

## Trying Times for a Washington Organ

Hereinafter are two editorials taken from the October 17 issue of the Washington (D. C.) Post.

In one editorial the Post protests against a local extortion, bitterly criticising certain railroads that, in its view, have imposed upon the people of the national capital. In that editorial the Post says that the railroads responsible for this local imposition are "inviting disaster," also; "sometimes it seems as though the railroad men of the country were bent upon their own destruction. They certainly betray signs of madness that precedes destruction."

In the other editorial the Post pokes fun at Governor Smith of Georgia, and Thomas E. Watson for their criticism of monopoly and it suggests that what it calls the "octopus chasers" should "adjourn the case until the south gets at least fifty thousand miles additional railroad lines to chase." The Post says that it is plain that railroad men will not build railroads in the presence of all the present day criticism.

Here is the Post editorial protesting against the imposition upon the people of the District of Columbia:

### TAX ON THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

It is now proposed that the seven railroads enjoying a monopoly of passenger travel to and from the national capital shall impose a tax upon every passenger going and coming, for the ostensible purpose of recovering the sum of \$15,000,000 alleged to have been expended in construction of the new Union station. If the general passenger and traffic managers of the railroads had conspired for a year, they could not have devised a more ingenious and certain method of arousing public resentment at the very time when it should be allayed. The imposition of a tax, however small, upon every man visiting Washington is such conspicuous evidence of the irresistible propensity of the railroads to get "all the traffic will bear" that it can not be overlooked. The smallness and meanness of the tax draw attention to it. Not only is every ticket over \$1 to be taxed twenty or twenty-five cents, but every fare under \$1 is to be increased ten per cent.

Sometimes it seems as though the railroad men of the country were bent upon their own destruction. They certainly betray signs of the madness that precedes destruction. Have they not harped upon the injustice of the public avalanche of condemnation? Have they not held up their hands to Roosevelt and begged him to call off the enraged people? Have they not asked for federal control as an escape from still more odious state control? And yet, with congress about to convene, the railroads propose that every person going in or out of the gates of the national capitol shall pay toll to them to pay for an improvement that has already been paid for in large part by the government! Congress was more than liberal with the railroads entering Washington. It gave them space and cash and rights of way. Now the railroads propose that the people, who are the government, shall pay extra rates until they have paid for all of the improvements! Does anybody suppose that the rates will be lowered after the railroads have recouped the cost of the Union station? Not at all. If the people will stand for the cost of one Union station, paid for in petty taxes, they will stand for half a dozen stations. Thus the railroads will get back all they have expended, and a permanent tribute in addition. Why did the railroad companies work so hard to get an appropriation from congress, if the people are to pay for the whole thing after all? Or, why did not the railroads induce congress to hand over \$15,000,000 more from the treasury, in-

stead of forcing the people to pay this tax? It amounts to the same thing.

If the railroad managers of the country agree to the plan to impose a tax on passengers visiting Washington, and attempt to enforce it, they will invite disaster. Their recent experience with public opinion ought to have taught them to keep their hands from the buzz saw. Is it any wonder that men of moderate views are sometimes forced to admit that the public outcry against the railroads has much to commend it? Is it any wonder that the railroads get the worst of it so long as they are managed in such fashion?

Here is the Post editorial sneering at the efforts of southern statesmen to obtain for their people the same relief from railroad imposition which the Post demands for the people of the national capital:

### OCTOPUS CHASING

A distinguished citizen of that state declares that West Virginia is in sore need of additional railroads aggregating 2,000 miles. Between the Potomac and the Rio Grande there is need of additional railroads aggregating 80,000 miles. As the crow flies it is sixty miles from Somerset, Ky., to Glasgow, Ky., and the crow can journey from one to the other of these towns without crossing a railroad track, though it is as fair a land as the eye of bird ever viewed and rich in most of the natural energies of field, of forest and of mine.

But this is the age of octopus chasing. Where is the capitalist that will construct a railroad for Hoke Smith and Tom Watson to play with? Mr. Moses Wetmore is a man of millions, proprietor of a baronial estate in the Ozark region that might challenge the envy of a Hapsburg or a Hohenzollern; but Mr. Moses Wetmore is not building railroads for the octopus chasers to practice on. It is narrated that Mr. Tom Watson has become disreputably rich, and in an honest way, but Mr. Watson is not making railroads for Mr. Hoke Smith to toss in a blanket. Mr. Hoke Smith is also disgracefully rich—a millionaire, his wealth honestly acquired, we make not the smallest doubt—but Mr. Smith is not building any railroads for Tom Watson or Ben Tillman to chase.

There is a deal of amusement in the octopus chase. We all got our money's worth out of the Hepburn-Tillman bill, but it has pretty nearly stopped railroad building, except extensions and connections imperatively demanded.

We are not picking any quarrel with the octopus chasers. They are a noble army of patriots, triumphant and militant. They are all right; but we do believe they would be public benefactors to adjourn the chase until the south gets at least 50,000 miles additional railroad lines to chase.

## Washington Letter

Washington, D. C., October 28.—Several days ago the state of Michigan led off with the election of two delegates to the republican national convention. They were instructed to vote for Uncle Joe Cannon, first, last and all the time. People in Washington are beginning to think that they will have ample opportunity to cast their votes more than once, for it is only too apparent that the Taft boom has gone glimmering, Foraker has flickered out while Hughes has not had a look in.

Following swiftly upon the election of these two republican delegates comes the election of two democratic delegates from Ohio. They are Mr. George W. Sigafos and Mr. Henry L.

Yount. Mr. Yount, for personal reasons, withdrew and has been succeeded by Mr. Charles C. Marshall of Shelby county. These are the first democratic delegates to be selected in the United States. Mr. Marshall is an active democrat and prosecuting attorney of Shelby county; his colleague, Mr. Sigafos, is auditor of Darke county and present cashier of the Farmers National bank of Greenville, Ohio. Both are devoted friends of Mr. Bryan and are for him first, last and all the time. It would appear, therefore, that up to the present moment, Mr. Bryan and Speaker Cannon are tied for the nomination.

People who have watched politics for some years past will find a certain historical, though not a news, interest in the difficulties into which the Mercantile National Bank of New York has been plunged by the collapse of the copper corner in which its president, F. Augustus Heinze, was deeply involved. Mr. Heinze retires from

the presidency of the bank. The statement is made that in order to secure William B. Ridgely, the present comptroller of the currency, to take his place, an offer has been made to that gentleman and his friends of a large block of stock in the bank at \$200 a share. The stock for many years has been selling for three hundred or more.

That is the immediate situation. The story of the past seems a little interesting. During the 1896 campaign the treasurer of the democratic national committee was William P. St. John. Mr. St. John was at the time of his appointment president of the Mercantile National bank. He had built that bank up to a position of great prosperity in New York. He was largely interested in its stock and drew from the bank a princely salary. But he believed in bimetalism; in the monetary system which would be for the benefit of the people rather than for that of the banks. So they forced him out of the presidency of his bank. He accepted the blow with sorrow, but without complaint. I knew him well and talked with him at the time, and while I understood the measure of the sacrifice he had made, I heard no word of criticism on his part. He handled the finances of the democratic national committee in a year when every bank and every trust and every monopolistic corporation in the United States was contributing to Mark Hanna, and then when the power of money defeated the democratic party he went to his modest home on East Thirty-fourth street, turned his face to the wall and died. If there was ever a martyr to Wall Street, William P. St. John was one.

It is interesting to note that the directors of the Mercantile National bank who forced St. John out, put Heinze in. Silver as money was to them most obnoxious. Copper as a commodity to speculate in did not seem to affront them. The man who honestly, even though some may think mistakenly, was striving to improve the currency system of the country for the people's good was swiftly ejected. The man who has notoriously for more than ten years been engaged in the most fierce and relentless stock-gambling game, a game which I personally know to have sent many men to the penitentiary, was installed as president.

It is true that Heinze is now out of the Mercantile National bank. It is true also that the bank itself, though a large one and always a prosperous one, is but one cog in the financial system of the country. I tell the story here simply because it seems to me a symptom of what the banks of New York's financial center have been doing in the past and are willing to do in the future.

Speaker Cannon suggested the other day that it was time to elect a president who would "keep on his own side of the fence." Lest his remark should be a little above the heads of his audience, he explained that he meant a president who would attend to the affairs of the executive office and not insist upon running both houses of congress as well. When the fathers of the republic formulated the constitution they thought they laid out a legal fence, which the executive, or the president, could not overleap. When in later days the city of Washington was laid out its projectors with a certain childlike simplicity thought they were going to keep the legislative and the executive branches from overlapping by putting the Capitol and the White House nearly two miles apart. They did not foresee telephones, trolleys, swift cabs and above all the fact that the growing influence of the president has made it the ambition of every congressman and senator to live as near the White House as possible. The side of the fence that the dispenser of patronage occupies is the one which too many of the members of the legislative branch are eager to occupy.

But after all, is it not a fair retort to Speaker Cannon that it might be worth while to elect a speaker who would keep on his own side of the fence. Theoretically the business of the speaker is to preserve order, to direct debate, to appoint committees and to recognize those who desire to address the house. Speaker Cannon is not the first to arrogate to himself the right to say whether a bill shall have a hearing, or whether a vote shall be taken. He sneers at the president for not keeping on his side of the fence separating the execution and the making of the laws. Hasn't the distinguished speaker, himself a candidate for the presidential nomination, rather overstepped the boundary between the proper functions of a presiding officer and the assumed powers of a legislative autocrat?

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