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PORTLAND, FRIDAY, DEC. 28, 1917.

THE PRESIDENT'S RAILROAD POLICY.

By a stroke of the pen President Wilson has taken possession, on behalf of the Government, of all the railroads of the United States—property valued at twenty billions of dollars. That fact tells how tremendous are the war powers of the Government. It expresses its determination of the President to stop nothing which will contribute to our success in war. The ready acquiescence of the railroad presidents in his action expresses like determination. They are moved by the same spirit which moves all the people. The American people are united for victory and are ready to devote all that they are and all that they have to that end.

Hope had been entertained to the last that the President might find some way out of the dilemma short of Government operation, but the gravity of the crisis and the urgency of escape from it left no alternative. The railroads have done so unreservedly subject to many legal restrictions. By voluntary co-operation under their War Board they have added 25 per cent to the great flood of traffic which already is being poured into the great declared war. But laws which never contemplated war with the greatest military power in the world prevented many measures which would bring about a degree of efficiency possible under the best of control. Some lines have suffered serious loss by patriotically making voluntary concessions which necessity requires from all. Unified control is possible only in one or two ways—by suspending the anti-trust laws and anti-trust laws and requiring operation as a unit and guaranteeing each road against loss, or by operating in the name of the Government.

The President has chosen the latter method and it is a method which is not far from the best. Much time would have been consumed by Congress in debating the laws needed to make the former method successful, and that time might have been better spent about with hampering restrictions. Time is too precious thus to be wasted, for it fights on the side of the enemy. Action must be taken to relieve the railroad situation now, after Congress has finished talking. The emergency demands the most absolute power over every department of railroad management, and the prejudices and theories of Congress might limit that power. By Government operation under his war powers the President sweeps away all these difficulties. The laws enacted to regulate private operation are automatically suspended, except so far as he chooses to continue them, and he is free to make such arrangements as he deems wise.

But the President does not actually take the management of the railroads out of the hands of their owners. He simply places Secretary McAdoo over them to direct them in accordance with policies, which are inconsistent with their separate, private interests under a competitive system, but which are necessary to their highest efficiency in war emergency. To this end he may compel them to hand over their most profitable traffic to a competitor, and the motive for objection is removed by the guaranty of earnings equal to the average of three years ending last June. Great economy may result from requiring that coal shall not be hauled from West Virginia to Northern Ohio, when that section can be supplied from near-by mines. Export traffic may be diverted to the South Atlantic coast ports, to the relief of the congested North Atlantic ports. Transportation of luxuries can be absolutely forbidden and labor and capital can be indirectly diverted to necessary industries. Cars can be distributed to points where they are most needed without regard to the separate interest of their owners. The Government may escape the necessity of paying out money under its guaranty of earnings either by the economy that results from the advance in rates or by using that plus over guaranteed earnings of some roads to make good the deficits of other roads.

The position of the roads financially will be materially strengthened by this arrangement, for the credit of the United States is placed behind their securities. Many improvements are urgently needed, and the Government will help the roads to raise the money and will see that they earn enough to pay it. The principal difficulty will be in buying the material and employing the labor required for improvements, but ways will be found to overcome them, for railroads are now an implement of war.

The plan adopted by the President is practically that by which the British government has operated the railroads since the outbreak of the war. It is based on the fact that that country in advance of hostilities that the movement of the first expedition to Belgium was a marvel of speed and noiseless efficiency. When in full operation, no more should give good results. No more should be held up by car shortage or freight blockades.

This solution of the railroad problem should bring home to many people, especially in Congress, the fact that autocratic power is necessary for successful prosecution of a war and that such power is vested in the President. Those persons who protest that it is undemocratic are blind to

the fact that it is derived from the people, is limited to the period of war and that failure to exercise it would probably bring defeat, and, with it, destruction of democracy in this as in other countries. War demands that a whole nation be welded into a club in the hands of one man for destruction of the enemy. If through mistaken regard for democracy we should refuse to comply with this demand, democracy would be destroyed by its overzealous friends. Mr. Wilson has shown by his handling of the railroad question that he realizes this truth, and he encourages us to hope that he will deal as vigorously with the other problems which have arisen. The Nation will support him in his action, for that is the only way for war, for that is now the one and only aim.

CONGRATULATIONS. The season of good cheer and good will is here, and quite properly it is a great stimulus to countrymen. The faithful chronicler of courthouse happenings tells us that the record of licenses exceeds the June flood; and everybody knows that June marks the high tide of matrimonial expectancy and fruition. June is the month of flowers, fair skies and pleasant breezes, and naturally it is associated with the honeymoon and the launching of the hymeneal bark.

But if June offers special inducements to wedded bliss, or thoughts hereof, how shall the grand rush of December be explained? It is an act of unparalleled significance and importance. It means that a great democracy has been literally converted, with its consent, into a military autocracy, with dictatorial command.

It means that the republic has become a mighty army, a whole nation at war, and that every citizen is a soldier, subject to the immediate authority of the commander-in-chief. It means that "all the resources of the country," once pledged by the President to the cause of the allies in the war, was no idle promise or boast.

It means that civil rights, immunities, privileges and obligations are subordinated to the supreme rule of military necessity. It means that the war is the direct duty and the personal business of every citizen.

It means war to the knife, and knife to the hilt, with the Kaiser and his generals, accomplices, minions, spies, creatures and hirelings. If there has ever been ground for the hope that America does not realize, because it refuses to realize, that it is in the war—the greatest of all wars—there is none now. America knows it full well.

The right way, the only way, to meet war is to adopt the approved methods and instruments of scientific and effective warfare.

GOOD AMERICANS. The distinguished educator from Minnesota, here to attend the meetings of the State Teachers' Association, asks the pertinent question as to "how the schools can help in time of war." He gives the equally pertinent answer that the pupils should be given a "sympathetic comprehension of what America and Americanism are."

We suppose that Dr. Burton's chief anxiety is to give the best of his duty of teachers at this time to prepare the minds of the young generation of Americans, by instruction, illustration and example, for the task of preserving the heritage of freedom.

We hope he will have a heart-to-heart talk with the teachers along the lines of his interview in The Oregonian the other day. He insisted upon "joint teaching of our National history and literature."

Well said, Dr. Burton say it again, and more. We know that the Oregon teachers are deeply patriotic and we know that they will respond with alacrity and enthusiasm to any further appeal to the patriotic sentiment which is so much. But a way must be provided to do more. They should be given definite instruction to relate the courses in their respective classrooms to the problems of the hour. They should be urged to give their highest service to make good citizens. They should do their best always to make the boys and girls good Americans.

STILL WEDDED TO HIS IDEALS. One sentence in the annual report of Secretary of War Baker indicates that he still adheres to the error which is responsible for the fact that, though the United States has been at war for nine months, it has scarcely yet begun to fight and is in the ignominious position of letting other nations do nearly all the fighting. The Secretary says:

The peaceful ambitions of our people had long postponed our entrance into the contest and the delay of neutralities through long months of delicate maneuvers delayed the beginning of active military operations.

It is not true that "adherence to a strict neutrality" required this Nation to delay "active military preparations." Common prudence required that when the world was on fire with war and when one of the belligerents was invading our rights at sea and was plotting in our own territory, we should put ourselves in an ample state of defense. No one nation would have had a right to assume that our preparations were aimed at it and that it was a breach of neutrality.

When Holland and Switzerland mobilized their armies to defend their neutrality, we would have been fully justified in enlarging our army for the same purpose. Germany had resented our preparation, she would have justified it, for the assumption that we contemplated war with her would have carried with it the admission that we had some cause and strong enough to count on her help. Preparation for the eventuality of war, when war is on all sides, is not inconsistent with neutrality.

There is good ground for the opinion that our neglect to prepare was invading our rights at sea and our rights at sea. The German General Staff calculates closely without considering anything but military ends. It knew how long we would take to train and equip an army strong enough to count on her help. We must build and how long a time that would take. It calculated that the submarine would have reduced Britain to starvation and the

aided armies to impotence before we could be ready. If we could have put a million men in France last Spring, Germany would have known it, and the calculations of the General Staff would have been radically changed. The pacifists tempted Germany too far by keeping us unprepared; if the demand for preparedness had been heeded, the temptation would have been stronger to let us alone.

Coming from the same fabric as the falsehoods concerning the Red Cross, a new tale has recently been circulated by alien enemies at home. The story was that millions of yards of Wilton carpets had been ordered by the Government in the face of a wood shortage in the world. Naturally the story was credited to the indignant, sarcastic writers wanted to know whether it was intended to carpet the decks of vessels, or only the floors of the bureaucrats, and so forth.

It transpires that the only grain of truth in the rumor is that important carpet factories have taken large contracts for war work. The wool committee of the Council of National Defense knows nothing of any contracts for carpets. The largest manufacturer of carpets in the country says that his mills are working on cotton duck for tentage for the Army. That is all.

Currents are given to harmful rumors by propaganda, but they are not alone to blame. The well-meaning citizen, however loyal he may be, who passes a ridiculous story along without weighing it or investigating it is also culpable.

There is a safe rule to go by. If a story one hears is likely to have an adverse effect upon our conduct of the war, or to alienate the sympathy of the people, it probably is untrue. In any case, it will be looking into it should not be circulated by anyone who lacks complete assurance as to the facts.

No fact worth acting upon will suffer by a general policy of accepting all news stories with reserve. It is only required that the citizen shall know what he is talking about when he opens his mouth.

The depth bomb now being employed in the attack on the United States is the most promising agency yet developed for their destruction. Hudson Maxim has written to the Scientific American that a charge of 500 pounds of trinitrotoluol exploded deep in the water within 100 feet of the surface would destroy it utterly. Employment of trinitrotoluol, therefore, robs the submarine of a large proportion of its advantage in presenting a small target. The depth bomb is a superior to the submarine's incompressibility of water. Four cubic feet of the explosive mentioned produces at the instant of detonation 40,000 cubic feet of gas, and in expanding seeks the line of least resistance, which is the surface of the water.

It is probable that the so-called anti-picketing ordinance been presented frankly as an ordinance attempting to prohibit strikes it would not have been adopted by the voters of Oregon. While the ordinance prohibited conspiracies to injure trade, business or commerce, the text of the ordinance seemed to refer particularly to picketing and boycotting as such conspiracies. It attained the name of "anti-picketing ordinance" and was quite generally accepted as that and nothing more. Now it is declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court because it attempts to prohibit the right of workmen to their employment by agreement or in a body.

After adoption of the ordinance, The Oregonian expressed some doubt as to its meaning concerning the right to strike. That it did contain such an inhibition was not denied, but accepted by the Portland authorities at the time of the shipyard strike. There was a determined effort, so long as picketing of the yards continued, to keep the ordinance from being applied. That custom, but no effort was made to prosecute any workers for entering into the strike agreement. And while it is that particular incident the shipyard workers and their public sympathy, still there was no general disposition indicated by the public to deny or to attempt to deny generally the right of workers to strike. Thus is the conclusion reached that it is an opinion of the Oregonian has heretofore expressed—that the voters did not fully understand the nature of the ordinance.

The earlier opinion, however, went farther in the sweeping terms of the ordinance. For example, it would have prohibited any strike which was a conspiracy to injure the business or commerce of any person doing business in the city of Portland is hereby defined as a conspiracy to injure the business or commerce of any person who, or has dealings with any person or persons in the city of Portland or attempt to induce, others not to buy from, sell to, or have dealings with any person or persons in the city of Portland.

For the purpose or with the intent to prevent any person from employing any person, or for the purpose of compelling any person to employ or discharge any person, or to compel or force any person to alter his mode of carrying on his business, or to induce any person to employ, or their rate of wages or time of service.

When followed the declaration that picketing was prima facie evidence of participation in such a conspiracy. The difficulty the layman encountered in interpreting the ordinance will be readily gained from the foregoing. Loosely construed it does not prohibit any strike, but it is a cutting in aid of a strike. But, strictly construed, a workman in a factory is having "dealings" with his employer, as to his labor. And an agreement not to have labor dealings with a person is a strike. That it may be assumed, is the court's construction of the ordinance, and on that ground it is unconstitutional.

It is interesting to recall that the promoters of the ordinance, in reply to those who objected to its broad character of its provisions, contended that a plain anti-picketing ordinance would be unconstitutional; that it was necessary to go through the process of defining the law, which is in order to reach picketing, which was the intent of the ordinance. But the promoters signally failed to read the mind of the Supreme Court. The very circumlocution which they insisted on defining the law, which is plainly intimated by the court that a flat-footed anti-picketing ordinance would not be invalid.

Whatever the strict legal construction placed upon the ordinance, the fact remains that the people intended, and intended only, to prohibit picketing. The disapproval of the voters has been expressed concerning the various means of intimidating employers and other employees practiced under the name of picketing.

A moderate, sensible ordinance aimed at disorderly conduct attendant upon strikes and prohibiting banning of "unfair" establishments would

meet the desires of the people. It need hardly be said that the City Council has a plain duty to perform. If it is desirable that workmen be protected in their right to quit employment it is as equally desirable that others, if there be such, be assured of the right to take the places thus vacated and without molestation.

ENEMIES AT HOME. Coming from the same fabric as the falsehoods concerning the Red Cross, a new tale has recently been circulated by alien enemies at home. The story was that millions of yards of Wilton carpets had been ordered by the Government in the face of a wood shortage in the world. Naturally the story was credited to the indignant, sarcastic writers wanted to know whether it was intended to carpet the decks of vessels, or only the floors of the bureaucrats, and so forth.

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Crimes of the Bolsheviki Against Democracy.

By A. J. Sack, Director Russian Information Bureau. The word "Bolsheviki" is a new word for Americans. Unfortunately it is quite an old word for us Russians. We have known the "Bolsheviki" for the past 14 years, and since they played the major role in the Russian revolution, we have known them as one of the most evil forces in our political and social life.

Twelve years ago the Russian people, after the unfortunate war with Japan, made the first attack upon the old autocratic government. There were mounted the Russian people, and they recognized them as one of the most evil forces in our political and social life.

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GOOD BOOKS BLESSING TO MAN

Great Thinkers Have Been Great Readers, Says Correspondent. UNIVERSITY PARK, Dec. 27.—(To the Editor.)—A recent contribution to the Oregonian concerning the bookworms contains the truth expressed in forcible English. That many people stick their noses into books to an unwarrantable extent is well known. But after all how thankful we are for the coming into our hand of a live book with no drowsy sentences, which book for its thought and makes us mentally! That book suggests and instead of making fat, it gives us sinews of thought and action.

It is in reading that we find a book creatively, by being stimulated to take even reverse positions to those in the book, to expand the thought expressed in the book, to discover in the printed page with other truths we have laid away for future use. If we find ourselves using fairly what we have read, we comfort ourselves with the reflection that truth belongs to the common good and that the temple of truth erected is too great for the abilities of any one workman.

We find in bright books garments for our own thoughts which, being our children, make us concerned as to how quickly they will grow. There have been great readers and the glory of a nation in its libraries is undiminished by the worms which creep in. The Sabbath is made for the books of the Sabbath; so books are made for men and not men for books.

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In Other Days.

Washington—The Interstate Commerce Commission's order in connection with the Spokane rate case, involving terminal rates, will not go into effect until February 1, a postponement having been asked by the railroad. The order, which is a considerable reduction in some rates and, it is feared, a rate war may result from too hurried execution of the order.

One of the most disastrous fires on the East Side was that last night at East Morrison street and Union avenue. One row of frame buildings, of which the Barker Hotel was one, was burned.

President-elect Cleveland is not in accord with the election of Murphy, of New York, as Senator. He says: "Speaking frankly, it does not seem to me that the selection of Mr. Murphy shows the desire or intention of placing in the Senate men of such type as the party has fought for. This first use of our power would cause much disappointment."

Whisky has gone up in price 15 cents a gallon in the last two weeks. The "trust" blames the dealers and the dealers blame the "trust."

Professor W. Edgar Buck, of the Portland College of Music, has taken handsome quarters in the Oregonian building.

Half a Century Ago. From The Oregonian, December 28, 1867. The English newspapers, although they criticize us severely, are not above taking advantage of the good that is in our institutions. One of them, lately discussing the subject of National education, has said that we have adopted the free school system of the United States as, on the whole, being the most judicious, economical and effective of all other systems.

Of the 1800 volumes of Dickens' works in the Mercantile Library, New York, only two remain. The natural inference is that, despairing of an opportunity to see the works of the great novelist, they are being sold for their own sake.

Paris—The Senate is discussing a bill for the reorganization of the army. Its adoption is urged on the ground that the measure is necessary because of the German situation. The revolutionary aspect of affairs in Italy.

Postal Agent Quincy A. Brooks has returned from Bolivia where he went on an official inspection trip.

Auction this day—A. B. Richardson, as usual, today will address his fellow citizens from the old stand at the corner of Front and Oak on the all-important subject of the day. Sale commences at 10 A. M.

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