



# The Indianapolis Times

(A SCRIPPS-HOWARD NEWSPAPER)

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

## A Fundamental Decision

The people of this city expected a decision protecting self-government from Judge John W. Kern. The very name stands in Indiana for the preservation of fundamental principles of Americanism at its best.

Judge Kern has ruled that the state tax board had no right to cut the city tax budget and declared emphatically that the people of this city are entitled to run their own affairs.

He very clearly points out that there was no question of superiority of judgment as between city officials and the tax board, although had that question been raised the verdict would have been decided in favor of officials who chose to redeem the millions of dollars of water which mean high rates from the rule of a machine which is ancestor to the present membership of the tax board.

One slash attempted by the tax board illustrates the danger of moving the government of cities to the statehouse.

That board ordered a cut in the small fund asked by Major Reginald Sullivan to finance the fight of the people against high utility rates and the completion of the effort to obtain legal control of the gas company.

The tax board attempted to leave the city weapons against these forces of organized pillage and greed. It tried to shack the city, to send it into any legal conflict with no funds while these plunderers are amply supplied with loot with which to hire all sorts of experts to confuse and bewilder the issue.

That one act revealed the animus behind this board which claims the right to rule this city.

The power to fix budgets means finally the power to rule cities. In this instance, the one reduction would have the effect of helping to perpetuate the slavery of the city to utility extortions.

The other cuts made had the same imperial ring. One of these reductions was in pay rolls of the park board. The state Caesars declared that the parks might use jobless who obtain work from the emergency funds.

That was their policy. It will have little sympathy from those who believe that in days such as these, there should be every effort to maintain regular pay rolls and not try to reconstruct society on the basis of pauperism.

The truth is that the tax board is dominated by partisan politics and is endeavoring to penalize every community which has had the courage to rid itself of the old order.

Judge Kern has performed a fine public service. But, of course, every one knew that he would stand firm for justice and for right.

## The Arrogant Utilities

The stage is now set for a demonstration as to whether public utilities are under any control by the state.

The city of Indianapolis and a group of citizens under leadership of the South Side Civic clubs have demanded a reduction of rates on water and electricity.

At once the public service commission, through one of its members, suggested that an appraisal of the plants would cost a large sum of money and that months would be required to give any relief.

At his suggestion the city and the utilities are arranging to see whether there can be obtained a "voluntary" reduction of rates.

In plain language, the city will be forced to decide whether it will take a concession or try to obtain justice.

The utilities, arrogant, demanded that all petitions be withdrawn. Still arrogant, they now state that they will not insist upon such a retreat, but will talk things over.

Of course, there would be no necessity of making a new appraisal to fix rates that are more nearly fair to the public. Just an investigation of the books of the companies into the one item of how much the holding companies are grafting would show vast sums charged to their operation that do not belong to such operation.

It is these sums which go to make up the profits for the holding companies that make them so profit-making.

The purchase of coal by the electric company, the fees for management by the holding company for the water company, alone would give a basis for a reduction.

The saloons were once as arrogant as the utilities are today. The saloons are gone. Some day the people may get as tired of utility arrogance as they were of saloon stupidity.

## More Dry Dictatorship

Once again the dry forces are using their power to block reform. This time the fight is over liberalization of the rules of the national house of representatives.

Under the old rules, a small group of majority party leaders has been able to hold powers of dictatorship over all legislation. This group has been able to determine which bills shall come out of committee and which bills shall be buried.

It has been able to shut off floor debate even on such major subjects as the tariff. In the last congress this dictatorship was held by a triumvirate consisting of the Speaker, the chairman of the rules committee, and the majority floor leader.

As the life of most progressive legislation depends on changing these rules of the house, this test is one of the most important to be met by the incoming congress.

When it became clear through the additional loss of Republican seats in special elections this autumn that the Democrats would organize and control the house, it was believed generally that this fight for liberalizing the house rules had been won.

The slight Democratic majority, plus the Republican progressive minority, was believed to be strong enough to put across this reform over the heads of the Republican old guard and the reactionary fringe of Democrats.

Now, however, certain drys have discovered that liberalization of the rules if carried far enough actually would allow the house to take direct votes on the subject of prohibition. They will try to prevent that at all costs—even at the cost of perpetuating a general dictatorship over all legislation.

Under the suggested reform, one house member could not block bills on the private or consent calendars, and no committee could bury a bill on which a fair number of petitioning members desired a debate and a vote. The drys are trying to keep the number required for discharging a committee larger than the number of wet votes in the house.

Perhaps these drys justify their tactics by the questionable philosophy that the end justifies the means. But even an extreme dry should hesitate before he chooses prohibition as a higher end than the preservation of representative government.

That is the issue in this fight to reform the house rules—the preservation of representative government.

## A Disappointing Report

The new federal power commission, organized in the interest of better enforcement of the federal water power act, presents a distinctly disappointing document in its first annual report. Its omissions and silence are significant and disturbing.

Congress created the new full time commission because administration of the water power act had been neglected so flagrantly during the last ten years by cabinet-member commissioners.

Congress was specifically indignant at the failure of past commissions to scrutinize capital investment accounts of its licensees and squeeze from them the millions of dollars of water which mean high rates and unfair recapture prices.

The report of the new commission contains nothing to indicate it appreciates the importance of this situation. Only recently has it begun hearing on this subject, after a year's delay.

The commission's report suggests mildly that perhaps the federal government should regulate interstate power transactions, after gathering more data on the subject. The importance of immediate action in this matter has been appreciated in congress and elsewhere for considerable time.

The federal trade commission has made an exhaustive survey of the extent of unregulated interstate power transactions, but the power commission ignores its figures.

Carefully drawn legislation will be considered by congress this winter to provide federal interstate regulation and regulation of holding companies, but the power commission ignores this.

It takes occasion to praise the power industry, and to express its keen interest in the welfare of the power company investor.

The report's ineptitudes and indifference raise the serious question as to whether further responsibility should be placed in its hands. Of the need for a competent body to guide federal policy toward power utilities there can be no doubt. The Hoover commission has not yet demonstrated that it fills this requirement.

## Mississippi Slavery

Reports of American Federation of Labor investigators describing conditions "of slavery in its most hideous form" in the Vicksburg area of the government's Mississippi levee project call for a sweeping probe into the manner in which federal contractors are doing public work.

This disquieting report includes charges of beating and slugging of Negro workers, forced work of from twelve to eighteen hours a day, wages running from 75 cents to \$2, and "intolerable" camp conditions.

Unfortunately this scandal is not the first involving government contractors. It follows vigorous protests over wage and housing conditions imposed by the six companies, builders of the great Hoover dam, and a resolution by the A. F. of L. convention citing the "pressing need for speedy action to improve" these conditions.

Since the Davis-Bacon prevailing wage act went into effect last April more than 100 complaints have come into the United States labor department as to wage-cutting on federal buildings—from Tacoma to Key West, Oklahoma to Virginia, and even in the nation's capital.

According to Representative Bacon of New York and President M. J. McDonough of the A. F. of L.'s building trades department, the chief violators are the protective tariff and his hand-some campaign contribution.

In 1928, he helped raise a fund of \$4,000 and last fall donated \$5,000 to the state Republican campaign fund.

These latter, hiding under an unfortunate record by the comptroller-general that any bidder with a large enough certified check is "responsible," often underbid decent contractors and then farm the contract out to irresponsible subcontractors.

Three things, it appears, should be done.

One is to redefine the word "responsible" in the law and regulations, so as to eliminate the parasitic brokers.

Another is to widen the scope of the Davis-Bacon act to include all government work, rather than limiting it to federal buildings as at present.

The third is to give the Davis-Bacon act teeth, by providing a penalty for under-cutting the prevailing wage.

American public opinion will not tolerate slavery on government work, nor endure a public works relief program that, under guise of helping labor, degrades its living standards.

Now that the navy squabbles is back in the headlines again it's plain that Hoover and the Navy League are still at sea.

A Philadelphia youth was sentenced to two years for yelling something belittling at Grandi. He might have failed, but for the next two years he'll succeed in making little ones out of big ones.

## Just Every Day Sense

BY MRS. WALTER FERGUSON

EVERY now and then somebody pops up and begins harping about the "Good Old Days." One of the favorite contentions of this group is that everybody from grandpa to the baby went joyfully to church on Sunday.

It follows accordingly that everybody was good and pious, and that all the children minded their parents and mamas.

Nothing is more remote from the truth than this pleasant fantasy. People went regularly to church years ago because there was nowhere else to go. In many small communities where the blue laws are enforced rigidly today, the congregations worship for exactly the same reason.

I am not saying that these meetings were not delightful experiences for grandpa and grandma. But I do assert that a good many individuals hated the church cordially.

You can't make me believe that children ever sat contentedly through long platitudinous sermons with hell fire and damnation flaunted in their faces. Anybody who, as an infant, ever endured such harangues and is honest about it will testify to the contrary.

Is there any difference between a sanitarium and a sanatorium?

Sanatorium is a locality conducive to restoration or preservation of health, especially when used as a resort of invalids. Sanitarium is the same, except that sometimes it is restricted to a place where conditions are prophylactic instead of therapeutic agencies.

Are persons who die on board ships buried at sea?

Sometimes it is necessary to bury them at sea because of facilities for keeping bodies are lacking. Whenever possible, however, the captain brings the body to port if members of the family of the deceased person do not instruct him otherwise.

How many states have representatives in the United States house of representatives who are elected at large from the state?

Illinois is the only state that elects at-large. It has two.

## M. E. Tracy

SAYS:

*It Is Feared That Many of Our Charity Efforts Are Succumbing to the Plan Where the Promoter Gets 50 Per Cent and Expenses Take the Other 50.*

NEW YORK Dec. 2.—Radio announcers appear to be having a tough time of it with football this year. One was banned from the Harvard stadium not long ago for calling a play "putrid." Now Lowell Thomas is being taken to task for reading part of an editorial which criticised the Boston College-Holy Cross game.

That game was played in the Harvard stadium on Thanksgiving day. It was supposed to help the unemployed, but resulted in a deficit.

Whether Bostonians understood it before hand, they know now that the agreement under which the game was played provided "money for unemployment relief only after 32,000 tickets had been sold."

Such an agreement was quite all right, but it hardly warranted all the advertising for "charity's sweet sake."

*Charity Must Pay*

*In this connection, Uncle Sam has decided that "charity" prize fights in New York must pay the federal tax.*

It sounds kind of narrow, until one remembers that they always have been subject to the state tax and that, as a usual proposition, a large percentage of gate receipts goes to the fighters, promoters, managers, and others directly concerned.

In issuing his order against future exemptions, David Burnett, commissioner of internal revenue, sharply scores this practice. Because of it, he points out, the specific charity supposed to be benefited "nearly always gets less than the amount of the tax the government would have received had the exemption not been allowed."

It is also quite possible that a new generation of mankind brings into the situation a soil easily infected, or what is called a susceptible host.

Trained bacteriologists have not been able to show that the organism which occurred in the epidemics in the far west, in Indianapolis, in Chicago and in Detroit, in 1930 were due to a new strain coming from Japan or developed from some other source.

The conditions that seem to underlie these outbreaks, according to Dr. Augustus Wadsworth, are those that favor epidemics of respiratory diseases in general; namely, indoor life, crowding, inadequate ventilation and the exceptionally bad weather that occurs in the late winter months.

It has not been established whether this type of meningitis is due to the introduction of a new form of the organism in the community or due to the fact that the organism already present, takes on unusual virulence.

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