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PANAMA CITY, FLA., DEC. 31, 1908.

Harbor Improvement.

On Monday, January 11th, a meeting is to be held in Washington at which the Board of Engineers request that the facts showing the necessity of immediate improvement of the entrance to St Andrews Bay be presented before them.

This meeting is of vital importance to all interested in the opening of this magnificent harbor to the commerce of the world, and should be attended by every one interested in this important project. It is not a local matter confined to this Bay, but it directly affects all that territory south of Atlanta, Ga., east of Montgomery, Ala., and west of Macon, Ga.

With the improvement of the Apalachicola river and its tributaries, the above mentioned territory in Alabama and Georgia would have a direct and economical way to reach a deep water harbor, and be in close commercial touch with all the ports of the world. To the inhabitants of that section the improvement of the entrance to this harbor means a saving in freight of a million dollars yearly.

From Atlanta to the Gulf, and from Montgomery to Macon, every citizen should take immediate and active steps to be represented at this meeting. They should write their Representatives in Congress, their Senators, and all other public men who can aid them, requesting that they appear before the Board of Engineers and advocate the immediate improvement of this harbor entrance.

By such action the Board would be forcibly impressed with the importance of the work, and of the great saving in freight that it would bring to such a large and influential territory. Our West Florida citizens should also write their congressmen, and see that they are fully posted as to the requirements of this section of the country, and also see that they are fully furnished with all the facts as to amount of freights, &c., that would pass through this port.

Senators Taliaferro and Milton will do all in their power to cause the Board to report favorably upon this improvement, but they must be backed by every possible fact that may have a favorable bearing upon the case, and by an attendance at the meeting, of public men, that will show the interest of the people in the subject. Let there be a full attendance of those interested, and a full presentation of all the facts showing the necessity of immediate action in the premises.

Presidential Primaries.

Although nomination by the Primaries undoubtedly has its defects yet there is so much "to the good" about it that it will not easily be eradicated from our political economy. Like all new methods it is susceptible of improvement and will be changed as time develops the necessity.

But the principle is right, and right will prevail. Not only has the system been growing rapidly in these United States but it has been extended from local to State nominations, and now there begins a campaign to nominate the president in that way.

A late issue of the Boston Transcript has the following upon this subject:

"How would the voters of the United States like to wake up some morning in June of a presidential year, to go to primaries to indicate their preference for the nominations of their respective parties? Either States or districts might be made the units. The candidate getting the largest amount of such State and

district support would then become the party choice, the national conventions falling into secondary importance useful chiefly for drafting the platform and for formally registering the decrees already made by the people. That presidential nominations will some time be made in this way is not wholly unlikely. C. Edward Merriam, the author of a work on "Primary Elections," recently published by the University of Chicago Press, makes the prediction that this method is coming, as the culmination of our direct primary developments.

Is it not already under way? This author recalls that this last year Wisconsin and Pennsylvania chose their delegates by a direct vote on the presidential issue. The next step, he believes, will be a definite provision for a preferential vote on the presidential nominations everywhere, with the understanding that the delegates selected shall be bound in honor thereby. Whether the direct vote system will be carried so far as to provide for the nomination of a President by the popular vote of the entire party is problematical. But at least States are likely to choose their delegates to the national convention by direct primary, and these delegates will be instructed by the popular vote upon the question of the presidential nomination. That would mean about the same thing as the Wisconsin plan of direct presidential preference, expressed by the direct voters in the primary booths.

Dr Merriam leads up to this conclusion by a study of direct primaries. He recalls that as long ago as the sixties Pennsylvania experimented with them, and that in the South they easily gained great headway because there but one party had to be considered. It may be popularly recalled that in Mr Breckinridge's famous contest for renomination in 1894, the returns came as if by complete popular vote in the various towns and cities. This was the first evidence which many Northern people had of the method of nomination that had gained a foothold in a large section of the country. In the last ten years it has spread rapidly. Two-thirds of the States have enacted direct primary laws. It has brought its problems, and these the experimenting States are trying to solve."

A National Waterway Policy.

The improvement of our waterways is a National problem. Two weeks ago the President, the President-elect, the Vice-President, the Governors of more than half the States, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Senators, Representatives, and members of important civic and commercial associations from all over the country united at Washington in expressing their appreciation of the importance of this question. As Mr James Bryce, the British Ambassador, said, we have in this country a system of great rivers such as is to be found nowhere else on the face of the earth except in the tropical jungles of South America. This system of natural channels of transportation ought to be comprehensively improved. Our great rivers, like the Mississippi, the Missouri, the Ohio, the Columbia, should be made safely and easily navigable for freight carrying vessels, and should be connected by canals into a complete waterway system wherever the exigencies of freight transportation require. A continuous inland channel, parallel to the Atlantic coast, should be constructed from Boston to Florida. The development of our waterways would help the railways by relieving them from the great flood of heavy and bulky freight which congests them at certain times of the year with unfortunate effect upon their fast freight and passenger service. It would also aid the shipper and the consumer by providing a check on excessive freight charges. The need is a National one. The development which it demands should be Nationally carried on.

In 1882 President Arthur vetoed a Rivers and Harbors Bill carrying appropriations of eighteen million dollars, and the bill was passed over his veto. The Outlook at that time characterized the measure as one for the Improvement of the Chances of Re-election of the present Members of Congress. For years the Rivers and Harbors Bill has preserved this character and has been known as the legislative "pork barrel." It is true that in the last few years, under the leadership of the present chairman of the Rivers and Harbors Committee of the House of Representatives, Mr Theodore E. Burton, the method of legislating for waterway improvement has been greatly bettered. Now no project is included in a Rivers and Harbors Bill until it has been passed upon by the engineers of the Army and has received their approval. But even with this desirable change the question of improving the waterways of the country remains, if we may

believe Speaker Cannon, a matter of compromise. The process of preparing a waterways measure was described by him as that of "throwing into the pot" projects from different parts of the country in order to secure a majority for the bill in Congress. And, according to Mr Cannon, an important consideration in the selection of the projects to be included is the desire for re-election on the part of individual Congressmen. Such a method of procedure may improve the chances of Congressmen for re-election, but it will never adequately and comprehensively improve the waterways of the country. What is needed is a National plan scientifically prepared and efficiently carried out, in accordance with the dictates of National public policy, by an executive branch of the Government. Congress should provide the money—whether out of current income or by a charge upon future generations in the form of a bond issue is a matter for later consideration. But the money should be expended by the executive branch of the Government, free from the local demands which inevitably make themselves felt in Congressional action.

By good fortune we have a model ready to hand which may well be followed in waterway development. The Reclamation Service, a branch of the Department of the Interior, is engaged in the development of twenty-five projects in sixteen different States and Territories which when completed, will irrigate nearly two million acres and will cost seventy million dollars. The location of the projects, the selection of the lands to be irrigated and of the waters to be used upon them, are determined by considerations of public policy and good engineering practice. There is no compromise in the work of reclamation, except the compromise between the many things that ought to be done and the not unlimited funds available for their doing. No irrigation project is located at a certain point because the Senator or Representative from that region is powerful on a certain committee in Congress and needs for his re-election the prestige of the securing of that project for his district.

Our vast waterway resources demand development. They should be developed. Nationally along the lines laid down in the Reclamation Service, without compromise, and free from the influences of special interests and individual localities.—The Outlook.

In the opinion of William E. Curtis, the annual reports of the department of agriculture, "ought to be published before Thanksgiving day every year, in order to furnish material for Thanksgiving sermons." This year's report is certainly well adapted to such use, as it gives the farm products of 1908 as \$7,778,000,000, "the most extraordinary amount in the history of the world." It is about four times the value of the products of the mines of the United States, including coal and petroleum. Corn is reported at 2,643,000,000 bushels, worth \$1,616,000,000; hay is valued at \$621,000,000; wheat (660,000,000 bushels) at \$620,000,000; oats (780,000,000 bushels) at \$321,000,000. The value of the cattle sold and slaughtered totals nearly 3,000,000,000, and the dairy product is reported at \$800,000,000. The farmer still occupies a front seat in the nation's industrial household.

Congressman Sparkman says that from the expression he has heard and from the conditions with which he is familiar, he entertains little hope that congress will have a general river and harbor appropriation bill this session, though he believes there will be an emergency bill. In view of the large treasury deficit it is evident that congress will be disposed to exercise the most rigid economy this session, and many projects of the highest merit will have to wait for more prosperous times. The great falling off in the internal revenue receipts at a time when the check in our foreign trade has seriously reduced the amount of the customs receipts, coupled with the past extravagance of the government, makes retrenchment a necessity.—Times-Union.

By direct information from Tallahassee, we learn that the State Supreme Court has rendered a decision which declares in effect that all statutes providing for state aid to schools in the state are unconstitutional. This decision comes as a severe blow to the public schools of our state and places them in about the condition they were ten or twelve years ago.—Times-Courier, Marianna.

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