote-buying." The American people will learn to place the proper estimate upon the character of their public men whenever the noblest of professions returns to the motto of the Salem Register: "Here shall the press the people's right maintain, Unawed by influence and unbribed by gain; Here patriot Truth her glorious precepts draw, Pledged to Religion, Liberty and Law."

A TERRIBLE ARRAIGNMENT

M. Makeby, Edenton, North Carolina, writes: "Enclosed you will find a piece of the Southern Churchman, which has an article from an English magazine, which, I think, shows very well what we, as a nation, are drifting to. What we need is to arouse the people to stop and consider. When we can get them to do that we will come out all right, but we often suffer before we do that. I send you the slip, thinking that you may not have seen it, and might make use of some portions of it."

Below is an extract from the Southern Churchman published at Richmond, Va., article:

"The alliance between organized wealth and conscienceless political leadership is the determining and constant factor of American public life. From the smallest municipality in the country up to the United States senate there is not an elected body of any kind that does not contain some members who are the nominees and representatives of one or other of the trusts, and charged with the well-understood mission of protecting its interests at any cost. The moral lawlessness thus engendered engenders in its turn physical lawlessness. Is it a small fact, for instance, that 3,337 persons should have been lynched in the United States between 1882 and 1903? Is it a small fact that the number of murders and homicides should now be four and a half times as great for each million of the population as it was twenty years ago—that between eight and ten thousand Americans should be annually murdered? Is it a small fact that the

present secretary of war, himself a lawyer and an ex-judge, should feel impelled to describe the administration of criminal law in America as 'a disgrace to our civilization,' and should be able to prove his contention by an irrefutable appeal to judicial records? Since 1885 there have been in the United States 131,951 murders and homicides and 2,286 executions. In 1885 the number of murders was 1,808. In 1904 it had increased to 8,482. The number of executions in 1885 was 108. In 1904 the number was 110.

"These are terrible facts and they raise terrible problems. A debauched political system, an atmosphere of private and public corruption and lawlessness, an inefficient judiciary, and surrounding and permeating everything else, a spirit of materialism more crude, more grasping, more pitiless than any the world has yet experienced—whither will so portentous a combination lead? No one can pretend to say. Even Americans do not attempt with any confidence to forecast the future of their civilization; the data are perhaps too many, the conditions too novel and complex. The industrial future alone is full of menacing possibilities. Labor in America, already violent in its methods, is just becoming conscious both of politics and economics; conscious, that is to say, that by organization it may hope to control the ballot box, and conscious, too, that there is something for it to learn in the trusts and in Wall Street. The new American unionism is deliberately preparing to fight monopoly with monopoly. Its objective is the same as the trusts'—to crush competition. One drives the independent company ruthlessly to the wall, the

other painfully discourages the blackleg. The union boycotts, the trust blacklists; the union has its pickets, the trust its paid spies; each limits output, each restricts membership; one fixes a minimum price, the other a minimum wage; both clamor for special legislation, and both in their different spheres seek a complete monopoly—the one of production, the other of labor. The concentration of wealth and management in a few hands is gradually heading off opportunity, and giving to the struggle with labor the aspects and the ferocity of a class war; and labor, already embittered by that very lack of natural distinctions between class and class that theoretically should have softened the relations of employers and employed, retaliates upon capital with dynamite, the rifle and the torch, feeling that force alone can bring the high Toryism of America to its knees. No one can contemplate these phenomena without deep misgivings, deeper in the case of America than in that of any other country because of the absence of those ideals of social welfare and conduct that elsewhere might mitigate the harshness of materialism."

NO UNREST?

In a newspaper interview, Speaker Cannon said, "There is very little unrest in this country just now." Mr. Cannon ought to take a peep into the inner councils of Iowa republicans or of Pennsylvania republicans. He would conclude that there is considerable "unrest" to say nothing of the demands from republicans in other states that their party do something to justify its claim as "the party of the people."