

CURRENT TOPICS

THE FIRST convention to be held in 1908, (republican state, of Florida) was called to meet at St. Augustine, February 6. The convention split in two, one body being known as "the office holders' convention," and the other body being known as the "anti-Taft convention." One convention instructed for Taft and the other elected an uninstructed delegation. Concerning the two conventions the Associated Press says: "The office holders' convention elected as delegates to the national convention J. N. Coombs, member of the national committee from Florida; Joseph E. Lee (colored), collector of internal revenue; Henry S. Hubb, receiver of the United States land office at Gainesville; M. C. MacFarland, collector of customs at Tampa, and four alternates. The anti-Taft convention elected as delegates Joseph N. Stripling, former United States attorney; J. De Hazzard, J. H. Dickerson, B. R. Robinson, the latter two colored, and four alternates. The congressional district conventions of the First and Second districts of Florida were held by each faction immediately after the adjournment of the state convention, and each of those conventions elected two delegates to the national convention, and adopted the same resolutions as the state convention of their respective factions had adopted. The marshal and a dozen policemen were on duty in the hall and were frequently called upon to eject unruly delegates. Nine-tenths of both conventions were negroes."

FOR THE THIRD time within thirty days the United States supreme court delivered, on February 3, an opinion construing laws adversely to the contentions of organized labor. Referring to former decisions the Washington correspondent for the Associated Press said: "The first of the decisions was rendered January 6, in the case of some railway employees who sought to secure damages under what is known as the employers' liability law, making railroads responsible for injuries resulting from the negligence of fellow servants which law the court held to be unconstitutional. The second important finding in this line was announced January 23, when the Erdman arbitration act, forbidding the discharge of employees because they are members of labor unions, was also declared to be invalid. The verdict rendered February 3 was in the case of Loewe vs. Lawler, the latter a member of the Hatters' Union and the former a hat manufacturer of Danbury, Conn. The case involved the applicability of the seventh section of the Sherman anti-trust law to conspiracies by labor unions to boycott articles entering into interstate trade. Under the terms of that provision the complaining party may collect three times the amount of his loss if the charge is sustained. The union fought the case on the ground that the law was inapplicable to such organizations; but the court, whose opinion was announced by Chief Justice Fuller, failed to accept this view and in effect held that the unions could not be permitted to interfere by boycott with the free exchange of commerce between the states. There was no dissenting opinion."

AFTER QUOTING precedent and reciting the complaint in the case the supreme court said: "The averments here are that there was an existing interstate traffic between plaintiffs and citizens of other states and that for the direct purpose of destroying such interstate traffic, defendant combined not merely to prevent plaintiffs from manufacturing articles then and there intended for transportation beyond the state, but also to prevent the vendees from reselling the hats which they had imported from Connecticut, or from further negotiating with plaintiffs for the purchase and transportation of such hats from Connecticut to the various places of destination. So that although some of the means whereby the interstate traffic was to be destroyed were acts within a state and some of them were in themselves as a part of their obvious purpose and effect beyond the scope of federal authority, still, as we have seen, the acts must be considered as a whole and the plan is open to condemnation, notwithstanding a negligible amount of interstate busi-

ness might be affected in carrying it out. If the purposes of the combination were, as alleged, to prevent any interstate transportation at all, the fact that the means operated at one end before physical transportation commenced at the other end after the physical transportation ended, was immaterial. Nor can the act in question be held inapplicable because the defendants were not themselves engaged in interstate commerce. The act made no distinction between classes. It provided that 'every' contract, combination or conspiracy in restraint of trade was illegal. The records of congress show that several efforts were made to exempt by legislation organizations of farmers and laborers from the operation of the act and that all these efforts failed, so that the act remained as we have it before us."

DANIEL DAVENPORT, of Bridgeport, Conn., associated with James M. Beck of New York as counsel for the plaintiffs in the case, made the following statement regarding the decision: "The United States supreme court by its decision in the case of Loewe vs. Lawler, declared illegal and criminal under the Sherman anti-trust act all combinations of workmen to boycott the interstate business of manufacturers who sell their goods in other states than that of manufacture. So long as the American Federation of Labor and other labor unions resort to the boycott as a weapon of attack upon the interstate business of manufacturers, they are illegal and criminal combinations, and it is the duty of the department of justice to proceed against them the same as against illegal and criminal combinations of capitalists. The court holds that the Sherman anti-trust act applies to combinations of workmen and of capitalists and for the same reasons." When asked for an expression of opinion in regard to the decision, Samuel Gompers, president of the American Federation of Labor, declined to make any comment.

HERMAN RIDDER, editor of the New York Staats Zeitung, recently visited the White House but, according to the New York correspondent for the Chicago Record-Herald, he was unable to see the president. This correspondent says that when informed that Mr. Ridder wanted to see him Mr. Roosevelt said: "Oh, it's that limburger envoy, hey?" and would not see the distinguished German-American editor. Mr. Ridder was cut to the quick by the reported utterance of the president, and said a few caustic things to this effect: "Perhaps Mr. Roosevelt, who is a politician, when he learns that more than fifty per cent of the population have German blood in their veins, may next time think twice before he slurs a citizen on account of his German birth or descent. He has known me quite well for many years, and he knows I have never been a candidate for public office nor sought a political favor for myself from any national or state administration, and that whatever I did I did as a matter of conviction and not as a matter of self-interest. I also have the greatest respect for every citizen who takes an active interest in politics, and I do not believe that this race is a subject for vulgar criticism."

IT IS CLAIMED by many republican politicians that Mr. Roosevelt sent his special message to congress at the time he did for the special purpose of checking the boom for Governor Hughes of New York. The Washington Herald of February 2 told this story: "If the old leaders in the senate and house had been right 'on the job' all the week President Roosevelt would have had no opportunity to present his special message Friday and thus 'muss up' the Hughes meeting of the New York Republican club. They were full of chagrin yesterday that they did not 'catch on' to the suspicious doings under their very noses. Thursday the telephone bell rang in Speaker Cannon's office at the capitol. The White House was on the other end of the wire, inquiring if the house of representative were to meet Friday. An affirmative reply

was given. Nothing more was thought of the matter. That same Thursday afternoon Senator Lodge was hustling around at the north end of the capitol. Usually the senate adjourns over Friday. Mr. Lodge was quietly ascertaining what senators had business they would like to present the following day. Thereupon he pleaded with the steering committee not to adjourn till Monday, as there was plenty of work to do. The bigwigs of the senate did not tumble to Mr. Lodge's real program and placidly acquiesced. Had they 'smelled the rat' President Roosevelt would not have had the chance to get before the country first. The senate could have been adjourned over Friday easily. Speaker Cannon could and would have done likewise with the house. That would have made it impossible for the president to deliver his special message before tomorrow. Congress was not in session yesterday, but its senators and representatives were generally discussing the president's remarkable words. The message has for the time being supplanted the politics of president-making and even side-tracked perusal of the Hughes speech. While opinion continues to vary as to the circumstances which impelled Mr. Roosevelt to pen this most remarkable document, there seems to be general unanimity, in the view that its object was to produce a marked effect upon the deliberations of the forthcoming national convention of the republican party. Following, as the message did, close on the heels of the mysterious suggestion to critics of Mr. Roosevelt's policies that if the Chicago convention did not nominate Taft on the first ballot it would be compelled to nominate Roosevelt on the second, it was impossible for senators and representatives to escape the suspicion that Mr. Roosevelt's hot shot was intended to emphasize that suggestion. A widespread feeling exists in the capitol that the message was born of the president's anger over the manner in which he had been attacked by prominent men and the press since the recent money panic, but that its development brought the conviction that he might kill two birds with one stone—slap back at his critics and do a little electioneering for the Roosevelt policies and Roosevelt or Taft."

THE CHICAGO Record-Herald and various Chicago dispatches say that Governor Johnson of Minnesota will soon issue a statement announcing his candidacy for the democratic nomination for the presidency. The Record-Herald says: "Direct information to this effect reached Chicago yesterday in a letter from a personal friend of Governor Johnson and who is also a member of the Minnesota state administration. Plans have been made for the consolidation of all party interests in Illinois on Governor Johnson and the selection of fifty-four delegates from the state to the Denver convention who will be uninstructed for the presidency. One of the paragraphs of the letter from St. Paul reads as follows: 'Such pressure has been brought to bear upon Governor Johnson from representative democrats in nearly every state in the union that he has determined to make clear his personal views on national topics. Such a statement will come from Governor Johnson early next week. The statement will be perfectly clear in its terms and make his nomination by the national convention entirely possible and acceptable to him, if his fellow democrats see fit to choose him as their leader.' The understanding among some of the Illinois politicians is that a Johnson movement will be launched in a majority of the states. Party leaders in Chicago were reticent as to the possibility of an expansion of the Johnson boom until it reached a size sufficient to swamp William J. Bryan's aspirations. More evidence of the active but quiet work which is being done for Governor Johnson developed with the appearance of pamphlets attacking Mr. Bryan for again seeking the democratic nomination, charging him with being solely responsible for the repeated defeats of the democratic national ticket and pointing to Governor Johnson as a candidate who can carry every state which Bryan can and at least ten more which it is claimed Bryan can not win."