

missions are still guessing what the position of the court will be on each new attempt at regulation.

From 1893 to 1898 the money question overshadowed other issues, and for several years after 1898 the questions of imperialism occupied the first place, but during both periods there was a strong demand among the people for railroad legislation, although corporate influence at the national capital kept this demand from finding expression in laws. The democratic national platform of 1896 contained the following plank:

"The absorption of wealth by the few, the consolidation of our leading railway systems, and the formation of trusts and pools require a stricter control by the federal government of those arteries of commerce. We demand the enlargement of the powers of the interstate commerce commission, and such restriction and guarantees in the control of railroads as will protect the people from robbery and oppression."

In 1900 the platform repeated its demand for the enlargement of the interstate commerce law, and this demand was again repeated in the democratic national platform of 1904. The republican platforms were strangely silent upon the subject, and it is now known that the railroads showed their appreciation of that party's silence by liberal contributions and by the furnishing of passes.

Notwithstanding the fact that the republican national platform of 1904 studiously avoided the railroad question, President Roosevelt embodied in his annual message, sent to congress the following December, a recommendation in favor of additional regulation. The country was startled, the democrats were delighted, the republican leaders were provoked, and the railway magnates were highly offended. The president called attention to the fact that under the supreme court decisions the interstate commerce commission possessed simply "the bare power to denounce a particular rate as unreasonable," without the power to declare a reasonable rate. He not only asked for more stringent legislation in regard to rates and rebates, but to emphasize his recommendation he held out the fear of "a still more radical policy" if the government did not "in increasing degree supervise and regulate the working of the railways engaged in interstate commerce." By this "more radical policy" he meant the government ownership of railroads. Twice since then he has declared in his messages that effective regulation is the only thing that will prevent government ownership.

The Esch-Townsend bill, which was framed in accordance with his suggestions, passed the house by a practically unanimous vote, receiving the support of republicans and democrats alike. The railroads made no effort to defeat the bill in the house, and, therefore, we have no way of knowing what members would have voted against the bill if their votes would have defeated it—the railroad lobbyists are considerate enough not to require a show of hands except where a show will count. A determined fight was made against the bill in the senate and literary bureaus, established by the railroads, supplied editorials to all the papers that would use them. When a national convention of business men was called to endorse the president's program, the railroads got up an opposition convention. A majority of the republican senators entered into an agreement to prevent the passage of the bill in the form which the president asked, and the republican members of the committee which reported the bill entrusted it to the leadership of Senator Tillman, of South Carolina, in order to emphasize the fact that they regarded it as a democratic measure. Two important amendments were secured by the democrats—an anti-pass amendment, introduced by Senator Culberson, of Texas, and an amendment, introduced by Senator Stone, of Missouri, restoring the criminal clause which the Elkins act had repealed. A number of important amendments were introduced by Senator LaFollette, of Wisconsin, and supported by the democrats, but they were voted down by the republican majority. One of these amendments authorized the interstate commerce commission to ascertain the present value of the railroads, a measure which President Roosevelt has since endorsed.

The democrats formed a combination with the Roosevelt republicans to secure the passage of the bill along the lines laid down by the president, but at the last moment he effected a compromise with the railroad republicans of the senate, and, by conceding their demand in the matter of court review, secured almost the solid republican vote for the bill. The democrats felt aggrieved that the president should have

receded from his position when he could have secured what he wanted with the aid of the democrats, and the spirited discussion which followed resulted in some prominent additions to the president's Ananias club.

The new law is now being tried, and the results of the experiment are awaited with interest. It prohibits interstate passes, and this provision seems to be obeyed, but the cutting off of the pass increases the revenues of the road, for those now pay who used to ride free. Senator Foraker claims that the Elkins act should have the credit for stopping rebates, the recent prosecutions having been under that act; but no matter which act proves to be the most effective, the stopping of rebates is a distinct advantage to the railroads, for they now retain in their treasuries the money formerly returned to favored shippers.

A number of the state legislatures, stimulated by the example of the president (and no longer restrained by passes), undertook more effective legislation in local rates. All of the states in the northern Mississippi valley, and several southern states, reduced the passenger rate to two cents, and some of them made reductions in freight rates. These reductions are now being tested in the courts, and it is too early to predict the final result.



CENSORSHIP OF THE PRESS

The democrats of the senate and house will do well to watch the bill introduced by Senator Penrose on the 9th of December. It amends section 3893 of the revised statutes and purports to be a measure for the enforcement of the law against obscene literature, but a reading of the bill arouses the suspicion that it has another purpose. The amendment is so broad that it is a question if it does not establish a censorship of the press and vest in the postoffice department the right to arbitrarily exclude papers from the second class mailing privileges.

The bill should be so amended as to make it impossible for the postoffice department to exercise a censorship over political papers. We can not afford to subject political arguments to censorship.

The dangers involved in such a law far outweigh any good that could come from it. Freedom of press is essential to free government and in excluding obscene matter, care must be taken not to lodge in the postoffice department a discretion which will cover other matters.



"TOMORROW"

The Ohio republican platform which the Chicago Record-Herald claims was examined and approved by President Roosevelt and Mr. Taft favors "the reduction of representation in congress and the electoral college in all states of this union where white and colored citizens are disfranchised."

Is this a sop to the negro in the hope of soothing his wounded feelings? If it is not mere buncombe then why does not the republican congress, now in session, proceed along the proposed line?

It is "tomorrow" for tariff revision; "tomorrow" for currency and banking reform; "tomorrow" for vigorous and effective prosecution of trust magnates. And to the negro with respect to the proposition referred to it is "tomorrow" and it will be "tomorrow" forever and forever, because it is well understood that the republican party would not dare to reduce the representation as suggested.



WHO IS COPYING?

The Washington Post may not regard it as a serious mistake, but in a recent editorial it says that the Nebraska platform "repeats many of the paragraphs of the Taft platform adopted at Columbus—not word for word, of course, but meaning for meaning," and then it proceeds to specify. It quotes the republican platform as favoring "prosecution of illegal trusts, monopolists and all evil doers, both in the public service and in the commercial world, together with the enforcement of all wholesome measures which have made safer the guarantee of life, liberty and property." The Nebraska platform is quoted by the Post as follows: "We favor the vigorous enforcement of the criminal law against trusts and trust magnates, and demand the enactment of such additional legislation as may be necessary to make it impossible for a private monopoly to exist in the United States." This, the Post alleges, "is tweedledee and tweedledum drawn to a fine point."

In the first place, the language quoted from

the democratic platform of March 5 was copied verbatim from the Nebraska democratic platform of last September, so that if anybody "copied," the Taft managers have copied the democratic platform.

Will the Post make the correction and admit that the Nebraska democrats were in the field first, or will it allow the mistake to stand?

But, as a matter of fact, the two paragraphs are not at all alike. The republican platform asks for the prosecution of illegal trusts and monopolies. It does not ask for the enforcement of the "criminal law against trusts and trust magnates," neither does the republican platform demand "the enactment of such additional legislation as may be necessary to make it impossible for a private monopoly to exist in the United States." There is no suggestion in the republican plank, quoted by the Post, of additional legislation, while the Nebraska platform demands additional legislation. It not only demands additional legislation, but it specifies certain legislation which is demanded, as follows: "Among the additional remedies we specify three: First, a law preventing the duplication of directors among competing corporations; second, a license system which will, without abridging the right of each state to create corporations, or its right to regulate as it will foreign corporations doing business within its limits, make it necessary for a manufacturing or trading corporation engaged in interstate commerce to take out a federal license before it shall be permitted to control as much as twenty-five per cent of the product in which it deals, the license to protect the public from watered stock and to prohibit the control by such corporation of more than fifty per cent of the total amount of any product consumed in the United States; and, third, a law compelling such licensed corporations to sell to all purchasers in all parts of the country on the same terms, making due allowance for cost of transportation."

The Commoner is mailing a copy of the Nebraska platform to the editor of the Post and asks the Post to compare it with the Ohio platform. It will be seen at a glance that while the democratic platform is clear, emphatic and specific on each point, the republican platform is general, ambiguous and evasive. No matter what subject is dealt with, the Nebraska platform stands for something that can be understood, while the republican platform stands for something or nothing, according to the construction placed upon it, and anyone can place upon it the construction he likes.



NEBRASKA DEMOCRATIC EDITORS

The Nebraska Democratic Editorial Association will meet at Lincoln on March 31 to discuss plans for the coming campaign and to outline a policy of co-operation with the "volunteer" movement. President J. B. Donovan of the Madison Star-Mail has sent assurances to all democratic editors in Nebraska that the meeting will be interesting and profitable and urging all to attend. The democratic editors of Nebraska form a band of tireless workers for democracy. They have been loyal in season and out of season. Defeat was never decisive enough to discourage them, and victory has never left them puffed up and careless. They have held the banner aloft through dark days and bright days, always hopeful, always earnest, always loyal. Other states may have more democratic newspapers than Nebraska, but none has a better average of democratic newspapers, measured by any standard—editorially, locally or typographically. These democratic newspapers are strong factors in any campaign for the triumph of democratic principles, and they deserve and should have the hearty support of democrats in their respective communities. The democratic editors of other states should follow the example of their Nebraska colleagues and organize associations for the purpose of more thorough co-operation.



PLUTOCRACY'S DEFENDERS

Leslie's Weekly is one of the papers that habitually seek to deceive and mislead the public. It recently published an article entitled "Then Panic Stood at the Threshold," and the article has been published in the Official Time Table (No. 212) of the Pennsylvania railroad (which went into effect in February).

Leslie's Weekly condemns the Sherman anti-trust law and declares it a failure; it finds fault with the passage of that law and claims that it was enacted under pressure of "public clamor." It complains of the "denunciation of