

Theodore Roosevelt Defies Civil Service Union Officials

Orders Employe They Discharged Back on Payroll

No Objection to Organization, He Writes, If It Does Not Override Laws of United States.

(Not long after the coal strike was settled, President Roosevelt had on his hands the question of labor union influence in the government printing office.)

WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON, Oyster Bay, N. Y., Sept. 3, 1903.

Dear Cabot:

I was delighted to get your letter referring to what I said about lynchings. I was sure you would heartily approve of my course, both on that occasion and also in reference to the trouble in the government printing office. As you may not have seen about the latter, I will say briefly what it was.

The Bookbinders union, it appears, contains all of the employees in that branch of the government printing office. It disciplined one of its members, expelling him from the union, and then notified Palmer that in consequence he must be turned out of the printing office. Palmer refused to do so, and the union threatened to bring to my notice and I sent the two following letters:

Orders Reinstatement.

Oyster Bay, N. Y., July 13, 1903.

My Dear Secretary Cortelyou:

In accordance with the letter of the civil service commission of July 6, the public printer will reinstate Mr. A. Miller in his position. Meanwhile I will withhold my final decision of the whole case until I have received the report of the investigation on Miller's second communication, which you notify me has begun today, July 13.

On the face of the papers presented Miller would appear to have been removed in violation of the law. There is no objection to the employees of the government printing office constituting themselves into a union if they so desire; but no rules or resolutions of that union can be permitted to override the laws of the United States, which it is my sworn duty to enforce.

Please communicate a copy of this letter to the public printer for his information and that of his subordinates.

Very truly yours,
THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Hon. George B. Cortelyou,
Secretary of Commerce and Labor.

Personal.

"Open Shop" Order.

Oyster Bay, N. Y., July 14, 1903.

My dear Mr. Cortelyou:

In connection with my letter of yesterday I call attention to this judgment and award by the anthracite coal strike commission in its report to me of March 18 last:

"It is adjudged and awarded that no person shall be refused employment or in any way discriminated against on account of membership or non-membership in any labor organization, and that there shall be no discrimination against or interference with any employee who is not a member of any labor organization by members of such organization."

I heartily approved of this award and judgment by the commission appointed by me, which itself included a member of a labor union. This commission was dealing with labor organizations working for private employers. It is of course mere elementary decency to require that all the government departments shall be handled in accordance with the principle thus clearly and fearlessly enunciated.

Please furnish a copy of this letter both to Mr. Palmer and the civil service commission for their guidance.

Sincerely yours,
THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Hon. George B. Cortelyou,
Secretary of Commerce and Labor.

Accordingly Miller was immediately reinstated. There was a good deal of wild talk for the time being and then things settled down. They threatened to strike and Clarkson wrote to me in great agitation that he would do so. I wrote him back that if they did not a man jack of the strikers should get back into the government service while I was president. The result was that they fizzled out.

Labor Angered.

The country as a whole is well pleased. At the same time from the political standpoint there is no use in disguising the fact that the country as a whole will probably forget all about it; while the labor union people who are angry will not forget, just as the country as a whole may forget all about the legislation and executive action which really has resulted during the last two years in making the big corporation people hold themselves amenable to the law and the public sense of decency, while these same big corporation people will not forget, and in every way, including the use of their organ, The Sun, will keep on doing all the damage in their power.

The Wall street situation is greatly improved. The chance of a panic seems to be pretty well over. Of course the check to the boom and the Wall Street disturbance generally will have some effect on the whole business world and times will not be so good for the next year or so as they have been during the last year. The fault belongs wholly of course to the speculators, the promoters who have over-capitalized the great trusts, and the reckless, greedy and over-sanguine men generally; but equally of course these people and a considerable number of their followers will not wish to shoulder the blame and will put it on me if they can.

Give my love to Nannie. We have had a lovely summer here at Oyster Bay, although of course with a good deal of work and worry.

Ever yours,
THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

Hon. H. C. Lodge,
care United States Embassy,
London, England.

ALASKA BOUNDARY TRIBUNAL, FOREIGN OFFICE, S. W. Sept. 24, 1903.

Confidential

Dear Theodore:

The Wall street opposition has very much subsided; it had begun to before I left, but the labor men seem to be pretty violent about the printing office business and I see you are to meet Gompers and Mitchell this week. I believe myself you are not only absolutely right in the position but that it will prove a source of strength of you. As Root said, in a case where there are two courses between which one has to choose, after decision it is permissible to feel anxiety as to whether choice has been wise, but where there is only one possible course one is at least relieved from all anxiety. Your action was so thorough and right in the printing office case that I do not see how anybody, labor leader or other, can make an issue of it.

Best love to Edith.

Always yours,
H. C. LODGE.

WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON, September 30, 1903.

Dear Cabot:

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The afternoon I spent chopping—having practically struck out all official work, attending to my correspondence in the evening, Friday was a delicious day, cool and fresh, and on Helstein and Edith on Yakenka had a four hours' ride. It was really delightful. George Bird Grinnell, with whom I wanted to talk Indian reservations, and incidentally some points on big game zoology, was out for lunch. In the afternoon I played tennis.

Tells of Picnic.

Saturday I took Edith off in a row boat and we were out all day, rowing down to the great marsh at the end of Lloyd's Neck, where we took our lunch and watched the white sails of the coasters passing up and down the sound. I had a stiff row home against the wind and tide.

Edith thinks that the enclosed clippings, describing the woes of my tailor over my and Nannie, send them back to me when you have read them. Do the same with Mrs. Stuyvesant Fish's "appreciation" of Edith's dress and my social habits.

I have been reading Aristotle's politics and Plutarch's miscellany, and as usual take an immense comfort out of the speeches of Lincoln. I have just read across a speech of his on lynching, delivered, I think, in 1836, which I wish I had remembered when I wrote to Governor Durbin. I should have quoted from it with a free hand.

As soon as I got back here I had to take up various bits of work, especially the Miller case with the labor unions, and the postoffice scandals.

Meets Labor Men.

John Mitchell, Gompers and various other leaders of the unions called upon me about the Miller case, and the announcement that they intended to do so caused one of those curious panics habitual among our friends of the wealthy and cultivated classes. They got it into their fool heads that as I was to hold a "conference" with the labor men, this meant that I intended to weaken. They immediately fell into a panic and screamed that I had weakened.

It was some time before I discovered that their trouble was with the terminology of the affair. I happened to say to one shrill remonstrant that I certainly could not deny to anybody a hearing, whether it was to the labor people or the trust magnates. He seemed immensely relieved, and said that as long as it was a "hearing" and not a "conference" it was all right. I did not attempt to find out exactly what the distinction was in his mind; but whatever it was it seems to have been widespread, for all my financial and intellectual friends have solemnly agreed that while it would be wicked to hold a conference it would be eminently proper to hold a hearing.

Gompers "Sneak Article."

The labor leaders who saw me were entirely reasonable. Mitchell, of course, especially so; Gompers (who is a sneak article) thought it better to let me go. The others counted less. When not in my presence they have passed multitudes of denunciatory resolutions, but I had no difficulty with them when face to face. In order that there should be no chance of misinterpreting or misquoting me, I finally read them my decision.

(Here the president quotes in Lodge the decision rendered in the printing office case. In it he informs the labor leaders that he governs his actions according to the law of the land, and that he is "president" of all the people of the United States, without regard to creed, color, birthplace, occupation or social condition. He continues: "In the employment and dismissal of men in the government service I can no more recognize the fact that a man does or does not belong to a union as being more important than his own recognition of the fact that he is a Protestant or a Catholic, a Jew or a Gentile, as being more important than his own.")

ADVERTISING.

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ALASKAN BOUNDARY TRIBUNAL, FOREIGN OFFICE, S. W. Oct. 12, 1903.

Personal

Dear Theodore:

I need not say how much I was interested in all you tell me about the labor men. Nothing could possibly be better than the statement you so wisely wrote out and read to them. I have been over it two or three times and I cannot see anything in it that is not absolutely solid and right. That is a platform on which we can all stand. I am not surprised that Mitchell behaved well; still less that that convict Parks has been passing resolutions against you. His reelection is really a menacing incident.

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UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D. C. June 29, 1899.

Dear Cabot:

I am having a hard row to hoe. I have made this commission a living force, and in consequence the outcry among the spoilsmen has become furious; it has evidently frightened both the president and Halford* a little. They have shown symptoms of telling me that the law should be rigidly enforced where the people will stand it, and gingerly handled elsewhere. But I answered militantly; that as long as I was responsible the law should be enforced up to the handle everywhere, fearlessly and honestly.

I am a great believer in practical politics, but when my duty is to enforce a law, that law is surely going to be enforced, without fear or favor. I am perfectly willing to be turned out—or legislated out—but while in I mean business. As a matter of fact I believe I have strengthened this administration by showing, in striking contrast to the facts under Cleveland, that there was no humbug in the law now.

All the Chicago and Milwaukee papers are lacking me up heartily. The Indiana men are very angry—even Browne* has gone back on his previous record. It is disheartening to see such folly, but its only effect on me personally is to make me more

doggedly resolute than ever to insist on exact and full justice.

Yours,
T. R.

*E. W. Halford, secretary to the president. *Thomas McClelland Brown, congressman from Indiana.

(As in previous letters, Roosevelt voices below his dislike of the "mugwumps" as voters of no party were known in those days.)

SAGAMORE HILL, Oyster Bay, Long Island, N. Y. July 1, '03.

Dear Cabot:

I have now read your book (Life of Washington) carefully through, and can only reiterate what I have already said as to its worth. It is head and shoulders above what you have already done; and it is the life of Washington; you have now reached what I am still struggling for; a uniformly excellent style. The contrast between your description of Virginia society in this book and in your "History of the colonies" is so great as to be almost amusing. Moreover, though you have no absolutely new material, your chapter on "Washington as a party man" (I am thankful you took that exact title; it acts as a mordant to set the picture) is in reality as absolutely new as if based on Mass. never before unearthed. It is a great work.

I was glad to hear from you in approval of my western trip, when I made "a slam among the postoffices." I have been seriously annoyed at the mugwump praises, for fear they would discredit me with well-meaning but narrow republicans, and for the last week my party friends in Washington have evidently felt a little shaky. This has no effect on me whatever; I took the first opportunity to make a dash at the Post Office man especially to show that I was resolutely bent on following out my course to the very end.

Even Halford, however, says he is alarmed at the feeling against the law in the west; but as I told him, it had far better be repealed than allowed to remain as under Cleveland a non-enforced humbug. If you get the chance do dwell on the fact that it is to Harrison's credit, all that we are doing in enforcing the law. I am part of the administration; if I do good work it redounds to the credit of the administration. This needs to be insisted on; both for the sake of the mugwumps and for the sake of Harrison himself.

How fortunate it is that I did not get the assistant secretaryship of state! I could have done nothing there; whereas now I have been a real force, and think I have helped the cause of good government and of the party.

Best love to Nannie.

T. R.

Sagamore Hill, July 6, '03.

Oyster Bay, Long Island, N. Y.

You blessed and jaundiced gaze. Your letters were so very gloomy that they made me quite regain my spirits. Edith thoroughly agrees with you about interviews; so I cry pecuni and will assume a statesmanlike

reserve of manner whenever reporters come near me. Seriously, I was only led into saying so much by the not unnatural desire to hit back at the western politicians who were hitting at me.

I had an extremely good letter from Col. Clapp,* which I shall show to Halford and the president. I have no idea that I shall be asked to resign, and it would need really treacherous treatment to make me do so of my own accord. As far as I can see at present all that the commission will do before October will be to finish the fight with the Milwaukee postmaster and try to get one in Grand Rapids indicted (both are demerits); and I may have a single "interview" on the practical character of our examinations just before leaving in July or August, for the west.

The praise I am now receiving from the mugwumps excites in me more good-natured amusement. Your book has permanent value; your work in congress for the country has permanent value; your children's children will feel honored to bear your name—you can snap your fingers at the snarling host of little yelpers, whose lies are predestined to rot in forgotten obscurity.

Best love to Nannie.

Yours,
T. R.

*Editor of the Boston Journal.

UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D. C. July 11, 1899.

Dear Cabot:

I read your speech with great care. I wonder whether it did not occur to your mugwump friends that it was an honor to the community to have in congress a man capable of making such a speech.

Your remarks about indiscriminate, abusive criticism of course go to my heart; I'm going to try to drag in something of the sort into my volume for New York.—For Freeman's series if I ever write it. I regard this dishonest jealousy of decent men on the part of the people who claim to be good, and this wholesale abuse, as two of the most potent forces for evil now existent in our nation. The foul and coarse abuse of an avowed partisan, willing to hurt the nation for the sake of personal or party gain, is bad enough; but it receives the final touch when steeped in the mendacious hypocrisy of the mugwump, the mis-called independent.

I have come back to my work. The commission had a very satisfactory interview with the president. The old boy is with us—which was rather a relief to learn definitely.

During the hot weather we shall have comparatively little to do; it is pretty dreary to sizzle here, day after day, doing routine work, and I shall take my six weeks in the west with a light heart and a clear conscience. I shall start about August 6.

Give my best love to Nannie, and tell her it is everything for me to have 1211 as a home. Yours ever,
T. R.

I guess from what the Press says I will stay in unless knocked on the head by congress.

*History of New York City H. C. L.

ALASKA BOUNDARY TRIBUNAL, FOREIGN OFFICE, S. W. Oct. 12, 1903.

Personal

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As soon as I got back here I had to take up various bits of work, especially the Miller case with the labor unions, and the postoffice scandals.

Meets Labor Men.

John Mitchell, Gompers and various other leaders of the unions called upon me about the Miller case, and the announcement that they intended to do so caused one of those curious panics habitual among our friends of the wealthy and cultivated classes. They got it into their fool heads that as I was to hold a "conference" with the labor men, this meant that I intended to weaken. They immediately fell into a panic and screamed that I had weakened.

It was some time before I discovered that their trouble was with the terminology of the affair. I happened to say to one shrill remonstrant that I certainly could not deny to anybody a hearing, whether it was to the labor people or the trust magnates. He seemed immensely relieved, and said that as long as it was a "hearing" and not a "conference" it was all right. I did not attempt to find out exactly what the distinction was in his mind; but whatever it was it seems to have been widespread, for all my financial and intellectual friends have solemnly agreed that while it would be wicked to hold a conference it would be eminently proper to hold a hearing.

Gompers "Sneak Article."

The labor leaders who saw me were entirely reasonable. Mitchell, of course, especially so; Gompers (who is a sneak article) thought it better to let me go. The others counted less. When not in my presence they have passed multitudes of denunciatory resolutions, but I had no difficulty with them when face to face. In order that there should be no chance of misinterpreting or misquoting me, I finally read them my decision.

(Here the president quotes in Lodge the decision rendered in the printing office case. In it he informs the labor leaders that he governs his actions according to the law of the land, and that he is "president" of all the people of the United States, without regard to creed, color, birthplace, occupation or social condition. He continues: "In the employment and dismissal of men in the government service I can no more recognize the fact that a man does or does not belong to a union as being more important than his own recognition of the fact that he is a Protestant or a Catholic, a Jew or a Gentile, as being more important than his own.")

ADVERTISING.

They are the standard for dyspeptic conditions and are sold in drug stores everywhere at 60 cents a box. Try them today. They won't fail you.

ALASKAN BOUNDARY TRIBUNAL, FOREIGN OFFICE, S. W. Oct. 12, 1903.

Personal

Dear Theodore:

I need not say how much I was interested in all you tell me about the labor men. Nothing could possibly be better than the statement you so wisely wrote out and read to them. I have been over it two or three times and I cannot see anything in it that is not absolutely solid and right. That is a platform on which we can all stand. I am not surprised that Mitchell behaved well; still less that that convict Parks has been passing resolutions against you. His reelection is really a menacing incident.

Ever yours,
H. C. LODGE.

WHITE HOUSE, WASHINGTON, September 30, 1903.

Dear Cabot:

Well, the summer has come to an end. On Monday, the 28th, we came back here. The last three days were very pleasant. It was brilliant fall weather. Grant, La Forge and Dan Wister came out on Wednesday night, and Friday morning I took them on an three hours' ride. Dr. Lyman Abbott was at lunch.

The afternoon I spent chopping—having practically struck out all official work, attending to my correspondence in the evening, Friday was a delicious day, cool and fresh, and on Helstein and Edith on Yakenka had a four hours' ride. It was really delightful. George Bird Grinnell, with whom I wanted to talk Indian reservations, and incidentally some points on big game zoology, was out for lunch. In the afternoon I played tennis.

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UNITED STATES CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, WASHINGTON, D. C. June 29, 1899.

Dear Cabot:

I am having a hard row to hoe. I have made this commission a living force, and in consequence the outcry among the spoilsmen has become furious; it has evidently frightened both the president and Halford* a little. They have shown symptoms of telling me that the law should be rigidly enforced where the people will stand it, and gingerly handled elsewhere. But I answered militantly; that as long as I was responsible the law should be enforced up to the handle everywhere, fearlessly and honestly.

I am a great believer in practical politics, but when my duty is to enforce a law, that law is surely going to be enforced, without fear or favor. I am perfectly willing to be turned out—or legislated out—but while in I mean business. As a matter of fact I believe I have strengthened this administration by showing, in striking contrast to the facts under Cleveland, that there was no humbug in the law now.

All the Chicago and Milwaukee papers are lacking me up heartily. The Indiana men are very angry—even Browne* has gone back on his previous record. It is disheartening to see such folly, but its only effect on me personally is to make me more

doggedly resolute than ever to insist on exact and full justice.

Yours,
T. R.

*E. W. Halford, secretary to the president. *Thomas McClelland Brown, congressman from Indiana.

(As in previous letters, Roosevelt voices below his dislike of the "mugwumps" as voters of no party were known in those days.)

SAGAMORE HILL, Oyster Bay, Long Island, N. Y. July 1, '03.

Dear Cabot:

I have now read your book (Life of Washington) carefully through, and can only reiterate what I have already said as to its worth. It is head and shoulders above what you have already done; and it is the life of Washington; you have now reached what I am still struggling for; a uniformly excellent style. The contrast between your description of Virginia society in this book and in your "History of the colonies" is so great as to be almost amusing. Moreover, though you have no absolutely new material, your chapter on "Washington as a party man" (I am thankful you took that exact title; it acts as a mordant to set the picture) is in reality as absolutely new as if based on Mass. never before unearthed. It is a great work.

I was glad to hear from you in approval of my western trip, when I made "a slam among the postoffices." I have been seriously annoyed at the mugwump praises, for fear they would discredit me with well-meaning but narrow republicans, and for the last week my party friends in Washington have evidently felt a little shaky. This has no effect on me whatever; I took the first opportunity to make a dash at the Post Office man especially to show that I was resolutely bent on following out my course to the very end.

Even Halford, however, says he is alarmed at the feeling against the law in the west; but as I told him, it had far better be repealed than allowed to remain as under Cleveland a non-enforced humbug. If you get the chance do dwell on the fact that it is to Harrison's credit, all that we are doing in enforcing the law.