

Polk County Observer

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Office.....517-519 Court Street
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BY H. W. BRUNE

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REAL ISSUE STILL UNSETTLED.

The passage of an eight hour law by congress put a quick stop to the threatened rail strike, but it is generally conceded it will not settle the real issue which has been raised. This issue involves the question of permanent protection for the public against great industrial wars, especially when they threaten the convenience, safety and welfare of the general public. And as the transportation companies are engaged in a service which is actually essential to the convenience and welfare of the public, it is perfectly plain that while the present program of legislation may tide over the present crisis, it does not go far enough and fails to offer the real solution needed and demanded by the people.

The eight hour law which was rushed through congress to avert a strike by railway employes, in other words, is merely a makeshift to meet a pressing emergency—the price that is to be paid for present industrial peace. It is a concession to a certain class of dissatisfied employes, but it may not serve to satisfy even those employes for any length of time. While this concession may be justified, moreover, on grounds of fairness and justice, the manner in which it has been wrung from the national law-making body is, not at all pleasing or satisfactory to the public. A sinister threat of national calamity was included in the strike program of rail employes, and the public cannot forget this, even though allowing for the action of congress in enacting a law to pacify the members of the railroad brotherhoods.

The problem of a permanent safeguard against recurrence of such troubles, however, still remains to be solved, and congress should address itself to this task without hesitation and while recollection of the present trouble is still fresh. In solving this problem, moreover, congress should pay less attention to what the railroad employes or the railroad presidents want, than to what the general public wants and actually needs. This need, of course, includes a system for effectively handling large labor troubles and industrial disputes of every character, whenever such troubles and disputes become a menace to public convenience and national welfare. And the public will not rest or be satisfied until such a system is provided.

THE GRAIN SITUATION.

The grain markets of this country have been in an excited condition for several weeks, due to well confirmed reports of crop damage and a prospective shortage of wheat and other cereals. Prices have fluctuated wildly, with a strong upward tendency, causing a good deal of worry to millers and bakers especially, and considerable concern to the general public. Professional speculators have also been kept on the anxious seat, for while the prospect of still higher prices is a strong lure to "get in the market" and reap quick and easy profits, the uncertainty of the war situation is enough to keep the speculators guessing. The entry of Roumania in the war, for instance, last week caused a sudden slump in grain prices, based on the theory that if the Dardanelles should be opened it will release vast quantities of Russian grain.

This is a reminder that although the grain supply of this nation and Canada promises to be somewhat short short this year, there are immense reserves in Australia, as well as Russia, which would help out the situation under normal conditions. Russia cannot deliver its grain to outside nations because it is cut off from sea routes, and a shortage of available shipping is keeping thousands of tons of grain in Australian elevators and warehouses. Consequently this country and Canada just now are the chief sources of the world's grain supply, and this year's crops will fall below the average in both these nations.

The prospective curtailment of domestic supplies will not necessarily mean actual privation at home, but there is a chance it may mean an increase in the cost of bread, or a reduction in the size of bakers' loaves, which are questions that just now are being earnestly discussed by those connected with the bakers' trade. The public has not yet commenced to worry, apparently feeling that the situation will adjust itself, but an actual increase in the price of bread would be a genuine hardship on many people of the poorer classes.

The condition is one which, apparently, is not now open to remedy. It merely shows what a little crop damage can do in war times. Were the world at peace and ships available for commerce as they are in peace times, the Russian and Australian supplies would counterbalance the shortage in the United States and Canada, prices would be a normal level and the loaf of bread would not be reduced in size.

"PLAYING POLITICS."

The democrats are always ready to accuse republicans of "playing politics" in the consideration of public questions and public business, but there is considerable evidence to indicate the democrats themselves are not immune from this charge. Both with democratic members of congress and members of the administration there is an apparent tendency to overlook no opportunity to make political capital for their own side, in the handling of public affairs, and this while the democratic leaders keep up a clamor of accusation against the republicans.

In connection with the railroad dispute, for instance, the suspicion is not lacking that both the president and democratic congressmen were more or less swayed and influenced by political considerations. The president's effort to avert a strike is entirely commendable, to be sure, but both in his negotiations as mediator and in his recommendations to congress he has shown he is not unmindful of the fact that a national election soon will occur, the result of which will directly concern himself and his party. Democratic senators and representatives, moreover, are plainly "playing to the galleries" striving to catch votes. Yet on every possible occasion they raise a hullabaloo about republicans doing the same thing. It is the old story of the "Stop thief!" cry, raised for no other purpose than to divert attention from the real offenders.

In this connection it is of interest to note what one army officer says about the Mexican situation. Colonel Luce, of the First Minnesota infantry, has just returned home to take charge of recruiting, and in urging young men of his state to join the army he says: "Every man down there believes that we will be sent into Mexico right after election. That's one reason why we want to fill up the ranks now."

This is a frank intimation that politics is the dominating and deciding factor in democratic plans concerning Mexico, and that the administration program and policy are being shaped with deliberate intention to mislead the people and gain support in the coming election. And when the democrats will do such things they at least should have the decency to refrain from accusing republicans of the same offense. For even if the latter occasionally fall into this error, they do not bear the same responsibility as now rests on the democratic administration, which is in present control of public affairs and is, therefore, the responsible guardian of national peace, safety and welfare.

Here is something to think about: "Women take advantage of their employer's smiles to take more liberties. They come to work fifteen minutes late. They often grow careless in their work. Men, on the other hand, take the same smiles to mean opportunity for advancement with harder work." Now maybe you think some mean man said that. Not at all. It is the utterance of Dr. Kate Barrett, special representative of the United States department of labor.

An auto trade journal says there will not be much change in the 1917 autos. Among other things, of course, will be the same old appetite for gasoline.

President Wilson had the chance of his life to beat Hughes to the woman suffrage proposition, but he failed to connect. There isn't any of the watchful waiting business about Hughes.

OTHERS' OPINIONS

McCoy, Oregon, September 5, 1916.—Editor Observer: Referring to your offer to publish articles by me contributed over my signature, "I am happy, O King Agrippa, that I am permitted to speak for myself." I beg to correct you Mr. Editor: I am not the "father" of the proposed recall in any sense. I was at Dallas on May third and there learned of the proposed independence outrages. On May fifth I went before the Farmers' union meeting at Smithfield and discussed the county court's action. The Farmers' union called a meeting of taxpayers to meet at Dallas on May 12th to initiate proceedings to prevent consummation of these proposed outrages. On Monday, May eighth, I learned that a large grading outfit passed McCoy for Independence, and on the ninth I went to Dallas and there learned that work had actually begun, evidently making haste to destroy the road grade before a taxpayers' meeting called to meet on the twelfth.

I therefore filed an injunction suit to hold up work at Independence until the taxpayers' meeting called for three days later was held. Now at the meeting at the court house on the twelfth of May I made report that I had filed the suit to hold up work until the meeting and now if the taxpayers wanted these contracts carried out I, too, wanted it and would dismiss the suit and donate the costs put up. If they did not want the contracts carried out they would take action in which case I would turn the suit over to them. At this meeting a taxpayers' league was organized, officers elected and the suit taken over. Under a resolution passed a committee of five was named to arrange and conduct the injunction suit and I was added to the committee as advisory. The committee, with myself, met at Dallas on May 10th. The court arranged to hear Attorney Holman conduct the suit and to employ Judge Ramsey to assist him. Trial of the suit was had on June 6th. A meeting of the taxpayers' league was called for June 15th. At this meeting I made report of preparation for the suit, of the trial and result as follows: "The case was closed just after noon at about two o'clock and immediately the judge rendered an opinion. I will read from The Observer (and so read from last column on title page) 'In the following written opinion Judge Belt holds, etc.'" I then repeated that immediately the case closed, the judge gave his decision and if a written opinion I was curious to know when it was written. That is all I said about the suit. Now at this time came calls, but not by me, for recall, and finally action was taken to recall. I am therefore not the father of the recall. Now in The Observer of date, June 20th, I am accused of attacking Judge Belt and casting reflections upon him because and only because of this written opinion, and which written opinion I read from The Observer of June 9th at the meeting of June 15th. Says there was no written opinion rendered, but that upon request of The Observer the judge wrote the opinion later for it. The Itemizer also charges attack of Judge Belt and says upon request of Itemizer and Observer the judge afterwards wrote the opinion for them.

Now I challenge a denial of these stated facts, and I leave the public to judge if I made attack or cast reflections on Judge Belt. Brevity is the soul of writ. I close. Yours for the right,

JAMES K. SEARS.

Editor Observer: In your paper of Tuesday last, you printed a list of prices of staple commodities as charged by Dallas merchants fifty years ago. It appears that in the pioneer days spelling books were sold at 25 cents each, and the comment is added that "spelling books of today cost more than those of fifty years ago, notwithstanding the very much greater cost of printing, paper, ink, and transportation then." Is it true that paper and printing costs were higher fifty years ago than they are today? I have no doubt that spelling books were sold for 25 cents each in those days, but the assertion that the price is higher today is incorrect. I have a fairly accurate knowledge of the price of school books and I do not know of any speller that is sold for more than 25 cents. Some are sold for less.

J. C. HAYTER.

ELECTING A PRESIDENT
17



Bryan Ran Again In 1908, but Taft Was Winner.

TAFT.

WILLIAM H. TAFT of Ohio, who was Roosevelt's secretary of war, went to the Chicago convention in 1908 with the colonel's support. He was quickly nominated, with James S. Sherman of New York as his running mate.

The Democrats nominated Bryan again, with John W. Kern of Indiana as the vice presidential candidate.

For the third time Bryan was defeated for the presidency, Taft receiving a popular vote of 7,678,908 to Bryan's 6,460,104. The vote in the electoral college was 321 to 162. The Republican party was united solidly that year, while the friction among the Democrats still existed.

(Watch for the election of Wilson in 1912 in our next issue.)

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