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WASTE AT WASHINGTON.

President Taft has answered most conclusively all those who wish the federal government to assume new duties and burdens with consequent additions to the payroll and service lists. He says nothing about the proposal to add the telegraph and, ultimately, the telephone service of the country to the postoffice department's work, but he gives a hundred reasons why it should not be done, all of which may be read between the lines of the message on economy and efficiency in the government service which he communicated to congress last Wednesday.

This message is based on the results of the inquiry congress authorized on June 25, 1910, when an appropriation of \$100,000 was made to enable the president to inquire into the methods of transacting the public business of the executive department and other government establishments and to recommend to congress such legislation as may be necessary to carry into effect changes found to be desirable that can not be accomplished by executive action alone. This was a task of some magnitude, for the gross expenditures of the government amount to about a billion dollars a year, and, including the military and naval establishments, more than 400,000 persons are required to do the work of the executive branch of the government.

This investigation was carried on to a considerable extent under the personal direction of the president, and it disclosed wastefulness and extravagance in the public service that should impress every citizen of this country with the need for reform. The revenue cutter service, for instance, costs more than \$2,500,000 a year of which not less than \$1,000,000 is wasted and can be saved. Similar waste occurs in the lighthouse and life-saving services and in the returns office of the department of the interior.

Perhaps the part of the organization in which the greatest economy in public expenditure is possible, the president says, is to be found in the numerous local offices of the government. In some instances the establishment and the discontinuance of these local offices are matters of administrative discretion. In other instances they are established by permanent law in such a manner that their discontinuance is beyond the power of the president or that of any executive officer. In a number of services these laws were passed nearly a century ago. Changes in economic conditions have taken place which have had the effect of rendering certain offices not only useless but even worse than useless in that their very existence needlessly swells expenditures and complicates the administrative system.

The president makes recommendations that will cause professional politicians to shudder. He asks congress to deprive him and his successors in office of a large part of the very patronage which makes the president for the time being the dictator of his party. President Taft says the incumbents of local offices throughout the country should possess the requisite qualifications and should be removed from the realm of political patronage. This would reduce the payroll of the field services. At the present time the incumbents of many of these positions leave the actual performance of many of their duties to deputies and assistants. The government often pays two persons for doing work that could easily be done by one. What is the loss to the government can not be stated, but that it is very large can not be denied, when it is remembered how numerous are the local offices in the postal, customs, internal revenue, public lands and other field services of the government.

The New York Commercial, the leading financial and commercial newspapers of the nation, truthfully portrays the facts as regards the public officers and deputies. It says:

So long as local officers are within the sphere of political patronage it will be difficult to discontinue local offices or reform the service because of the effect upon local political conditions. Paying political obligations with appointments to such offices makes it necessary for the president and members of congress to devote to matters of patronage time which they should give to public questions and work.

President Taft would treat the administrative officers at Washington in the same way as those in inferior positions. His views on this subject are radical. He holds that all these officers should be placed in the classified service and those provisions of law which give to those officers a fixed term of years should be repealed. So long as a fixed term is provided by law the

question of reappointment of an officer, no matter how efficiently he may have performed his duties, will inevitably be raised periodically. So long as appointments to these offices must be confirmed by the senate, and so long as appointments to them must be made every four years, just so long will it be impossible to provide a force of employes with a reasonably permanent tenure who are qualified by reason of education and training to do the best work.

In dealing with departmental extravagance at Washington the president says some pungent things which his postmaster general should ponder before asking congress to give his department the telegraph service of the country. Of handing and filing correspondence, a minor matter, the president says:

The reports also show not only a very wide range in the methods of doing this comparatively simple part of the government business, but an extraordinary range in cost. For the handling of incoming mail the averages of cost by departments vary from \$5.84 to \$84.40 per thousand. For the handling of outgoing mail the averages by departments vary from \$5.94 to \$69.89 per thousand. This does not include the cost of preparation, but is confined merely to the physical side of the work. The variations between individual offices is many times greater than that shown for averages by departments.

It is at once evident either that it is costing some of the offices too little or that others are being run at an unwarranted expense. Nor are these variations explained by differences in character of work. For example, there are two departments which handle practically the same kind of business and in very large volume. The average cost of handling incoming mail to one was found to be over six times as great as the cost of handling incoming mail to the other. Excluding the cost of preparation, the average per thousand for outgoing mail to one was nearly 50 per cent greater than that for the other.

Department heads should study system in their own offices in Washington and show results before asking for added responsibility that involves great aggregate waste in petty details, if conducted in the way that now prevails. Even in the matter of passenger fares, the government employes buy and charge up single fares when return trip tickets or mileage books would save one-fifth of the \$12,000,000 spent annually in that way.

The president recommends the treasury department to present an annual budget as the best means for getting before congress, the press and the people a definite annual program of business to be financed. It should be in the nature of a prospectus both of revenues and expenditures; it should comprehend every relation of the government to the people, whether with reference to the raising of revenues or the rendering of service. The United States is the only great nation whose government is operated without a budget.

EXECUTIVE CLEMENCY MISPLACED.

Richeson has been condemned to death, but there seems to be a general impression that, for one or another reason, instead of going to the electric chair, his penalty will be reduced to imprisonment for life.

That is evidently what Richeson himself expects—and it is as evident that he made his confession solely with that object in view.

Governor Foss, according to report, is opposed to capital punishment on general principles, and will avoid if he can the painful duty of signing a death warrant. In other quarters stress is laid on the expense which has been spared to the state, on the relief of Avis Linnell's family from the agony of going on the witness stand, on the sparing of the murdered girl's memory from further injury, and on the withholding from the public of the detailed exposures which a long and hard-fought trial would involve. There is even mention of "the cloth" and the injury that would come to it from the shameful death of one of its wearers!

None of these reasons seems to us to be a good one, and few of them are even relevant to the question at issue. That question is not, it should be remembered, whether capital punishment is right or wrong, but whether, in a state where capital punishment is the legal penalty for murder, and is not infrequently inflicted, that punishment should or should not be inflicted on a man who committed—and who, when he saw that his conviction was certain, confessed—a murder which for cold-blooded atrocity, for baseness of motive, for cowardice and treachery, has never been surpassed and not many times equaled in the criminal annals of civilized people.

This was no deed of hasty passion, not the act of an ignorant man, untrained in drawing distinction between right and wrong. It was that of a professional moralist who had assumed to lead and teach other men; it was long contemplated and carefully planned; it was executed in cold heartlessness by playing upon the confidence of a helpless and desperate woman in the one man who of all others owed her love and protection. While capital punishment remains on the statute book, to commute Richeson's sentence is such a compounding of felony as even "the state," in spite of the frequency with which "the state" does what its individual units are forbidden to do, should recoil from. It would be an outrage upon common decency and a cruel injustice to every other murderer who has been or will be put to death for murders that in comparison with this one can be called and are justifiable homicide.

A San Bernardino man has adopted six healthy young skunks as pets. Loose affection sometimes finds strange objects to fasten itself to.

However, the trial of the beef trust officials has reached a stage where the defendants are manifesting considerable interest in the proceedings.

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