

Washington Letter

Washington, D. C., November 18.—The fall elections are over and the maneuvering for the presidential nominations begins. In the republican organization the situation is complicated by the indefinite, one could say, unfair attitude of the president toward the third term. Theodore Roosevelt is above all else an astute politician. More than any other individual he is responsible for the factional quarrel in Ohio. The fight waged upon Senators Foraker and Dick was originally his fight. How he adroitly drew Secretary Taft and Congressman Burton into the lists and made his quarrel appear to be theirs is now political history. The president has not played fair with either Taft or Burton. The latter was pushed into a hopeless fight against Tom Johnson. If elected mayor of Cleveland the president would have removed an able congressman who has always opposed the extravagance of the present administration, whether it took the form of a huge navy, or vast internal improvements. If defeated, the influence of Burton in republican circles would be materially weakened. In either event the president would be the gainer. It is little wonder therefore that he said the day after election that "the results have been extremely gratifying to me."

But if the president's treatment of Burton was bad, his treatment of Taft has been worse.

No sincere proponent of the presidential candidacy of Secretary Taft would have launched his boom so early and so inopportune as did the president, and then have allowed it to stagnate because of silence on the question of the third term. President Roosevelt could even now put an end to his own candidacy for re-nomination by an unequivocal declaration, and he could insure the nomination of Taft by coupling with such a statement a mere expression of opinion that the secretary of war is best adapted of all republican statesmen to carry out his policies. Instead, he kills the Taft boom by his silence. He compromises his friend's chances by stirring up trouble in Ohio, knowing full well that the republican national convention will be loath to nominate a man who comes with a factional difference to settle in his own—a pivotal state.

Secretary Taft has been used either with his consent or without realizing it, as the president's stalking horse, to feel the third term sentiment of the nation. Everywhere that his presidential aspirations have been pushed they have carried as a burdensome rider the possibility of a third term for Roosevelt. The result has been that Taft's chances have waned, while Roosevelt's have waxed fat.

What the president has done in Ohio, and to Ohio's presidential aspirants, I stated some time since, he was trying to do in New York. The seeming purpose of the president is to stir up factional feeling in any pivotal state where a likely candidate appears. The republican national convention will be as unwilling to nominate Hughes, for instance, if there is factional warfare in New York state, as it will be to nominate Taft because of a like condition in Ohio.

Ever since Governor Hughes loomed large on the presidential horizon, the president has shown a disposition to arraign the administration faction in New York state against him. This opposition has even gone to the extent of presidential interference, at least indirectly, with proposed legislation—as witnessed the defeat of the Hughes direct nominations bill in the last legislature. In fact, back of all this anti-Hughes activity can be found the presidential determination to control the delegation of his own state to the next republican national convention. Such control, of course, would be fatal to the presidential aspirations of Governor Hughes. Within a week John A. Stewart, president of the New York League of Republican clubs, Representatives Bennet, Olcott, and Herbert Parsons, State Chairman Timothy Woodruff, Speaker Wadsworth of the New York legislature, William Barnes, jr., the boss of Albany county, National Committeeman William L. Ward, and many others equally influential and prominent in New York politics will appear in Washington to confer with the president. Mr. Barnes has been quoted as saying "the republican party in New York state can not afford to have a fight. We came out splendidly on election, but for all that we can not afford to have further factional differences."

All of which, and much more that Barnes and others said, goes to show that a factional war between republicans in New York state is actually on. If the republicans of New York expect to smooth out their troubles by invoking the aid of President Roosevelt, they have not profited by the experience in other states where the president has taken a hand. In fact factional quarrels in the different states are the very means by which the president hopes to insure his own nomination. Thus by a process of elimination will the possible republican nominees be rejected until but one name remains—and that name is Theodore Roosevelt. Anomalous as it may seem, thus the arch-agent of all the discord that will result in the repudiation of all other candidates will in the end be turned to that harmony may be restored. Under apparent pressure he will accept the nomination to save his party and his country, and the Theodore Roosevelt who, under no circumstances, would run again, will be a candidate for a third presidential term. At least that is the kind of politics that a great majority of the unprejudiced correspondents in Washington believe the president is playing. It may be good politics from his standpoint to obtain a nomination, but he seems to forget that the real reckoning after all must take place on election day.

The story is current in Washington that when the fleet of battleships leaves Hampton Roads on its tour around Cape Horn to San Francisco—and thereafter to nobody knows where, President Roosevelt will personally review it at the start. It is asserted that he will go to the Roads and dispatch the fleet upon a mission which may be one of enormous importance to the nation. That he should do so is not a matter of very great significance, except as it shows his strenuous inclination to make out of the United States a fighting power. We can look back over the whole lists of our presidents from George Washington to the present incumbent of that office and we can find not one who did not stand emphatically for peace rather than for war. There have been men who had to face in that office very grave conditions. As a rule they did all that could be done to avoid armed conflict with foreign peoples. Thomas Jefferson encountered the hostility of England and averted as far as he could actual war. But when the war was forced upon us the nation gave a good account of itself. Andrew Jackson with whom the friends of the president today are fond of drawing a parallel, averted another war. Every one who has studied the life and the public papers of Lincoln knows how that great statesman and patriot struggled to prevent the war which rent the north and the south in twain. And as we come to later days we find that William McKinley stood steadfastly against the Spanish war and only entered upon it because of political forces which he could not control. The record of history declares that the great statesmen of this country have stood always for peace. The news of the day shows only too clearly that the president now in the White House is ready to invite war. He may be checked. Only a few days ago two of the most prominent financiers of New York came to Washington and told him bluntly that in the present condition of the American banks and trust companies a war would be disastrous. Indeed Mr. J. P. Morgan declared that a war could not be financed and that should one occur it would result in the gravest disaster to the financial institutions of the United States. Mr. Morgan went on to say that the attacks of the administration upon commercial interests had done enough without the menace to international peace which would result from the transfer of the United States fleet from the Atlantic to the Pacific coast.

That menace is not yet thoroughly determined. Nor is the meaning of the transfer thoroughly understood. Diplomats are necessarily courteous concerning it. Navy officers are compelled to be silent. But it is worth while calling attention to the fact that the admiral in command of the fleet, Robley D. Evans, at a banquet given him by a New York club a few nights ago had so little sense of the responsibility of his position that he declared that whether the fleet went into the Pacific ocean for "a fight or a frolic" it would give a good account of itself. There is only one Pacific power with which a fight might occur. Admiral Evans' speech should put him in the same category with former Admiral Coghlan who, at the same club, recited some doggerel concerning the German emperor with the refrain at the end of each line, "Me unt Gott."

A week ago it was announced that Secretary

Taft, who is wandering about the world at the expense of the American taxpayers, had changed the plans for his tour. It was then said that instead of going from Asia to Europe and thus reaching the United States by an eastern route, he would come back directly. Now the report is that he will continue his plan for circumnavigating the globe, cross the Siberian plains and come back through Moscow, Berlin, Paris and London. Incidentally the people of the United States pay the freight, which is not small. One wonders what the sudden change in the Taft plan means. An Ohio politician of some prominence said to me today that it meant that the election results in Ohio had convinced Secretary Taft of the hopelessness of his cause, and that therefore he would complete his tour of the great countries of the world leaving his representatives in the United States to press his candidacy as they thought best. This seems plausible. On the other hand Senator Warner, of Missouri, told me today that the Taft movement had attained such proportions that there was no question of its success. Secretary Taft can go where he chooses, said the senator, he will be nominated in the next republican national convention and will be elected. President Roosevelt will not allow his name to be used. There are the varying opinions. No one can tell which is the accurate one. But it might be worth while for the people of the United States to consider why they have members of the cabinet, notably a secretary of war, to whom they pay twelve thousand dollars a year, and who are of so little importance to the government that they can travel around the world, drawing their salaries, drawing their traveling expenses, furnished all the time with United States men of war when an ocean trip is necessary, and still the department of which this particular official is the head, goes on without interruption to its business. Secretary Taft has been secretary of war for practically two terms. During that time he has been at the war department for scarcely two months out of a year. It is true that some of his absences have been because of trips to Panama or to the Philippines. But there has been no such a record of absence from the office made by any official of such standing. This last trip of his takes him away from American territory altogether. The war department goes on very comfortably in his absence. It seems possible that the people of the United States may wonder whether if the war department can be run while Secretary Taft is traveling on salary and expenses, it might not be run without him at all.

Among the politicians in Washington the chief talk on Monday of last week centered about the positive assertion of friends of Senator Foraker that he would without question become a candidate for the republican presidential nomination. Senator Foraker is not here. His colleague, and admirer, Senator Dick, smiles when asked concerning this rumor. But Senator Dick always smiles. He smiled when I asked him today what he thought about Tom Johnson's victory in Cleveland. A real true devotee of the Roosevelt administration, an admirer of Mr. Taft and of Secretary Garfield should have frowned bitterly at such maladrofit question. It would appear that the tears shed for the unfortunate Burton are not falling from the eyes of the Foraker faction.

The real immediate issue in the republican party is Mr. Roosevelt's own purpose. The White House reporters declare today that upon information coming direct from the executive office, they are able to say that the president will not re-iterate his expressed purpose of not being a candidate for some months—possibly not until the republican national convention meets. The correspondents of New York newspapers and New Yorkers visiting in Washington declare that every step now being made by Mr. Roosevelt in that state is directed toward preventing the selection of a Hughes delegation or even the increase of the influence of Governor Hughes in its politics. The only telegram of congratulation sent by the president into New York state was sent to an avowed antagonist of Governor Hughes. It is fair to say, however, that the president's own personal representative, Herbert Parsons, was so badly beaten as a result of his fusion with the Independence League that there was no good opportunity for a telegram other than of condolence. However the question arises, if the president is not himself a candidate, why is all the New York talk for a Roosevelt delegation and not a Taft delegation? No one here doubts that Mr. Taft is playing his

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