

Current Comment on Leading Topics

RAILWAY REGULATION

The Kansas City Times predicts that the president in his next message to congress will point out the speciousness and utter fallacy of the railway arguments against railway regulation. This will be interesting indeed to those who think that the president has been rather uncertain in his views as to just what measures should be taken to secure national regulation of railways:

President Roosevelt has received abundant assurances of popular support for his railway policy, but he also knows that the railways have been making a systematic canvass, through various devices for reaching the people, against this policy. It is said that he will meet this voluminous propaganda by making the subject of rate regulation the leading topic of his forthcoming message to congress and that he will place before the readers of the whole country the speciousness and the utter fallacy of the railway arguments. The president will have the advantage of reaching the people openly and frankly and through the medium of a state paper for which every public spirited man in the country will wait with interest, while a great deal of the railway matter circulated must necessarily be classed as "dry reading." There is particular significance in the method employed by the railway corporations in this instance. They recognize the power of public sentiment as they have never recognized it before. They know that they cannot carry out their policy against the restoration of the rate-adjusting prerogatives of the interstate commerce commission unless they get some public sentiment to help them out. Therefore, they have adopted the plan of conducting a "campaign of education." They have enlisted some plausible writers and some eloquent spokesmen to oppose the president and to twist the president's own record on this subject. Now the significance of this method lies in the fact that ordinarily the railroads would not have troubled themselves much about the people. They would have relied solely on their representatives in the United States senate.

Professor Ripley of Harvard denies the statement so freely and confidently made by James J. Hill and other railroad managers that freight rates have steadily declined for twenty years. Rates, he says, did decline about the time when the supreme court took from the interstate commerce commission the power to enforce its decrees, but for the past six years there has been a steady increase. This increase, he asserts, has been confined to rates in localities or on articles which were not subject to competition. On the articles which have been raised, the increase has been about 30 per cent, while the general level of rates has been raised 5 per cent. It is significant that the period of the general rise in rates has corresponded with the period of great consolidations of railroads, showing that the movement for mergers was not altogether in the interest of more economical management, but also laid the foundation for an increase in the tariffs. This, of course, was the most natural inference from the anxiety of the trunk lines to consolidate their interests, and although the railroad men strenuously denied any such intention, the significant fact remains that consolidation and rate-raising are contemporary and complementary.—Minneapolis Journal.

Furthermore, the provision putting the administrative work on the circuit courts failed to insure the prompt relief desired. To be sure, the shipper may sue for damages if the railroad rate is finally held to be excessive. But meanwhile his business is apt to go to pieces. Experience has sufficiently shown that the remedy for an unfair rate is not to continue it in effect and allow a suit for damages, but to substitute a reasonable charge at once. In short, the Elkins law defines the position of its author in favor of the extreme let-alone policy for the railroads which would shear the interstate com-

merce commission of all real authority and would leave the shipper with only such redress as the slow process of the courts at present afford. This would be all very well if the public were satisfied with existing transportation conditions. But granted that the nation is discontented with them it is not apparent that any remedy in line with the Elkins law would give relief.—Kansas City Star.

The people of Missouri are not deeply interested in the triumph of either the Ramsey or the Gould factions, but they are interested in the things that Mr. Gould and Mr. Ramsey have been doing with the railroads in Missouri and with the laws of Missouri; they are interested in what the winners of this contest may do hereafter with Missouri railroads and laws. Judge Taylor's significant statement that the record is "replete with evidence of violations of the Missouri laws" is of great importance to the people of the state. It has a deep interest for Attorney General Hadley, who represents the people and who has the power to make the government of Missouri representing the people party to a suit against the law-breaking railroads. The issue of "clean hands" will not obstruct his action. The laws which were cited as having been violated were section 17, article 12 of the constitution, and section 1052 of the revised statutes, prohibiting common ownership, control or management of parallel and competing railroads. Now that Attorney General Hadley has a clear intimation from the bench of the court's opinion that the laws of Missouri have been violated, what will he do?—St. Louis Post Dispatch.

WHEN THE PRESIDENT TRAVELS

The New York Sun suggests that congress should supply the president with a special train to be maintained at government expense. The Columbus Press-Post treats the suggestion in a rather facetious vein:

Considerable discussion is being carried on concerning who shall pay for the special train which will convey the president south. By all means let Uncle Sam pay the expense of the trip, and thus relieve Mr. Roosevelt from any obligation to the railroad corporations. The people of this country are often anxious to entertain the president, and why should not they make it possible for him to travel independent of any railroad monopoly? Uncle Sam is richer than any corporation. Why then should the president be forced to accept favors from the very people whom he will ask congress to investigate? The natural man does not wish to accept favors from those whose business methods he feels called upon to question. And it is certainly not consistent to expect the chief executive of this nation to beg favors from interested corporations. Let the country build a presidential train and let Uncle Sam invite Mr. Roosevelt to get aboard and visit the people of the country whenever he sees fit. Let him enjoy himself to the full limit of his strenuousness, and when he returns, let him be soon convinced of the superiority of the independence of the people's train over the private car of some railroad magnate, that he will blaze away at the crooked corporations without fearing to hurt those whose favors he has accepted. Build the train now! Get it into good running order, for the democratic president who will board it in 1908.

Most people are apt to forget that the president is commander-in-chief of the navy as well as of the army. Attention is called to this fact by the St. Louis Republic:

By all odds the most interesting incident of President Roosevelt's October jaunt will be his return from New Orleans to Hampton Roads in command of a fleet of armored cruisers. He will be the first commander-in-chief of the navy of the United States to go to sea in one of the floating fighting machines in which the American people have taken such pride ever since the days of Paul

Jones and Nicholas Biddle of the Randolph. There is an appearance of Rooseveltian strenuousness in the billow-bounding ocean race in which the president will try the mettle of the three great cruisers that will be under his command as soon as he goes on board. But as commander-in-chief of the navy it is part of his duty to find out for himself of what stuff our boats are made. Throughout the voyage the president will be constructively within the limits of the United States, for he will have an American deck under his feet and the American flag above him all the time. Rough seas and a speedy trip to the commander-in-chief on his initial voyage! Everybody will wish the cruiser that carries him may win the race.

THE STATE CAMPAIGN

In order to delude the people, republican newspapers are striving to turn public attention from republican extravagance by presenting statistics to prove that the fusionists while in power produced conditions that caused great expenditures after the republicans gained control of the state. On this point the Omaha World-Herald says:

The republican state committee, through the party press, is peddling a lot of juggled figures in the endeavor to explain that the doubling in cost of state government under republican administration is largely due to the alleged fact that the republicans have spent very much more money on the permanent improvement of state institutions than did the fusionists. It is set forth that appropriations for permanent improvements in 1897 and 1899, under fusion administration, were \$464,545, and for the same purpose in 1901 and 1903, under republican administration, were \$1,007,200. A little analysis shows how deceptive and misleading these figures are. During the period mentioned the fusionists spent, on permanent improvements at the Hastings asylum, the Lincoln asylum, the Soldiers and Sailors' homes at Grand Island and Milford, the industrial schools at Kearney and Geneva, the industrial home at Milford, the deaf and dumb institute at Omaha, the feeble-minded institute at Beatrice, and the home for the friendless at Lincoln, a total of \$285,725. The republicans, during an equal length of time, spent but \$273,450 on permanent improvements at these institutions. These totals may easily be verified by consulting the figures furnished by the republican state committee itself. Where, then, did the big republican appropriations for permanent improvement go? The penitentiary got \$205,700 from the republicans, as against \$4,000 by the fusionists. The republicans allowed the penitentiary to burn, it will be remembered, and had to rebuild it. The Norfolk asylum got \$105,850 from the republicans, as against 4,020 from the fusionists. For the republicans also allowed this institution to burn, and it had to be rebuilt. Do you begin to understand? More than \$300,000 of this increase for permanent improvements, about which they are bragging so loudly, went for burned buildings—burned because of republican laxness, inefficiency and carelessness. The rest of the increase, according to the figures given by the committee, went to the state university and the normal schools. The university has been granted a 1-mill levy, and the republicans are increasing the assessment roll so fast that heavy appropriations have to be made for university purposes to allow that institution to use up the revenues that 1-mill levy brings in. Consequently the university is drawing as much money now as it cost to run the whole state government twenty-five years ago. These figures are interesting, we grant. But they are not so interesting as some others. They are not so interesting as those that show that republican administration has increased the assessment roll from a valuation of \$165,000,000 to \$305,000,000. They are not so interesting as those that show that republican administration has piled up a state debt of more than \$2,000,000. They are not so in-