

CURRENT TOPICS

WILLIAM J. CONNER, chairman of the democratic state committee for New York, created quite a stir when he declared that he was ready to testify that places on the supreme court bench of the state have been auctioned off in Greater New York. He said some of these places came pretty high. A number of New York legislators insist that Connor's charge should be investigated. A clash came up between Conners and Murphy, the Tammany leader. Conners' term as chairman expires April 17, 1910. At a meeting of the state committee he announced that he would not be a candidate for re-election. Associated Press dispatches say that Murphy forced Conners from the field. The Press dispatch adds: "Three resolutions were adopted at the meeting. The first was in favor of a federal income tax; the second placed the committee on record as favoring the direct primary bills introduced by Senator Grady, and Assemblyman Frisbie; the third declared the republican party won the last national election upon the platform pledging it specifically to revise the tariff downward, but that in spite of that pledge 'the recent revision has in no way removed from the shoulders of the great mass of the people the burden of indirect taxation.'"

ARBITRATION proceedings between railroad companies and their employes are being held in the offices of the Illinois state railroad and warehouse commission at Chicago. Following is an extract from the Record-Herald's report: "In a plea for higher wages and fewer hours of labor for their husbands employed as switchmen in Chicago railroad yards women took the witness stand before the state board of arbitration yesterday and told of their daily struggles to make both ends meet. Never before, it was asserted, was the real story of the high cost of living so vividly portrayed or 'the short and simple annals of the poor' told with more dramatic effect. Butter and eggs were declared to be luxuries beyond the reach of the average working man's family, while one retail dealer swore that his trade among workmen now consisted largely of liver, kidneys and hearts where a few years ago the same families bought meats. In order that the little ones might be fed and clothed the mothers swore that the fathers had to work from twelve to sixteen hours a day, and every day in the month so that they never saw their children except while the latter were asleep. 'You don't mean that your children never see their father?' queried Attorney John Barton Payne for the railroads, while Mrs. Agnes Routh, 4338 Gladys avenue, was on the witness stand. 'Well, a week ago Sunday he was home, and just as sure as there is a heaven above us, the little ones made such a fuss over him that he did not get outside the door all day, though he intended to go to work in the afternoon. They hardly ever see him.'"

THE ANTHRACITE coal trust was arraigned in the federal court in Philadelphia by James C. McReynolds, special assistant to the United States attorney general. According to the Associated Press report Mr. McReynolds charged that seven of the nine coal-carrying railroads entering the hard coal fields of Pennsylvania are in a conspiracy to stifle trade. On behalf of the government he asked the court to issue an injunction to break up the alleged monopolistic control of the domestic fuel and also pleaded that the acquisitions by some of the railroads of stock in competing railroads and coal companies be declared a violation of the provisions of the Sherman anti-trust law. Mr. McReynolds laid great stress on the part the Temple Iron company has played in the coal fields, declaring that its organization clearly showed a conspiracy among the coal roads to control the anthracite trade to tidewater at New York. When independent mining companies, tiring of high freight rates, proposed building an independent railroad to New York, government counsel said the Temple Iron company, a small concern with a limitless charter in Pennsylvania, was purchased by the anthracite coal-carrying roads, they taking stock in proportion to the quantity of coal handled

by them. The Temple company, in turn, acquired the largest of the independent mines, and the proposed railroad to tidewater never was built. This act, Mr. McReynolds said, was one step in the alleged scheme to stifle interstate commerce in the coal trade. He also told of the inquisition by the Reading company, a holding concern of the Reading railway and the Reading Coal and Iron company, and of the acquisition by the Reading company of the Jersey Central railroad, a competing line to New York harbor, which in turn owned the Lehigh and Wilkesbarre Coal company. This Reading-Jersey Central combination, he said, owned sixty-three of the unmined coal districts in the anthracite regions, and was another step in the conspiracy.

AN ARTICLE written for the Washington (D. C.) Times was telegraphed over the country and printed in many newspapers. The Times article declares that the democratic members of the house are preparing to "eliminate William J. Bryan as the leader of the democratic party." Adding: "While there are coming to Washington various reports of what William Jennings Bryan wants to do in the next democratic national convention, there is rapidly crystallizing among the democrats of the house of representatives a feeling of hostility to the Nebraskan. The minority membership of the house is almost solid in its determination to eliminate Bryan either as a possible candidate for the presidency or as the controlling factor in the next convention. He still has some support in the Missouri and Nebraska delegations, but the southern states' representatives are against him, and outside of the two states mentioned there are very few who believe he ought to be allowed to interfere with the fate of the party."

SENATORS CLAPP and Cummins have made a minority report objecting to the Taft railroad bill. They declare that this measure would impair the efficiency of the existing statutes and that the creation of a "court of commerce" for which the measure provides would mean an expenditure "wholly unnecessary." The report holds that the creation of a court, the sole work of which would be to try railroad cases, would be fundamentally wrong, and reminds the senate of "the tremendous influences which inevitably surround the selection of such a tribunal. In the last three and a half years, the minority report asserts, there have been just twenty-six cases in which such a court would have had jurisdiction. In pointing out some of the things the senators think make the bill ineffective, they declare it includes all corporation common carriers and that there is nothing to prevent a holding corporation from issuing all the stocks and bonds it may please. What is termed the most "objectionable and harmful feature" is the proposed departure from the method of defending suits brought by carriers to make inoperative the orders of the commission. The minority senators claim that the section to govern consolidation of railway lines would permit water and rail routes to consolidate; would allow a railroad to buy up a competitive steamship line and that in effect all the railroads in the United States could be merged under a single corporation, provided they would be operated by electric power. Senators Cummins and Clapp reported to further amend the existing law to make all holding corporations come under the jurisdiction of the interstate commerce commission and would make the term "common carrier" embrace all corporations having a controlling interest in a common carrier.

PRESIDENT TAFT has written to H. P. Davis, United States Marshall at Cleveland, Ohio, this letter: "The White House, Washington, D. C., February 28, 1910.—My Dear Mr. Davis: I have your letter of February 26, in which you refer to criticisms of me for interfering in Ohio politics by suggesting the selection of Wade H. Ellis as chairman of the republican executive committee of Ohio. I am glad to have the opportunity of assuring you that I am not

in the slightest degree responsible for the selection of Wade H. Ellis as chairman of the republican executive committee of Ohio. The national committeeman, Mr. Vorys, and the head of the central committee, Mr. Brown, and Mr. Williams, who was chairman of the executive committee, came to Washington, and after what I assumed was a canvass of the state, notified me that for the general good of the party I should release Mr. Wade H. Ellis from his position in the department of justice (where he has been doing excellent work), and allow him to leave the government service in order to succeed Mr. Williams as head of the executive committee. Most reluctantly did I do this, and I did it also with the express understanding that I did not desire to interfere with local politics in Ohio; that I had no choice for governor; and that, although Mr. Ellis might succeed to the chairmanship, he would not, while there, represent me or act upon my suggestions. What I am most anxious about is that the republicans of Ohio shall have full and free expression with respect to the platform that they shall adopt and also as to the candidates to be selected. I do not think that there is now in the state any influence of an organized character that would seek to prevent such a full and free expression of the republicans. Certainly I shall neither have the power nor the inclination myself to exert any influence of this kind. Sincerely yours, William H. Taft."

JUDGE WRIGHT of the supreme court of the District of Columbia has ruled that United States senators may not refuse to answer the writ of mandamus from his court. Judge Wright has directed the three members of the printing committee to appear and show cause why they should not be required to consider the bid for furnishing paper to the senate of the Valley Paper company of Holyoke, Mass. "The court acted wholly within its jurisdiction and did not infringe on a single senatorial prerogative," according to Judge Wright. The judicial powers imposed by the constitution, he declared, extend to "all" cases arising under the laws of the United States, and the right of any person under the law should not be taken away from him, no matter how high the position the alleged wrong-doer may occupy. The act of the joint committee was ministerial, and not legislative, and for that reason the prerogative of the individual senator was not infringed upon, he held. He ruled that the district supreme court has the same authority to summon members of the committee on printing as it has to require any member of the cabinet to show cause why a writ of mandamus should not be issued; that senators are exempt only when the court would infringe on their legislative authority. The house members of the joint committee and their attorney were present, and immediately upon the conclusion of the reading of the decision notified Judge Wright that they were ready to proceed and hear the merits of the case. Judge Wright read from a decision of Chief Justice Marshall in support of his position. Senators Smoot, Bourne and Fletcher, members of the joint committee, said that was the senate's affair. They had been instructed by an overwhelming vote to disregard the summons of Judge Wright and not appear in court, and they would await such further orders as the senate might see fit to give. Senator Clark of Wyoming, chairman of the judiciary committee, and several of his associates say that Judge Wright's decision has not changed the situation. The three senators were only in default, not in contempt. They could not be arrested and punished. There was nothing further to be done until Judge Wright issued a writ of mandamus directing the senators to do something the senate had forbidden them to do.

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