

THE CORVALLIS GAZETTE

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A MEXICAN LESSON.

The advocates of governmental ownership of railways point to Mexico as a practical and satisfactory example of the benefits of such ownership.

They claim too much. The Mexican government does not own the railroads, nor any of them, of the country. It has a controlling interest in several of the main railways, but the remaining interest is in private hands. The control and operation of these roads are thus in the combined interest of the government representing the people, and of private citizens representing themselves. It was held that this arrangement would protect the people from corporate greed, give them the lowest possible rates for transportation service and at the same time insure private capital a fair and equitable return on its investment.

This is a beautiful theory. It is the basic theory of those who argue for government ownership in this country. But, like the theory of free-trade and other purely academic theories, it fails when an attempt is made to put it in practice.

The government expects to get, and is just as fully entitled to receive, as fair and reasonable a return on its investment as the capitalist is on his. Here we find two considerations influencing the government. It must protect the people and it must receive a fair return on its

own investment. Ownership has thus placed two burdens on the government when government control places but one—that of protecting the people from corporate greed.

Ownership, simply a controlling ownership by the government, opens wide the door to governmental stupidity, cupidity and rapacity. One or more of these elements are sure to be in evidence where control rests on ownership, whether ownership is by the government or by private individuals; nor does a divided ownership either obliterate or minimize such elements.

Turn again to Mexico. The policy of the Mexican government has long been to promote the mining industry in all reasonable ways. It has given miners low rates of transportation on their ores, and has employed low and direct taxation to secure the mine owner's contribution in support of the Federal and the State administrations. Pursuing this policy mining, agriculture, manufactures and other industries have been encouraged, stimulated and developed greatly to the benefit of the country.

For some reason the government now requires greater revenue, and it has raised the freight rate on the transportation of ore. Of course this is opposed by the mine owners. They ask: "Why this increase of rate?" They are told that the government simply seeks to realize a fair return on its investment. When asked why rates are not raised on other commodities no reply is made. The mine owners charge that because their traffic is heaviest it is taxed, and taxed with all the traffic will bear, for some hidden reason, since for years there has been no complaint by the government of too little return on the capital it has invested.

The situation there has caused

the Mexican socialist to do what he is little accustomed to do—stop and reflect. It should confirm Americans in the view that control, without any part in ownership, is the only practicable and safe method of protecting the people against the rapacity of transportation corporations.

SENSELESS CARPING.

The President is made the subject of much misrepresentation and a lot of carping, foolish criticism. Of the first is the hue raised by the monied interest that he is waging an indiscriminate war on all kinds of corporations and trusts, and would surely precipitate a disastrous panic. Wall street tried to make this assertion true, with the result that it only blistered its hands in a fire of its own kindling. Wall street might cause a bad panic, but it was never less able to do so than at present. The country is too healthfully prosperous to be frightened easily by bugaboos. Manufacturers, farmers and merchants were never before so well able to move along without Wall street. It is certain Wall street would have to work hard, and practically destroy itself, to create a general panic. For this reason it will not do anything of the kind.

Besides this the people at large know the President is not running amuck among the corporations and trusts. He is simply, earnestly and courageously endeavoring to enforce the laws against the lawless.

So much for misrepresentation. The latest carping at the President was because he summarily suspended the license of a steamboat Master for three months. "Holy horrors!" the faultfinders cried, and proceeded to characterize the act as illegal,

presumptive, harsh and unwarranted. Usually the navigation laws are administered or executed by a cabinet officer through a bureau in his department. This cabinet officer is simply an aid to the executive and is under his direction. Certainly the principal may do whatever he may bid his agent do.

A magistrate, on examination, suspended the Master's license for six months. What now becomes of the criticism of the President? It is seen to be senseless. The people have confidence in him, in his honesty of purpose, his courage, his independent spirit, his patriotism. He does things—does things that some of his predecessors should have done but never did. This sometimes may startle us but it should not betray us into voicing carping criticism of his acts. Let his enemies, if he have any, misrepresent him; they cannot deceive the people.

A Good Trade.

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