

The Roosevelt-Taft Controversy

The Roosevelt-Taft fight goes merrily on. At one place in Ohio Mr. Taft said: "I've got tired of being lied about and held up to the country as having violated every rule of conduct when I am not conscious that I have violated any."

In another place he declared that much of the support now being given Colonel Roosevelt in his fight for a renomination is coming from men indicted by the Taft administration.

"To say that because a man supports you you are bound up with him is to say something not justified by the mere fact of his support. If it were justified I could say that Mr. Roosevelt ought not to get your votes because all the indicted people are supporting him, as they are, or most of them. Mr. Perkins, a director in the steel and harvester trusts, was influential enough in the last administration to prevent suits against them," he said. "He is not influential enough now. He is a contributor to Mr. Roosevelt's political fund."

In another place the president said: "My friends, Mr. Roosevelt has introduced the issue of the bosses. He says that I am the candidate of the bosses, and he is against them all and they are all against him. You have right here, in northern Ohio, the only man who is in full commission as a boss, Walter Brown of Toledo, and he is backed by Dan Hanna, who is associated with all the great interests in northern Ohio and they own three newspapers. Now that makes a fine collection, doesn't it? Three great metropolitan newspapers, a man with unlimited wealth, associated with all the great special interests and a boss to represent them in politics. And yet Mr. Roosevelt says Mr. Brown is a patriot and a progressive. I am not attacking Mr. Roosevelt because Mr. Brown supports him. He is just like me and just like any other person in politics. He takes the support of any man who comes to him without asking him for a certificate of character from the Young Men's Christian Association."

In one of his speeches Mr. Roosevelt said: "I came into this fight," he said, "only because it had become evident that unless I did so there was not the slightest chance of any progressive winning the republican nomination. The reactionaries recognize this clearly. As a matter of fact they are not primarily for Mr. Taft at all. Every republican in Ohio who votes for any man except myself is strengthening the reactionary cause."

"Yet Mr. Taft said he believed he would win the nomination, because he believes the Chicago convention will be organized by friends of the constitutional government. I ask you to remember just who these friends of constitutional government are upon whom Mr. Taft relies. They are his campaign manager, Mr. McKinley; Mr. Lorimer from Illinois; Mr. Penrose, from Pennsylvania; Messrs. Guggenheim and Evans, from Colorado; Mr. Gallinger, from New Hampshire; Mr. Barnes, from New York, and Mr. Keating from Indiana. And I could go on indefinitely."

"When Mr. Taft says the Chicago convention will be controlled by the friends of constitutional government he means that it will be controlled by men such as Messrs. Lorimer, Barnes and Penrose, and by the delegates fraudulently seated from states like Washington, where they would be avowedly seated, not because they represented the people, but because they do not represent the people."

"Mr. Taft is mistaken. The Chicago convention will not be controlled by fraud and force in this manner. The attempt to so control it will be unsuccessful and if successful, it will merely mean the ruin of the republican party."

THROWN OUT OF THE HALL

Here is a United Press dispatch: Toledo, O., May 17.—Colonel Roosevelt jumped into southern Ohio this morning after addressing 8,000 persons here last night. His speech was a much milder arraignment of Taft policies than any he has uttered within the last few days. He devoted some time to praising Walter Brown, of this city, who is at the head of the Roosevelt organization here.

"If any one chooses to call that type of man a boss, all right, it's a matter of preference for them to do so," said Roosevelt. The great crowd was interested rather than enthusiastic. There was no demonstration in the streets when Roosevelt passed to and from the hall. Roosevelt was interrupted by a voice in the crowd: "How about Perkins?" The colonel looked in the direction of the questioner and sharply asked: "What do you know about Perkins?"

Then a deep voice answered: "All right, colonel, he's drunk."

There was the sound of a scuffle, as somebody was pitched out of the hall.

HELPING THE HARVESTER TRUST

Following is an Associated Press dispatch: Washington, May 17.—President Taft's secretary, Charles D. Hilles, appeared unexpectedly in Washington today, and at the white house gave out a statement concerning the delay in the prosecution of the International Harvester company during President Roosevelt's administration in 1907. It was not known here that Mr. Hilles had left President Taft's party in Ohio. He went to join the president again to-night.

"I have come to Washington to get United States Attorney Townsend's statement in reference to the harvester trust," says the statement. Townsend was, in 1907, one of the attorneys in the department of justice, and made an investigation of charges against the International Harvester company.

"It shows conclusively," the statement continues, "that President Roosevelt compelled his attorney general to discontinue the harvester prosecution in the fall of 1907, eighteen months prior to the colonel's retirement from office."

"President Roosevelt's term expired two years after the matter had been placed in the hands of the prosecuting officer as the result of an investigation. It is quite apparent from the record that civil and criminal proceedings were about to begin; that about a year and a half before President Roosevelt went out of office George W. Perkins took a hand in matters, and that in a remarkably short time thereafter the whole matter was suppressed, stifled, strangled, or put through some other process, which by whatever name you call it, I have no doubt was quite satisfactory to the harvester trust. If anybody was responsible for it besides President Roosevelt and officials acting directly under his instructions it does not appear from the record."

"Mr. Townsend began his inquiry in the spring of 1906. In February, 1907, Mr. Bonaparte transmitted Townsend's report to United States District Attorney Sims at Chicago, instructing him to take up the matter with a view to the institution of criminal prosecution against the individuals and corporations implicated. Mr. Townsend recommended prosecution."

"Sims wrote that if the report proves to be correct, it is my judgment that civil proceedings * * * can be successfully maintained against the harvester trust, and probably evidence could be secured to convict the corporation and possibly a number of the individuals concerned."

"There was more delay, of which Senator Hansborough complained to Mr. Roosevelt, and Mr. Bonaparte wrote to the senator that the case would receive immediate attention. An effort was made on the one hand to proceed with the prosecution; on the other hand to secure delay through a protracted investigation by the bureau of corporations."

"In his written statement Townsend says that in the spring of 1908 he was abruptly ordered to the Pacific coast to begin another investigation, and was therefore compelled to drop the harvester matter. He says:

"Attorney General Bonaparte told me the reason why I had not been authorized to institute the harvester trust suits. Shortly after I left Washington in the spring of 1907 the harvester trust people in some way learned of my report and asked permission of Attorney General Bonaparte to file a written statement by way of defense. Mr. Bonaparte considered the statement (of the harvester trust) not only insufficient by way of defense, but as a direct admission of all the essential facts, showing a violation of the anti-trust law."

"Shortly afterward, Mr. Perkins (the organizer of the harvester trust) called upon Mr. Bonaparte, in company with Herbert Knox Smith, and, I think, Cyrus H. McCormick. They requested Mr. Bonaparte to accompany them on a visit to President Roosevelt for the purpose of persuading the president to refrain from prosecuting the harvester trust. Mr. Bonaparte refused to do so, on the ground that the written statement filed by the harvester trust was in effect a confession of a violation of the law, and therefore, he (Mr. Bonaparte) would not stultify himself by temporizing with the subject in any manner."

"Thereafter Mr. Perkins and Mr. Smith (and

I think Mr. McCormick) went out and succeeded in persuading him not to prosecute the harvester trust and shortly thereafter President Roosevelt instructed Attorney General Bonaparte not to take action.

"Attorney General Bonaparte gave me this explanation for the purpose of assuring me that he had not intentionally broken his word with me in the matter of authorizing me to institute a suit against the harvester trust. Mr. Bonaparte plainly indicated to me that he was offended by the fact that the recommendations of the harvester trust had apparently had more weight with the president than his own recommendations and advices."

Mr. Hilles then refers to Colonel Roosevelt's declaration that none of the papers in the harvester trust suit were ever suppressed and reviews the recent presentation of some of the papers to the senate. The statement then continues:

"These papers show that the harvester trust was about to be prosecuted for rebating, but promised to do better, which promise was satisfactory to the attorney general. Other trusts, probably not of the benevolent variety, were fined for rebating, and had to settle in the courts."

"The suppressed papers show also that Mr. Perkins was referred to as the representative of the far-reaching Morgan interests; and that Mr. Perkins said to Commissioner Smith that if the harvester trust was going to be attacked, then the Morgan interests 'were going to fight'; whereupon Mr. Smith wrote to President Roosevelt:

"It is a very practical question whether it is well to throw away now the great influence of the so-called Morgan interests."

"President Roosevelt sent the report to the attorney general with these instructions:

"Please do not file the suit until I hear from you."

"Colonel Roosevelt met the damaging disclosure by saying that Mr. Taft as a member of the cabinet had advised the action that subsequently was taken. He even alleged that if his memory served him Mr. Taft made the motion in cabinet meeting which resulted in substituting an investigation for a prosecution."

"The records of the war department were then introduced by President Taft to show that in the fall of 1907, during the full period of the correspondence, he was absent from the country in the Philippines and elsewhere. Colonel Roosevelt then said that Mr. Taft approved the suppression of the suit after his return in January, 1908."

"This last charge is disproved by the record which shows that on November 7, 1907 (Mr. Taft was out of the country from early in September to late in December, 1907) Mr. Herbert Knox Smith, the commissioner of the bureau of corporations, telephoned Mr. Perkins 'at the president's order' that the president took the view that the bureau's investigation should come before the suit."

"Why, then, would the matter be brought before the cabinet for serious consideration in January, 1908?"

"If it was brought before the cabinet in January, then Mr. Perkins had a 'scoop' of sixty days on the president's confidential advisers."

"It is significant, too, that the order directed Commissioner Smith to communicate with Mr. Perkins of J. P. Morgan & Co., and not with the attorney of the harvester trust."

ROOSEVELT REPLIES

Associated Press dispatch: Washington, May 18.—A statement containing portions of a letter from Former Attorney General Bonaparte, in which he says that Mr. Taft, as secretary of war, took part in the cabinet meeting at which it was decided to withhold prosecution of the International Harvester company because of the bureau of corporations' investigation, is issued by Senator Dixon at the national headquarters. The statement took the form of that issued from the White house by Charles Hilles, secretary to the president.

"Nothing more despicable and degrading has ever occurred in the history of American politics," the statement reads, "than the attempt of Mr. Taft through deliberate, knowing and sustained falsehood, to misrepresent the facts regarding the case of the International Harvester company, and to avoid personal responsibility for non-action in the court by the government against the company. The statement issued at the White house last night is but a piece of mendacity that has characterized the entire utterance on this subject."

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