



## The Indianapolis Times

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

### Regulating Utilities

The federal court, through an opinion written by Judge Baltzell, has decided that the law means what it says. The law in Indiana fixes the city as the unit of regulation. As far as the lower federal court is concerned, this will remain the unit.

The victory is Pyrrhic, rather than real. It sends back to the legislature the task of amending the law so that regulation can be accomplished easily and justly and in accordance with the development of utility service.

When the law was written each city was supplied with electricity from a plant within its own borders. The day of the super plant had not arrived. The extensive use of electricity upon farms had not arrived.

The intent of the law was to limit the charges within cities to a decent return upon investment.

Since the law was passed the use of electricity has increased enormously. It has supplanted the man who stored ice in winter for summer use. It has replaced the broom of the servant girl and has taken the place of steam and horses in industry and in manufacture.

Electricity, for industrial and domestic use, has become one of the most important factors in modern life.

The utilities, looking always for a chance to capitalize social increments, have found ways of defeating regulation. They quite logically said that service is no longer a local matter, inasmuch as the service is now extended in its physical aspects over wide territories.

Regulation over wide areas, on the other hand, means no regulation. The cost of appraisals would nullify any reductions. Appeals of the public would be delayed beyond any period of time that would give real relief to the people.

Before any decision could be reached, if the usual procedure of the commission were followed, firms and citizens who bear the brunt would probably be bankrupt.

So, while there is rejoicing over the fact that finally a federal court has upheld the law, the people are now faced with the problem of rewriting the law to make it workable.

If the city unit is maintained, there will be no protection for the agricultural and suburban areas which are now large users of electricity.

If the area unit be established, the law becomes unworkable.

In the meantime, relief could be given if both the commission and legislature struck at the real source of the injustice.

The holding company is the device used to pry larger profits from consumers. The purchase of coal, for example, by the local light company takes from electric consumers at least a quarter of a million of dollars a year. Its engineering and financing fees take much more.

The water company, using the same corporation device, loots the people of this city of many thousands.

Perhaps, unless the utility interests are much wiser than they have been, the public will finally discover the way out by building its own plants and operating them.

### Prohibition News

Only two murders in Indianapolis yesterday, which recalls the prophecies and hopes of those who believed that prohibition would solve the problem of crime.

Some can recall their hopes. They believed that when national prohibition was enacted that there would be very few, if any, killings by drunken men.

They believed that the jails would be turned to hospitals and the poorhouses into retreats. The insane asylums were to be abandoned. The cost of punishing criminals would be lifted from the shoulders of the law abiding.

The murders in Indianapolis can be traced to the same cause—poison liquor that maddens men and twists minds. So easily is this liquor obtained that no officer of the law, either federal agent or policeman, thinks of attempting to trace its source after such tragedies.

Of course, there were killings in the preprohibition days that were due to drunkenness. When they happened, a saloon was closed. The man who sold the liquor was held responsible. He lost his license in cities where the saloon power did not control government.

Yesterday's killings were identical in their history. In both cases, one of the men had been drinking raw poisons sold as booze.

Next year candidates for the United States Senate will again pledge themselves to the dry cause. Some, perhaps, who may get an idea that very many people are beginning to doubt the present system will modify their fidelity to the Anti-Saloon League with weasel promises. There may even be one or two who will promise the people to treat this matter intelligently. Two murders a day ought to be somewhat suggestive as prohibition news.

### Killing the Lame Duck

Of the many barriers to representative government in the United States, one of the worst is the lame duck session of congress, which the house has voted to abolish by constitutional amendment.

The constitutional fathers did not intend to erect this particular barrier against democracy. In those stage coach days it was not practicable for a new congress to meet soon after election.

So it came about that the old congress functioned for several months—that is, until March 4—after the November elections. As there was no provision for a special session of congress without call by the President, the net result was that a congress did not meet until thirteen months after election.

By the time thirteen months had elapsed, of course, many national problems had changed and others grown acute. The effect was that a congress did not meet until thirteen months after election.

Meanwhile, the defeated members of congress—the "lame ducks"—were controlling legislation after they had been removed from office, insofar as the voters were able to remove them from office.

Such a crazy system could not have been perpetuated down through the decades had it not been of great profit to the political bosses. It was duck soup for them.

Most of the lame ducks wanted political appointments to soft jobs. To earn such jobs, many of them were willing to vote as ordered by those controlling the jobs. Thus the political bosses, and the President, when he has wished to use it, usually have held the balance of power in lame duck sessions.

For many years liberals and progressives have fought to remove this barrier to representative government. But always the bosses have won.

In recent years Senator Norris, now grown old

## Just Every Day Sense

BY MRS. WALTER FERGUSON

Now that the Olympic games are coming up, it might be well to explain that the pole vault is not in a bank at Warsaw.

The undertaker in London who advertised free funerals for suicides went broke. He forgot about London's large Scotch population.

Admiral Byrd plans to build an Antarctic city 500 miles nearer the pole than Little America. Just the place for the American people to warm up to the debt cancellation idea.

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