

# CURRENT TOPICS

A NEW YORK DISPATCH carried by the United Press says: "One hundred thousand dollars has been raised to fight the proposed increase in the magazine postal rates. One hundred publishers have agreed to contribute \$1,000 to a fund to be used in newspaper advertisements, giving the reasons for opposing the pending measure. S. S. McClure today flatly denied Postmaster General Hitchcock's statement that the magazines are making huge profits. 'No magazine of our type,' said McClure, 'earns an adequate return on the investment, because of the high cost of editorial matter used. Some of the special articles represent an outlay of \$30,000 to \$50,000. The result of the proposed iniquitous increase would be nothing less than forcing us to spend more money than our magazines earn.'"

MEMBERS OF CONGRESS are receiving many telegrams and letters protesting against the increase in postal rates. Senator Clapp, of Minnesota, is quoted, by the United Press, as saying: "In ten years' experience, I have never encountered a measure that seemed to me so unjust and so fraught with the prospects of destruction as this." Frank Morrison, secretary of the American Federation of Labor, said: "We want no penalty to be placed on reading matter which has such a far-reaching, educational value." M. M. Madden, representing Typographical Union, No. 16, of Chicago: "The increase in rates would affect 50,000 printers, 25,000 pressmen, 10,000 feeders, 22,000 binders, 25,000 mailers and many others in affiliated trades." J. H. Scribner, of Philadelphia, representing the associated religious publications: "The 15,000,000 people who read religious publications are a unit in opposing this outrageous tax on their reading matter."

SAMUEL G. BLYTHE, the famous political writer, has written for the United Press, this statement: "Politics, not a postal deficit, is the underlying motive of the administration's attack on the magazine and periodical press of this country, through the medium of an increase in second-class postage. Postmaster General Hitchcock has his excuse in his alleged deficit. President Taft has his excuse in his support of a cabinet member, who is trying to put his department on a self-sustaining basis. The administration senators, who tacked the amendment on the postoffice bill, have their excuse in the demand of the president that the increase shall be made. They are making these excuses, too, now that they are discovering how thoroughly the people are aroused on the matter of using the taxing power of the government to confiscate—for that is what it amounts to—a free press that has dared to criticize and condemn certain acts of both the administration and the supporters of the administration in congress. Laying aside the tremendous economic fact that the imposition of this tax by the government means the ruin of the magazine and periodical business in this country, the absolute extinction of the popular magazines, look at the politics of it. Three facts are certain: First—This tax is a part of a carefully matured plan by the administration, in conjunction with the interests the republican majority in congress have served sixteen years, to stamp out the progress of the republican movement in this country by depriving that movement of its means of publicity and its pay mediums for the spread of its propaganda? Second—It is especially directed at the newly formed progressives in congress who have been supported by the magazine and periodical press in their attempt to rid the country of Aldrichism and Cannonism. Third—It is an act of direct reprisal on the part of the president, Hitchcock, Cannon, Aldrich and all the Cannon and Aldrich crowd in congress, of whom there are seven on the committee that put the amendment in the senate bill, intended to punish those magazines and periodicals that have spoken fearlessly about governmental and political abuses. Of course, the publishers can make the case and are making it vigorously and effectively, that this discriminatory reprisal tax will bankrupt them, or if any of them can continue, will inevitably increase the price of

the popular magazines to the reading public, but that isn't the main point. The vital thing that concerns the people of this country is that this administration, by exercising its taxing power, is endeavoring to abolish a free press, not only in the interests of its own political ambitions and those of the men who serve it, but also in the interests and for the protection of the financial powers it seeks to serve. The question is bigger than one of money, either in the government's purse or out of the purses of the publishers and the thousands of men who will be thrown out of employment if the publishing business is curtailed, as it will be if this increase in second-class postage becomes a law. It is a blow at the liberty guaranteed under the constitution, and is subversive to every American idea of justice, fair play and decent politics."

FIVE HUNDRED and seventy-eight public offices, with salaries, amounting to nearly one million dollars a year, will go to democrats, as a result of capturing the house of representatives. The Washington correspondent to the Louisville, (Kentucky) Times, says: When the next congress convenes—whether in March or next December—the republicans will turn over to the democrats more than \$1,000,000 a year in patronage. Employees of the house, to the number of 578, now republicans, will be succeeded by democrats. The total annual salary of these 578 is \$744,333. Add to this sum the salaries of eighty-four secretaries of eighty-four new democratic members, at \$1,500 each, and the million is accounted for. South Trimble, of Kentucky, who will probably be the next house clerk, has seventy-five offices at his disposal, an annual salary list of \$132,990. Among these are a chief clerk, at \$4,500; a journal clerk, at \$4,000; two reading clerks, at \$4,000; and seventy other employees. Speaker Champ Clark has eighteen appointees, among them a secretary, at \$4,000; a parliamentarian, at \$3,600; a messenger, at \$1,400; six reporters of debate, at \$5,000 each; and one assistant reporter, at \$2,500; four committee stenographers, at \$5,000 each; and an assistant committee stenographer, at \$2,000. The next sergeant-at-arms, to be either Stokes Jackson, of Indiana, or W. H. Ryan, of Buffalo, has 100 offices to fill, thirty-eight of which are capitol policemen, with an annual pay roll of \$84,665. To the doorkeeper, who will probably be Joe Sinnott, of Virginia, 211 offices, with an annual salary of \$203,905, fall as plunder. This does not include special messengers. It is likely that the present blind chaplain, the Rev. H. C. Couden, will be retained. In addition to these officers, the house must select thirty-nine committee clerks, 233 assistant committee clerks; twenty-two session clerks; three stenographers and forty-seven janitors and messengers, all at good salaries. To the committee chairman will fall many of these plums.

STATE SENATOR B. E. Sundberg, of Minnesota, a year ago, brought action against the express companies. That action is still pending. Sundberg crossed the ocean forty years ago in the steerage of an immigrant ship. He now owns many farms in Minnesota. A few years ago he had a breakdown of one of his thrashing machines. He was compelled to lay off twenty men until the broken machinery could be replaced. He wired to Minneapolis for the casting, which cost something over two dollars. It came by express, and the express charges were \$36. Years rolled by as the story-tellers say. Sundberg was elected to the legislature. He was appointed on a committee which had to do with railroad and express charges. He found that the Adams Express company had accumulated over forty-five millions, besides paying enormous dividends annually; that the American had accumulated a like surplus; that the United States Express company had accumulated over fifteen millions; that the Wells-Fargo company had assets amounting to \$34,000,000, a large part of which had accumulated in very recent years; and that the assets of these four companies in the year 1907 amount-

ed to over \$144,000,000. Then Sundberg began to wonder what was the legitimate field for express companies anyway. The railroads could as readily have fast freight transportation for the public as for the express companies—why should the burden of business be increased by duplicating the machinery of operation? Why should a transportation tax be levied, collected, and diverted from the public treasury for private profit by railroads who were supposed to be doing a semi-public work? Sundberg did not apply to the government for relief—some observation had taught him the futility of that. He hired Manahan. They obtained access to the offices of the companies and served the subpoenas themselves on the presidents of each of the companies. The next morning Manahan stood in court against a brilliant array of lawyers. When these lawyers offered trained witnesses, experts in the juggling of figures, as substitutes for the chief officials of the companies, Manahan stubbornly insisted that only the officials themselves would do—and the hearing had to be adjourned to allow the officials to appear. They came, and the sturdy Norwegian farmer who had come over in the steerage succeeded where the government had often failed. We are led to hark back to that scene in the Seattle court room almost a year ago, when Sheridan, fresh from the law school, singly representing this great republic, was pitted against private attorneys of reputation and experience, in a suit which involved the vast coal deposits of Alaska, and ultimately the commercial control of that great territory.

A NEW YORK DISPATCH to the Oklahoma City Oklahoman, says: Senator Owen, of Oklahoma, who introduced a bill in the United States senate, to grant the right of suffrage to women, strongly defended that measure, in an interview in New York, Monday. Owen came to New York to deliver an address Saturday evening and stayed over Sunday. "Women should not only vote," he said, "but should be made to vote. No nation ever rises higher than the women of that nation. Just in the degree of honor and respect they are treated does it rise. As women began to fill the cares and press of business that respect has been modified. Six million women outside of domestic service are independent of any man. What reason is there that they should be denied equal wages, equal liberties, and equal say in government with men. An overwhelming reason for the cause of suffrage lies in the fact that throughout the country, if they don't own half the land, women at least, do half the work, and produce all the children. This alone ought to give them the right of equal voice in the matters of government."

## BLUNDERS

Perhaps the worst blunder the democrats could make would be the election of a half dozen interests serving senators. It would be another blunder to try to exclude Mr. Bryan from the counsels of the party. As a candidate he is, of course, out of the question, and no one knows it better than himself. But he has a larger following than any other democrat, and it is doubtful whether anybody will have as decisive a voice in the next national convention as he. The attempt to ignore him is ill-advised to the last degree. It can only divide the party and blight all hope of future advantages. The war upon Bryan is interpreted by the people as an effort of "big business" to get hold of the party machinery and use it for sinister purposes. If he is finally ostracised it is pretty certain that the next president will not be a democrat.—Portland Oregonian.

The American Homestead, a monthly farm journal of national scope, will be sent to all Commoner subscribers, without additional cost, who renew their subscriptions during the month of March when this notice is mentioned.