

LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE.

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AN APPEAL TO THE PATRIOTIC PEOPLE OF OREGON.

[BY GEN. T. J. THORP.]

The following appeal for action is not prompted by, nor is it in the interest of the propaganda of any political party. Neither is it made with any hope of arousing to action any citizen whose highest conception of American citizenship is satisfied by slavish obedience to the mandates of a political boss.

Patriotic citizens and patriotic orders, however, will take some decided and prompt action for arresting the purposes of those corporations which the Inter-State Commerce Commission has declared to be ungovernable by any code of laws found in the statutes of the Federal Government.

It is believed that a remedy sufficiently drastic, will be found in the following address, which sets forth the reasons and necessity for it now that the whole power of the government has ignominiously failed to restrain the unlawful and overt acts of the chartered corporations of the United States.

OUR APPEAL:

The organic law of a nation may ordain and establish political liberty—liberty of its citizens to prosecute their chosen calling under just rules of action.

The government of such a nation may write its statutes and enact its laws in harmony with the provisions of its organic powers and provide for freedom of speech, press and action, and yet rule a race of slaves.

The process of enslaving any race or class of men, outside of conquest by the sword, is, and ever has been, by the slow and aggressive action of some power working surreptitiously with the rights of the common people.

The nations which for centuries ruled the countries of the Mediterranean, in the fullness of time, nullified the rights of the private citizen whose liberty finally became absorbed in the prerogatives of some favored chief or prince through special grants of franchises in the public domain. With those grants came the power and authority to rule and govern those franchises in the interest of the favorite proprietor.

This is the origin of patrician nobility under the Roman Empire. This is the origin of the nobility of continental Europe. This is the origin of every species of European oppression in ancient or modern times. This is the origin of the castes and classes of European citizenship. Royal grants of franchises to private individuals have made a race of dependent citizens in India and in every Oriental state.

Nor has the form of government in any manner modified the rigor of that dependency, ranging from the distinguishing type of abject slavery to the condition of labor for the miserable compensation of a precarious supply of even the most common necessities of life.

Republics as well as monarchies may create classes of citizens by granting franchises to corporations organized by men of wealth to whom are granted charters as tyrannical and arbitrary in their application and in their administration as the charters of King George III. Under such charters the railway corporations of the United States have made combinations with no higher motive than the spoliation of every citizen of this Republic who is engaged in any legitimate business, or in developing any of the natural resources of the state. Railway transportation and freight rates are so manipulated under charters that only those who are stockholders, or are otherwise interested in such railways can receive reasonable and fair commercial treatment.

A pirate upon the high-seas strips his helpless victim of ship

and cargo. Railway corporations, the creatures of the state under charters, deliberately rob the producers and the consumers in the nation to the utmost limit that commercial traffic will bear. The pirate of the high-seas and the chartered railway corporations of the United States are identical in character. They differ only in degree of robbery and the form of charters under which they pillage and plunder their unfortunate victims. The pirate writes his own charter, for which he is outlawed, while the railway corporation receives its charter from the state under the authority of which it deliberately robs and plunders the commercial interests of every citizen of the nation.

It may be the patriotic duty of the citizen to submit to the gigantic robbery of railway corporations because they are the chartered cormorants of the state. It may be the duty of every citizen to scorn to make complaint against corporations which, if justly dealt with, would forfeit their charters and suffer the confiscation of their stolen wealth. But is it?

The chartered railway franchises, municipal, state and national, have produced nine-tenths of the unruly, defiant, insolent and arrogant millionaires of this country, commercial freebooters who defy our Courts and who but recently attempted to place one of their chosen representatives at the head of this government and are now reorganizing for the control of this government in 1908.

There is not a commercial trust in the United States, that is not composed, in large part, of men interested in railway corporations which are perpetrating their nefarious crimes under charters issued by the grace of the people from whom they filch the last dollar possible in every commercial transaction. The chartered railway corporations operating 160,000 miles of railroad in the United States are now perfecting the most gigantic combination in the world. A combination in violation of the laws of the United States; a combination in violation of the laws of the several states of this Republic.

This defiant act of combination is an unmistakable declaration of war upon the rights and commercial freedom of eighty millions of people. The magnitude of it is relied upon as sufficiently powerful and able to overawe and to defeat the Executive, Legislative and Judicial departments of the Federal Government, in every effort made to bring these offenders to justice.

If the magnitude of this felony, if the magnitude of this unparalleled commercial robbery of the people can be relied upon to secure immunity from our Courts and the executive department of the Government of the United States, then what peaceful remedy is there left to which a long suffering nation can appeal for relief?

Have chartered combinations renounced all sanctity of state and national government? Do they owe no duties and obligations to the people? Is there no law which corporate greed will respect? Do the railway corporations seek to provoke eighty millions of people to hurl wide-open their red-hot gates and make defiant commercial lines blaze with perpetual conflict, spreading into a war for the survival of the fittest?

Railway corporations, more than any other, have bred imperious, domineering and aggressive men, clothed with powers under charters which they interpret as license to plunder, and they now propose to combine in a colossal commercial trust for the avowed purpose of making greater dividends to their stockholders and millionaires. Railway corporations have in council resolved to rule this nation with a rod of iron. They have resolved to seat the next chief magistrate of this Republic. Their special chartered franchises have given them immense power over states. It is this power that holds the South solid in its despotic grasp. It yields nothing to reason and as little to our laws and the decrees of our national tribunals.

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Its proud, ambitious and domineering spirit brooks no resistance from Courts, States or Nation. It is determined to rule by the force of its financial and corporate power.

If there be anything about which the minds of our common people are united, it is this,—that a government administered by chartered corporations is the first step in the direction of monarchy; they will never submit to this. Rather by far declare every railway charter null and void and forfeit to the State.

This Government derives its just powers from the governed and it must be administered by the governed and not by a ruling class of chartered corporations. Our common people are irrevocably determined that a signal example shall be made of all attempts to do things otherwise than according to our laws and our Constitution.

Our great wheat fields and natural grazing lands upon the public domain are rapidly becoming exhausted by a depleting process of cropping without returning anything to repiete the soil with its native richness. This depleting system is carried on to give our nation a surplus in bread and meat for commercial export to less favored nations of the earth, also to give employment to our multiplied energies and to our sons and daughters at remunerative wages; but how long can this system of robbery and spoliation of the soil go on feeding railway corporations with ninety per cent of the net profits of our varied agricultural pursuits?

The American railway Oligarchy grows rich and strong while our agricultural lands are growing poorer every year, for the want of commercial fertilizers which cannot be employed on account of the high freight rates exacted by railway corporations everywhere. The vast tonnage of fertilizers and waste of cities would restore the constant waste of our soil if it could be distributed by railways at a reasonable margin above the actual cost of transportation in empty trains running to our rural depots for surplus products. A national system of distribution of fertilizers at actual cost would clean up our American cities and make them fit habitations for people and give employment to thousands of our citizens who are now either idle or employed to cart all the valuable elements and factors of fertilizers to the banks of our great rivers and there made to pollute our whole system of inland waters. All of this havoc and public waste is a direct result of the extortion practiced by the railway corporations of the United States.

This American railway Oligarchy has but recently absorbed 160,000 miles of railroad and is now dividing into systems to carry out purposes forbidden by our laws and the decrees of our Courts, and hence it is in revolt against the government of this Republic.

The settled policy of this Oligarchy is to extort a tribute from American commerce and rigidly enforce its demands, until it becomes the mistress of this continent and the absolute ruling power of this nation.

The administration of our government by railway corporations by methods adopted at the national convention of one of the leading political parties of this country, will seal the doom of American growth and development and make impossible the improvement of the fertility of the soil by any system of renewed application of capital and skill—paralyzing our great agri-

cultural industry under the drastic system of railway extortion.

When chartered corporations are able to rule this nation we shall have to come to the end of our commercial greatness. The finest regions of this republic will become as unfruitful and desolate as the fairest fields of Italy under the rule of Roman aristocracy.

The absolute control of our Judicial, Legislative and Administrative department by the colossal railway combinations of the United States will inaugurate a reign of commercial despotism more intolerable than the administration of our government under the naked power of the sword—more terrible than the vivid ruin inflicted upon the commerce of the world by the successive invasions of the Goths, Huns, and other vandal hordes of Europe.

The tactics applied to one of the late national political conventions will be attempted in the conventions of the leading political parties of the United States four years hence, and the only remedy for the insolent, proud, ambitious and domineering railroad Oligarchy is the speedy construction of a double track railroad across this continent from ocean to ocean, owned and operated by and for the people of the United States.

The construction of our great Panama canal by the people of the United States, under the administration of President Roosevelt is a monument to the splendor of our civilization, the glory of our arms, our commerce, and our power. A work more enduring than the pyramids of Egypt, a contribution to the commerce of the world by the people of the United States and a demonstration that our people can build, own and operate the greatest enterprise on earth. The construction of this canal makes the construction of a double track railroad from ocean to ocean through the commercial heart of this Republic an absolute necessity.

The railway corporations of the United States are now laying the foundation for a combination upon the high-seas that will overshadow all other trusts and combinations in the world. The commercial corporations of all Europe are to be taken into this gigantic pool to be operated to control the carrying trade of the commerce of the whole world, fixing freight rates by water at the exact figures for transportation by railway carriage. No government under heaven can prevent this commercial and financial combination upon the high-seas, nor can any government deliver any nation from the commercial slavery to the corporations of the world by any system of international commercial law. This colossal pool will revive all the rigor of the piracy of the middle ages less the savagery of barbarism of death and total confiscation,—every dollar that the traffic will bear will be the minimum rate of freight by ships sailing to every port in the world under the flags of every nation on earth.

The princes of commercial wealth in Europe will compel passivity on the part of their governments while the railway millionaires of the United States will attempt to control our Government, State and National, preventing any legislation hostile to this conspiracy to rob and plunder and lay every commercial nation under tribute to the corporate wealth of the chartered pirates of the world.

There is only one nation that has the resources and power to quell the boasting pomp of financial treachery to mankind. There is only one nation that has the fortitude and courage to assail this commercial Python and drag it to execution and transfix it upon the rocks of black despair, leaving its mighty commercial fleet rotting sailorless upon the seas.

The common people of this nation can build double tracked continental roads through the commercial centers of the United States and own and operate them in connection with ample shipping facilities upon the high-seas to every civilized port in the world, carrying our surplus products to every market on earth at a rate of transportation that will give the products of American labor, courage and patriotism the patronage of mankind. This is the remedy for the revolt of the chartered corporations of American railways against the laws enacted by eighty

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