



# The Indianapolis Times

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BOYD GURLEY,  
EditorROY W. HOWARD,  
PresidentFRANK G. MORRISON,  
Business Manager

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PHONE—Riley 5551

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"Give Light and the People Will Find Their Own Way"

## Cleaning Up Politics

The Republican primaries this year will settle the question of whether the majority of the voters of that party believe in Boss Coffin and really want his leadership, or have been denied a voice in party affairs through various forms of intrigue and trickery.

This year the elections will not be directed by the criminal lawyer, who, during the Coffin rule, has been on guard at election times, naming the clerks and judges, often those who stand in fear of jails and prisons.

The new Republican chairman, Martin Hugg, has named as the Republican election commissioner a man who headed the fight against Coffin two years ago. That would suggest that the primaries will be in the hands of the enemies of Coffinism.

Those who want to get rid of Coffinism now have a magnificent opportunity to demonstrate their power. They have declared that Coffin did not really represent the will of the party and that he maintained his place by tricks and prostitution of office.

All that any citizen can ask is a fair and square vote and a fair count. That now seems assured. The battle should be conclusive.

Good government is never given to the people. They have to work for it and protect it. The best that can be offered is a chance for those who belong to different parties to see that tickets represent the wish of the majority. No one can ask for more.

It is just possible that when the votes are counted it will be discovered that Coffin did really represent the moral and political views of a majority of his own party.

At any rate, those who have contended that he misrepresented his own party, that he stood for practices and principles which were repugnant to its conscience, will now have the chance to test their own claims. It would be tragic if it were discovered that they have been mistaken.

## Three Busy Men

The secretary of war is a busy man. The army and all the rivers and bays and bridges in the country are under his care. He has no time to give to the federal power commission, though he is a member of it.

The secretary of interior is a busy man. He, too, is a member of the federal power commission, though he must be responsible for all the public lands in the United States, all the parks, the Indians, the pensioners, and many other things.

The secretary of agriculture is the third member of the commission, but first he must deal with the numerous ills which beset the farmer. He has little time left over from that chore.

That is why the President and congress and the power commission itself are all agreed that a new sort of federal power commission must be organized.

The senate interstate commerce committee will start work this week on a plan for creating a permanent full-time commission. It is apparent that men should be in charge who can devote all their attention to the fast-multiplying problems concerned with power. Under the present system the secretary and other employees of the commission must carry most of the responsibilities.

There are fundamental issues waiting determination by the power commission.

What sort of items should the accounting department permit in company construction statements? Should suits be brought against companies refusing to open their books? What should be done about the Flathead power sites? Should the commission undertake regulatory functions?

All these matters in the end bear directly upon the pocketbook of the taxpayer and the electric rate payer.

Careful and expert decisions should be made.

## Government Gunmen

Again the federal government has won in its fight to prevent state courts from trying liquor killing cases, which it transfers to federal courts, where it can defend successfully the culprits.

From the day that Emmet J. White, United States customs patrolman, charged with the murder of Henry Virkkula near Little Fork, Minn., last June, was snatched into the haven of a federal court, it was assumed that he would be acquitted. On Saturday he was acquitted.

If White could not be convicted, it is difficult to see how any prohibition agent can be brought to justice for the killing of innocent citizens.

Superficially, then, this a great victory for the government in its defense of enforcement terrorists; but only superficially. For clearly this lawlessness by law officials, and their defense by the federal government, is largely responsible for the growing public reaction against prohibition.

It would be difficult to imagine a case which better establishes the guilt of a federal agent than the Virkkula killing. The victim was driving home on a country road. With him were his wife and children. He was violating no law. There was no liquor in his car. Not even the government questions these facts.

Suddenly out of the darkness came a volley of shots. It was the agent White, shooting with a riot gun. Virkkula, according to his wife beside him, was in the act of stopping the car, when he was struck by a bullet and the car rolled over into the ditch.

The agent was indicted in a state court on a charge of second degree murder. But when the government forced the case into its own federal court, the judge would not permit that charge. The jury was instructed that its only choices were acquittal, third degree murder or second degree manslaughter.

The government's defense of the agent was that White shot at the car with a riot gun, without meaning to hurt any one. Indeed, the government called the killing an "accident."

So the gunplay of these prohibition agents continues to jeopardize the lives of innocent citizens.

Two federal prohibition agents just have wounded a 25-year-old woman, nurse at the Veterans' hospital at Knoxville, Ia. The agents' automobile bumped into a car in which the girl was riding, whereupon the agents began shooting. The question of liquor was not involved.

Saturday United States coast guardsmen on Long Island used a machine gun to fire at East Hampton beach, which was crowded with innocent citizens. The same evening in the same region coast guardsmen fired upon two innocent automobile parties without warning.

Doubtless the usual investigations will be ordered by Washington, and administration officials again will bring out those familiar alibi regulations against

# M. E. Tracy SAYS:

*Justice Has Run to Ritualism; We Spend Far More Time Polishing and Greasing the System Than in Contemplating Its Results.*

OF the six men tried for murder in connection with the prison riot at Auburn, N. Y., three are convicted and three acquitted.

Of the three convicted, one mutters curses, one winks, and one takes it with a show of bravado, which may be shamed or the real thing.

As the grim tragedy comes to an end, a lawyer for the defense congratulates the prosecuting attorney. "Please don't," says the latter, as he glances toward the weeping father of one of the convicted men.

Nothing unique in any of these incidents, or a dozen more that might be mentioned; yet who doesn't like to read them?

At one time, the jury stood eleven to one for conviction of all six of the prisoners, and the most fascinating part of that is what went on in the jury room to change such a line-up into a verdict of acquittal for three.

If that one man had not stood firm, the electric chair would be claiming three more victims.

A narrow squeak for those whose lives were at stake, but one which frequently occurs.

## Too Much Pageant

WE like to think that the great and costly paraphernalia we have provided insures some precision, especially in capital cases—like to believe that the long-drawn-out quizzing of witnesses, learned arguments of counsel, and carefully prepared charges of judges would guarantee a certain degree of assurance.

But all too frequently we find that there is some lone juror who says the last word, some common, ordinary man, who, for one reason or another, not only disagrees with his eleven colleagues, but possesses the power to bend them to his will.

If that juror happens to be intelligently honest, all right; but if he happens to be only stubborn, or dominated by some peculiar twist of mind, all wrong.

Even to one the jury stood for convicting all six, and then decided to acquit three.

If that can happen at the end, one wonders if all the quizzing, arguing and instructing is necessary in between.

Sometimes it seems we might do just as well to let the story be told in a plain, simple way and cut out all this highfalutin business which, much as it may impress the majority of jurors, appears to have little influence with the few who really count.

In other words, if we're going to have a jury system, and allow "twelve good men and true" to have the final say so, why compel them to flounder through such a smoke screen of verbiage and technique?

## Runs to Ritualism

JUSTICE HAS run to ritualism. We have an elaborate system; so elaborate indeed, that we spend far more time keeping it greased and polished than in contemplating the results.

In important cases, we not only try those accused, but the whole system, to see if there is any flaw in it, or speck of dust on it.

More often than not, when a case is reversed, it is because of some reversal, it is because of some change in the law, rather than the facts.

We persist in the illusion that criminals are different from the rest of us, that they always think crooked, while we always think straight, but John Bunyan said, when passing a gibbet on which a man was waiting to be hanged, "but for the grace of God, there stands John Bunyan."

He was an optimist at that, since the kind of grace in which he believed had sent more than one poor devil to the gallows.

Even to the last, he insisted that the

prosecution is not the best of the

defenders, but the best of the