

The Public

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EDITORIAL

The Paper Trust and Its Customers.

The Republicans in Congress are between the devil of the paper trust and the deep sea of newspaper indignation. The newspapers demand repeal of the tariff on wood pulp and print paper, and the trust needs this tariff in its business. How to satisfy the newspapers without offending the trust, is the problem. But the Republican machine is as usual equal to the emergency. It decides to retain the tariff for the benefit of the trust, and to prosecute the trust for the amusement of the newspapers.

* *

The Crusade Against Free Speech.

Encouraged by the growing number of despotic interferences with freedom of speech and the press (pp. 26, 37), the new Mayor of Johnstown, Pennsylvania, has drawn the line against Socialists. When the local Socialists advertised a political meeting at the City Square, the Mayor ordered them away; but when the Republicans advertised a meeting at the same place, the Mayor permitted the meeting. Thus with steady tread does despotism advance.

* *

Presidential Despotism.

The most menacing act in the direction of despotic interference with speech and press is that of President Roosevelt, who announces his intention of prohibiting "the use of the mails for the

advocacy of murder, arson, and treason." We trust in all humility that a protest against this reckless purpose may be made without incurring accusations of defending crimes like murder and arson, to say nothing of treason. For the question which President Roosevelt raises is not whether anybody shall be permitted to advocate murder, arson, and treason; it is whether the President of the United States shall decide what constitutes advocacy of murder, arson, and treason, and whether he himself or a clerk in one of his bureaus shall determine guilt or innocence. Shall publishers have their property confiscated without due process of law? Shall the American Bill of Rights be nullified? Shall the American system of personal liberty and equality before the law be ruthlessly overturned by Presidential edicts?

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Let it be noticed, too, that advocacy of murder and arson, as the President may from time to time understand that offense, is not the only crime for which periodicals are to be suppressed by Presidential ukase. Advocacy of treason, as the President understands that, is also under the ban. He implies that advocacy of the abolition of coercive government, however peaceable the method proposed, is advocacy of treason; but he gives no other notice of the limitations he places upon this offense which he calls "advocacy of treason." So far as is yet known the limitations are only the President's personal will and his arbitrary power. But the safety of American institutions should depend upon no one's personal will and power. It should depend upon Constitutional principles of universal application, alike in their restraint upon the strongest and in their protection of the weakest. It does so depend, unless President Roosevelt's "big stick," like the New York policeman's club, is "bigger than the Constitution." Friends of Mr. Roosevelt might do him a salutary favor and render his party a substantial service by inducing him to read the sedition law episode which culminated in the death of the Federal party something more than a hundred years ago. History has a way of repeating itself.

* *

Postal Revelations.

Edwin C. Madden, formerly Third Assistant Postmaster General, has made an exposure of Secretary Cortelyou's administration of the Postoffice Department which may prove to be the beginning of the end of a great abuse of postal authority. This exposure refers especially to the attack of the

Department upon the newspaper and banking business of E. G. Lewis of St. Louis, upon which we commented (vol. ix, p. 3) at length at the time. Lewis's business was broken up by a "fraud order," ruthlessly and despotically as was evident, and lawlessly as Mr. Madden now distinctly charges. Mr. Madden implies, moreover, that this was not without a certain sort of corrupt purpose, for he shows that the express companies and certain banks had an enormous financial interest in suppressing Lewis's bank. In our comment at the time, we suggested that this "fraud order" system—whereby the Postmaster General makes postal outlaws of any victims he may pitch upon, denying them the use of the mails for any purpose whatsoever, by orders which the courts refuse to investigate—would enable an unscrupulous Administration to repay campaign contributions by destroying the business of persons in competition with contributors. Mr. Madden's exposure indicates that Mr. Lewis may have been the first victim of that novelty in the way of raising campaign funds. It seems that Mr. Madden's resignation was requested because he refused to carry out the programme in the Lewis case.

* *

Who are the Dangerous Anarchists?

In the din of all this outcry about "anarchists," is there not one question which may be overlooked? Who are the dangerous anarchists? May they not be those sordid rich men who murder their hundreds and their thousands in mines and factories and on railroads for the sake of dividends? May they not be those business men who reject safety appliances in dangerous occupations because it is cheaper to hire new employes in place of the injured than to buy safety devices? May they not be the rich rascals who ruin banks, corrupt legislators, taint the judiciary, and perpetuate economic systems that divert the products of toil from industrious earners to cunning idlers? Or is it true that the dangerous anarchist is the unfortunate madman whose sympathetic passions are inflamed by his consciousness of hunger and cold among the industrious, by the side of luxury for the cunning? May the dangerous anarchist not be he who fosters this insanity among sympathizers with the industrious and plundered poor, by defending or excusing the conditions that cause it? Or is it rather he who may possibly foster it by denouncing the conditions? In our opinion the most dangerous anarchist is not the man made murderously mad by industrial injustice, nor the man whose denunciations of this injustice may incidentally inflame that madness. The most