

NATIONAL OWNERSHIP OF RAILROADS.

Facts and Figures Which Show This to Be the Only True Remedy.

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(Concluded from last week.)

But let us view the question of perpetuating power, from the opposite side, namely, from the view which we have before our eyes of our government now controlled by private railroad corporations. Why will men look to a future mythical and impossible danger of party denomination by government railroads—when already, at this hour, the government is an industrial despotism controlled by political parties, who are dominated and moved like puppets, at the behest of, and in the interest of private monopolies?

Let the following undisputed statements of commercial bodies and statesmen receive the candid thought of the people. The New York board of trade and transportation, one of the most conservative bodies of merchants in the United States, issued a circular statement upon the dangers and corruptions of railroad domination containing the following extracts:

"When and where has the world ever seen such aggregations of wealth as have been suddenly accumulated by the carrier taxing the producer and merchant?"

"The corruption of our elections, legislatures and courts—the undermining of the very foundations upon which our forefathers based our free institutions—the spectacle exhibited to the young, of chicanery and fraud conferring the highest prizes of society upon its most unscrupulous and unworthy members—these are features of our modern life which suggest in the strongest manner a future, if not a present, for our country, 'where wealth accumulates and men decay.'

"If any are disposed to question the truth of this picture, let them consider a few undisputed facts. It is not disputed:

"That they control absolutely the legislatures of a majority of the states in the Union; make and unmake governors, United States senators and congressmen, and under the forms of popular government are practical dictators of the governmental policy of the United States.

"That within twenty years 200 million of acres of the public lands have been given to corporations, equal to about four acres for every man, woman and child in the United States.

"That this wealth and power has been acquired largely through bribery and corruption. Mr. Gould testified in 1873 that he contributed money to control legislation in four states, and it was proven that the Erie road, in a single year, under his management, disbursed more than 1 million dollars for this purpose.

"That because Senator Thurman was active in compelling the Pacific railroads to fulfill their contracts with the government, that honest man and able statesman could not return to the United States senate.

"That E. D. Worcester, treasurer of the New York Central railroad, testified before the late constitutional convention of the state of New York that that road paid \$205,000 one year and \$60,000 another to obtain legislation, and that it was obtained."

Hon. David Davis, once a judge of the supreme court and a senator of the United States, thus indicates the serious nature of the problem before us:

"The rapid growth of corporate power and the malign influence which

it exerts by combination on the national and state legislatures, is a well-grounded cause for alarm. A struggle is pending in the near future between this overgrown power, with its vast ramifications all over the Union, and a hard grip on much of the political machinery, on the one hand, and the people in an unorganized condition on the other, for the control of the government. It will be watched by every patriot with intense anxiety."

The former secretary of the treasury, Mr. Windom, in a letter to the president of the Anti-Monopoly league, says:

"The channels of thought and the channels of commerce thus owned and controlled by one man, or by a few men, what is to restrain corporate power, or to fix a limit to its exactions upon the people? What is then to hinder these men from depressing or inflating the value of all kinds of property to suit their caprice or avarice, and thereby gathering into their own coffers the wealth of the nation? Where is the limit to such a power as this? What shall be said of the spirit of a free people who will submit without a protest to be thus bound hand and foot?"

Governor Gray of Indiana, in a message to the legislature of that state, said:

"In my judgment the republic can not live long in the atmosphere which now surrounds the ballot-box. Monied corporations, to secure favorable legislation for themselves, are taking an active part in elections by furnishing large sums of money to corrupt the voter and purchase special privileges from the government. If money can control the decision at the ballot-box it will not be long until it can control its existence."

Governor Bell of New Hampshire, in his inaugural address on Thursday, June 2, 1881, used the following plain language:

"The improper use of money to influence popular elections is a crying evil of our times. It has become so general that little or no secrecy is made of it, and that well-meaning men assume to justify it. But nothing can be more fatal to the security of our free institutions. When the longest purse secures the elections to office, we may bid farewell to liberty and virtue in the government. This matter is too plain for argument."

The third semi-annual report of the railroad commissioners of the state of Georgia, submitted May 1, 1881, says:

"The moral and social consequences of these corruptions are even worse than the political; they are simply appalling. We contemplate them with anxiety and dismay. The demoralization is even worse than that of war—as fraud is milder than force, and trickery than violence."

Hon. James B. Beck of Kentucky, in one of his speeches in the United States senate, said:

"It is impossible to have an honest legislature, state or federal, so long as representatives are sent who owe their election to, or are personally interested in great monied corporations or monopolies. No matter whether they call themselves democrats or republicans, they are not the representatives of the people; they are simply the agents and attorneys of those who seek, by taxing the masses, to enrich themselves whenever they owe their election to monopolists, or are themselves interested in class legislation."

On the 27th day of January, 1880, Mr.

Gowen, the president of the Philadelphia & Reading railroad, in an argument before the committee on commerce of the house of representatives of the United States, in Washington, said:

"I have heard the counsel of the Pennsylvania Railroad company, standing in the supreme court of Pennsylvania, threaten that court with the displeasure of his clients if it decided against them, and all the blood in my body tingled with shame at the humiliating spectacle."

Hon. Jeremiah S. Black, ex-judge of the supreme court and ex-attorney general of the United States, said:

"All public men must take their side on this question. There can be no neutrals. He that is not for us is against us."

And observe with care the following extracts made this year (1891) at Chicago at the unveiling of Grant's monument, by Judge Walter Q. Gresham:

"It is worse than idle to shut our eyes to the existence of corrupt methods and practices in our politics, which threaten to subvert our free institutions. * * * And men who contribute money to buy votes and to bribe the people's representatives, as well as those who disburse it, are deadly enemies of the republic. * * * They may masquerade in the garb of righteousness, and address the people in the language of patriotism, but their virtues are assumed, they are hypocrites and assassins of liberty, and would welcome dynasty rather than shed their blood in defense of popular government. Their shameless and insidious attacks on free institutions are infinitely more dangerous than the revolutionary teachings and practices of a comparatively few visionary and misguided men and women in our large cities."

But listen to the report of the grand jury of San Francisco—publicly filed in open court on December 23, 1891, which, after finding that the legislature elected by the railroad power in 1890 contained an organized combination, with its agents and brokers, to sell legislation to the highest bidders, concludes as follows:

"The rapacious horde ought to be driven into the sea; but we are forced to the melancholy conclusion that the abstention of the railways from participation in public affairs is the only condition of freedom from this defilement? Is their power all-pervading, and shall there be no limit in point of time to their supremacy? No class seeks to confiscate their property or depreciate the services the managers have rendered the state. But it infects everything it touches politically. For its aims are solely selfish—financially selfish. It has debauched both parties until an honest man cannot, without fear of contamination, aspire to political office."

Henry Ward Beecher told us, in 1881, that five or ten men, controlling 10,000 miles of railroads and billions of property, had their hands on the throat of commerce, and "if they should need to have a man in sympathy with them in the executive chair it would require only five pockets to put him there."

Does not the position at which we have arrived show the truth of the words of Daniel Webster, who said:

"The freest government cannot long endure, where the tendency of the law is to create a rapid accumulation of property in the hands of a few, and to render the masses of the people poor and independent."

We have indeed reached the hour

foreseen by the prophetic Abraham Lincoln, when near the close of the war he said: "It has been indeed a trying hour for the republic; but I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me, and causes me to tremble for the safety of our country."

"As a result of the war corporations have been enthroned, and an era of corruption in high places will follow, and the money power of the country will endeavor to prolong its reign by working upon the prejudices of the people until all wealth is aggregated in a few hands, and the republic is destroyed."

"I feel at this moment more anxiety for the safety of my country than ever before, even in the midst of the war."

Thus we see, by broad daylight, that it is not government ownership of railroads, but private ownership, which will destroy the republic. The money they can drain from the public, and use as a corruption fund, will control a vastly greater number of votes than could ever be controlled by government employees.

But in addition to the money used by railroad corporations, and the terror they inspire in shippers, whom they can injure in many ways, they practically demand political allegiance from most of their employes whenever occasion requires it. An instance of this is proven from the vote in California in 1882 for Governor Stoneman. The Southern Pacific company is by preference a republican corporation, if that party serves its interests as directed from the company's office. But in 1882 the republican state convention passed strong anti-monopoly resolutions and nominated its candidate for governor.

The democratic convention adopted resolutions perhaps as strong as those of the republicans. But that was not the point with the railroad company. It was angry because the republican convention had kicked—and determined to punish and discipline that party, and show it that its existence in the state depended upon obeying the railroad company. A canvass was made among their employes. In 1880 the democratic majority was 117 in the state for Hancock, and in 1882 it was 23,519 for Stoneman for governor—a democratic gain of 23,402 out of a total vote of only 164,679, or a change of one vote in seven. In Alameda county, where the railroad is most potent, there was a democratic gain of 2,269, out of 9,257 votes cast. There the railroad changed one vote out of every four. Now, a change of one vote out of seven would, in 1896, when there will be over 14 million votes in the nation, amount to 2 million votes in the control of the railroad power in the United States. Which, then, is the most potent for perpetuating parties in power—government ownership under strict civil service, or private corporations controlling 2 millions of votes in the nation?

The enormous evils of unjust discrimination between not only individuals but places, has been shown times without number. The Cullom senate committee reported that the most glaring favoritism existed in favor of large capitalists, and that the result was most disastrous to the smaller shippers. Favoritism also is shown to trusts and syndicates composed mainly of directors and large stockholders in the railroads, who thereby secretly give rebates to themselves. Trusts and combinations have no more power ally than railroads in private hands. Recently the Northern Pacific railway refused to stop its trains or have a