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## GOVERNOR JUDSON HARMON OF OHIO

By A. V. ABERNETHY

**C**OLUMBUS, O.—[Special.]—When the bribery charges against members of the Ohio general assembly exploded with the suddenness and force of a bomb and sent scores on a hunt for lawyers, Governor Judson Harmon took the same view of the personality of guilt that he did when he reported to President Roosevelt that Paul Morton, a member of his cabinet, had been guilty of granting rebates while an officer of the Santa Fe railroad. "Guilt is always personal," said Harmon to Roosevelt, and he resigned his commission to investigate rebating because Teddy was inclined to shield Morton.

A few hours after the bribery charges were filed the Ohio executive sent out an order that no man should be spared in the legislative hoodluming investigation. Party and even personal friendships must be set aside, the governor said, and the entire situation cleaned up.

Throughout nineteen years of continuous control Republican state administrations, when charges of irregularities were made involving members of their party, assumed the attitude, "They are our thieves, and we must defend them." There is no Ohio statute which grants immunity to every

promptly placed the entire community bathos and prevented any one bathing in its soothing waters by insisting that no legislative investigating committee be appointed and that the highest of the grand jury be the only judge.

Indictments were returned against seven members of the general assembly and the sergeant-at-arms of the senate, and these cases will take the same course as that of the most humble citizen who becomes involved in criminal charges. A coterie of Democrats who had been fighting the governor's bills were among the members indicted.

In less than three years of his administration Governor Harmon has made a record of accomplishment unparalleled in the history of Ohio politics. He has wrought more progress for the people than was accomplished in the forty years that preceded him. There has been written into the statutes legislation that the enlightened citizens had been demanding and pleading for in vain for decades.

The supremely important achievements of the Ohio Democracy under the leadership of Governor Harmon may be divided into transactions and legislative firsts, first, the elimination of graft; second, such reform in the

partisan laws for the benefit of entire people, irrespective of political parties, and designed to make rule by interest seeking corporations extremely difficult and rule by the people easy.

After he became governor two years ago Mr. Harmon quietly began his investigation of the methods by which public money had been loaned by Republican state treasurers. He learned they put interest earnings in their pockets. There followed in rapid order suits against the estate and bondsmen of W. S. McKinnon, former state treasurer, for \$116,786 and interest thereon; against former State Treasurer I. B. Cameron and his bondsmen for \$211,731 and interest thereon. They were Republicans. Another graft investigation brought forth the exposure, prosecution and conviction of Mark Slater, former Republican state printer, on graft charges in lesser degree; the settlement of an interest claim of over \$5,700 on funds carried in the bank for former Republican State Auditor Walter D. Guilbert and the filing of a claim for over \$31,000 with the receiver of a defunct bank at Columbus as an interest charge on funds carried in that bank by Mr. Guilbert as auditor.

These revelations during the governor's first term awakened the civic conscience and paved the way for his subsequent re-election. The Democrats captured the general assembly at the same time.

Then Governor Harmon renewed his efforts in behalf of certain bills two Republican general assemblies denied him.

The most notable achievement accomplished by the executive during the legislative session was the enactment of the Wyman bill, including the Oregon plan of nominating and electing United States senators.

A conference committee was appointed to frame a compromise senatorial nomination and election bill. "I would vote for a Republican for United States senator if the people by their votes declared for a Republican," the governor told this committee during the conference. "I would be proud to do it. I would simply be doing the will of the people." One of the committee suggested the Oregon plan was undemocratic. The executive replied, "It's the very essence of Democracy to put the government back into the hands of the people and let them say whom they want for United States senator."

Governor Harmon took a new tack and had a similar measure offered in the house, the Wyman bill. That body passed it and sent it to the senate, where the governor finally got sufficient Republican votes to save it.

Ohioans had demonstrations recently that their judiciary, one of the most sacred institutions of a free government, had been invaded by party bosses in their inordinate thirst for power. Instead of being places where the people could turn to invoke the penalties of the criminal statutes on those who had offended certain courts were being used, in cases where men of vast political power were concerned, to shield violators from the vengeance of the law.

But the general assembly took a long step forward from boss domination of the courts by enacting a bill providing in the future that all Ohio judges, from the dignified gowned justices of the supreme court down to the humble laymen who sit as justices of the peace, shall be elected on tickets absolutely free from party emblem or device. Nominations may be made by conventions, but the power of bosses to control nominations was broken by a clause in the bill which says that nominations may be made by petitions. There is not another such law in the United States.

Ohio has been hampered by the crude, unwieldy machinery of a constitution which was adopted in 1851, and the subject of making a new organic law is the biggest and most important proposition that has come before a Buckeye general assembly in many years. Selfish hands were being outstretched to get control of the constitutional convention to be held in 1912 when Governor Harmon took charge of the arrangements for it and succeeded in getting through the general assembly a bill which will remove the delegates from political influence and make them responsible to the people only. So well did he manage the campaign that Ohio will set a precedent for all other states to follow when they come to rewrite their organic laws.

Nominations of delegates will be made by petition only, and nominees will be elected on ballots absolutely free from party device or emblem or any form of party designation. The liquor question, which has been a sore spot in Ohio for sixty years, will be finally settled when the new constitution is adopted.

The state when Governor Harmon grasped the reins of government had nineteen penal, reformatory and benevolent institutions, with the responsibility of governing them divided among nineteen separate boards of trustees, three members to a board. They were so conducted as to secure neither economy nor best results.

These trusteeships, all honorable

positions and eagerly sought after, had been used as a sort of currency to purchase nominations and to repay the boys who had delivered votes in conventions. The trustees appointed superintendents and all subordinates, and these combined to furnish the dynamic power for the steam roller which the late Mark Hanna and Boss George R. Cox used to crush the life out of rebellions against the rule of the G. O. P. machine.

Governor Harmon's idea was that "the establishments which a Christian state maintains for charity are sacred and that every selfish purpose should perish at their doors."

Acting on this principle, the governor framed and forced through the general assembly a bill placing all employees of the institutions ranking below a superintendent under civil service rules. The nineteen separate boards of trustees and nineteen stewards under this law were legislated out of office, and the duties of the fifty-seven trustees

were placed in a single board of four, while a single fiscal agent replaced the nineteen stewards.

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There were a large number of taxing boards composed of various state officers with jurisdiction over excise and other corporate taxation, but different boards were made up of different officers so that there could be no uniform and consistent action. Auditors in eighty-eight Ohio counties had nearly eighty-eight different rules of appraising property, with the result that no one got a square deal.

Governor Harmon had a bill drafted to abolish all these boards and to place the entire taxing machinery of the commonwealth in the hands of a single state commission of three members. Other new tax laws make it possible to chase out of hiding millions of dollars of property and also strengthen and broaden the inquisitorial powers of the state tax commission.

Ohioans expected big things from Judson Harmon when they elected him their governor. The achievements of the Democratic general assembly show the expectations of the people have been realized. He had been a leading attorney for years, but a search of his record disclosed Harmon, while he had corporations among his clients, had never given his talents to appear in a court suit against the people. As an attorney general of the United States he had proved to be a friend of the people, fighting through court cases which established the foundation of all jurisprudence on the anti-trust subject. In private life he was recognized as one of the ablest lawyers in Ohio.

In February, 1910, ten months before the state election in Ohio, when Judson Harmon would go before the people for re-election, Ohio Republicans by order of President Taft held a harmony meeting in Dayton. The Republicans at Dayton did not talk of helping President Taft or of restoring the Republican party; they talked about the chance of defeating Governor Harmon, and they did not talk hopefully. Unconsciously they paid a patent tribute to the real strength of the man. It suddenly revealed the tremendous success of Governor Harmon and his complete mastery of the political situation in Ohio. The plan of opposition outlined in Dayton has never ceased. No governor has ever been opposed by so strong a force as Governor Harmon.

During his first term of two years a Republican general assembly to discredit him reduced the treasury balance \$2,652,538.08 by making appropriations exceed revenues and also created obligations amounting to \$2,000,000

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The compulsory provisions which made the New York act unconstitutional were not incorporated into the Ohio act. Instead the employer could elect either to pay into the compensation fund or not to pay. If he should not avail himself of the law, however, the employee may sue for damages for injuries, or his legal representative in case of death may maintain the action. And in such suits the employer is deprived of the common law defenses of

more by deciding to build new structures for state institutions. When the revenues were reduced \$500,000 a year by voting out saloons and several hundred thousands of dollars were added to the wrong column by the abolishment of prison labor contracts Harmon's arms were apparently tied, and his enemies laughed at his discomfort. The governor promptly reduced public expenditures. Then, instead of a general levy, the proper enforcement of the excise laws provided \$500,000 additional every year. The establishment

of a market for prison manufactured goods and the concentration of authority over nineteen state institutions is expected to add another \$500,000 to the state revenues. Thus was the situation met and the state restored to a sound financial basis without any additional burdens being imposed on the people who are least able to be further taxed.

There are some things in Ohio more popular than the Taft smile. One of them is the Hon. Judson Harmon, who will countenance no trills and who sits on the edge of a big chair that occupies the center of the governor's reception room and chats with visitors. "Common as an old shoe" is the way Ohio farmers size up their governor after they see him perched on that table, swinging his feet, and hear him talk straight from the shoulder.

When he was attorney general he argued many cases before the supreme court—argued them well—so well that he earned many deserving compliments from bench and bar. Among them, and perhaps the most noted, was that of the United States against the Trans-missouri Freight association. It was the first test as to the efficiency of the Sherman anti-trust law when applied to prevent an illegal combination of railroads. Mr. Harmon won, and the combination went by the boards.

Of a similar character were the suits against the Freight Traffic association and the Addyston Pipe company. Harmon was successful in both, and thus was established the law as it stands today.

There is an odd series of coincidences in the careers of Governor Harmon and President Taft. Always Harmon has followed Taft or Taft has followed Harmon. Harmon resigned as judge in Ohio, and Taft took his place. Then Mr.