

BLACKMAILING IN POLITICS

DISCOVERIES MADE BY MR. ROOSEVELT IN THE WEST.

REPUBLICAN MANAGERS WHO HAVE LAID THEMSELVES OPEN TO PROSECUTION—EVEN WOMEN AND INDIANS ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE—FEELING THE SPOILS SYSTEM HAS BREED.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 14.—*Good Government*, the civil service paper of this city, will publish tomorrow an article on political blackmail in the West, containing some of Commissioner Roosevelt's discoveries during a tour of investigation which the United States Civil Service Commission had directed him to make of certain Indian reservations and Indian schools in South Dakota, Nebraska, and Kansas. The commission promptly turned all the papers in these cases over to the Department of Justice, so that immediate action could be taken in reference thereto.

Mr. Roosevelt's report was as follows: "At the Pine Ridge Agency, in South Dakota, I found that the following letter had been received by the agent, Capt. George Le Roy Brown, the letter coming from the Chairman of the South Dakota Republican Campaign Committee:

"Major at Pine Ridge. MY DEAR SIR: Will you kindly send me a list of all parties at the agency, including all teachers, helpers, &c. Give me a tabulated list showing name of each and salary per year. I am very desirous of a speedy reply to this inquiry so I can make up my list soon and correctly. Very truly yours, J. M. GREENE, Chairman.

"Capt. Brown, very properly, made no answer to this communication, but forwarded it immediately to the Civil Service Commission. I wish to call attention in the first place to the fact that the Chairman of the Republican Committee, Mr. Greene, makes no pretense that these collections are to be voluntary contributions. He distinctly uses the word 'assessment.' In the next place it is to be noted that he particularly requires the names of the helpers, most of whom are themselves Indians, and of the teachers, who are mostly women. In other words, he makes the perfectly bald request to Capt. Brown to commit a criminal act for the purpose of assisting him to blackmail women teachers and Indian helpers for the benefit of a political party. Had Capt. Brown acceded to the request he would, of course, have been guilty of violating the law, which provides that no Government employee shall be, directly or indirectly, concerned in soliciting political contributions from any other Government employee, and to assist in making up such an assessment list would, of course, have amounted to being at least indirectly concerned in making the assessments.

"Chairman Greene, therefore, was endeavoring to procure the commission of a criminal act by Capt. Brown. Whether he was himself guilty of a criminal act I am hardly prepared to say. The law ought to prohibit outsiders from soliciting Government employees at all, but all that it does in this respect is to prohibit them in the most sweeping terms from soliciting in any way in a Government building. This, of course, includes solicitation by writing. The letter sent by Mr. Greene to Capt. Brown was addressed to him at Pine Ridge Agency. I do not know whether this would be held as being addressed to him in a Government building or not, but it seems to me that it would be well to lay the matter before the Attorney General in any event.

"Furthermore, I found that this Pine Ridge case was not exceptional. At every reservation and Government school which I visited in South Dakota letters similar to the above, although varying in details, had been received, showing that the Republican State Committee was engaged in a resolute effort to assess all the governmental employees under different agencies and in the different schools. In all the other places, however, the agents and school Superintendents whom I questioned informed me that they had lost or mislaid the letters sent them by the committee, although on being cross-examined they all admitted, with more or less reluctance, having received them.

"The agent at the Cheyenne River Reservation told me he had received such a letter requesting a contribution of 2 per cent. on the salary of himself and his subordinates, but that he had handed it to his son and paid no further attention to it. Here I summoned all the teachers and other employees together and informed them that they need not pay one cent, and that if they were solicited by any one or threatened with molestation for not contributing, I would be grateful to them for promptly communicating with the commission, and that I thought the commission could guarantee that they would be protected, for the Interior Department would certainly see that they received no harm. The agent informed me that he had received such a letter, but that the writer had evidently learned beforehand the names and salaries of all his employees, for it contained a regular list of them, with the amount that was expected from each, varying from \$100, in the case of the agent, to \$10 in the case of the lower-grade teachers. He told me that he had paid no attention to this letter, and, as at Cheyenne River, I called together the employees and informed them that they need not contribute a cent unless they wished, and that they could contribute to whichever party they chose.

"The Superintendent of the Indian School at Pierre told me he had received the same kind of a letter, addressed to him at this Indian school at Pierre. He said he did not have the letter at hand, but that it requested, as well as he remembered, a subscription of 2 per cent. from himself and those under him. I told him and the only one of his teachers that I saw that they need pay no heed to the letter, and that they would not be molested for failing to contribute, to which he answered that he hoped that this was true, but that he feared, and he knew many other Government employees feared, that if they did not contribute the local politicians would remember it against them, would trump up charges to their discredit, and have them removed on the first occasion, not ostensibly for failure to contribute, of course, but because of some other alleged misdeed.

"It is due to the Superintendent of this school to say he struck me as being a very able and conscientious man, devoted to the welfare of his pupils; and undoubtedly the sentiments he expressed obtain very largely among the employees who receive such blackmailing letters as this of Chairman Greene, and who do feel coerced into contributing because they fear that, even though the contributions are not asked for by their superior officers, yet these superior officers will themselves be influenced more or less by the members standing high in their own party who do make the requests for contributions.

"In this case of the Government school at Pierre I think the solicitation was clearly illegal, as the letter was, without doubt, addressed to a Government building. I had no facilities for carrying on the investigation there myself, not being able to put witnesses under oath; but I had no doubt that an investigation by the Law Department of the Government would produce facts sufficient to warrant a prosecution, at least in this case.

"In Nebraska I found much less evidence of solicitation than in South Dakota. At the Santee Agency, where many of the Indians are voters, complaints were made to me that under the last Administration efforts had been made by Government employees to coerce the Indians into voting the Democratic ticket, precisely as I found that in North Dakota political assessments had been collected among the agencies by the Democrats prior to the last Presidential campaign. At the Winnebago and Omaha Agencies no attempt had been made to collect assessments during the past two or three years, as far as I could find out. On the Santee Reservation the agent had been solicited for \$100 by the Republican Campaign Committee a year or two ago, but no solicitation has been made this year. In all these cases it would be useless to attempt to take action on what happened prior to the present year, owing to the great difficulty of getting any testimony save that of the persons involved.

"In Kansas I visited only the Government Indian non-reservation boarding school known as Haskell Institute, under the charge of Superintendent Charles F. Meserve. Here I found that there had been a resolute effort on behalf of the Republican Committee of the Second Congressional District to assess the Superintendent and those under him, the attempt being made by R. B. Stevenson, the Secretary of the Republican Executive Committee for the Second Congressional District; and it appears to me that Mr. Stevenson has clearly laid himself open to prosecution for violating the law. * * * It appears, for instance, that Mr. Charles W. Grant, the assistant clerk, received a letter from 'his Mr. Stevenson, the Secretary of the Republican Committee of the Second Congressional District, addressed to him at Haskell Institute, soliciting \$10 for political purposes, about the 1st of August last; that Dr. Oliver D. Walker, the physician at Haskell Institute, received the same kind of letter, similarly addressed, requesting \$15; that the letter sent to Mr. Jewett requested \$7, the request being couched as follows:

"The Congressional Committee has directed that you be asked to contribute for campaign purposes in this district. Those occupying positions similar to the one you do are giving \$7. You may send your contribution to the Treasurer of the committee, Mr. W. H. Haskell, 522 Minnesota Avenue, Kansas City, Kan., who will make due entry thereof and receipt to you for same. An early response will be highly appreciated by the committee."

"Mr. Peairs was asked to contribute on the same ground, that persons occupying positions similar to the one he did were giving that amount. Mr. Meserve was asked to contribute \$40, similar reasons being given for specifying this sum. Mr. Meserve and the other gentlemen named were naturally not very anxious to testify in the matter, as to do so would very probably seriously embroil them with the local politicians of influence in the dominant party, but

they did testify with honorable frankness as soon as I requested them to do so in my official capacity.

"In response to my question as to what action Mr. Meserve had taken in reference to the request, he informed me that on finding that his employees had received such letters he notified them that the tenure by which they held their offices at Haskell Institute would be neither weakened nor strengthened by replying to the request or by failing to reply.

"If all the gentlemen occupying positions similar to Mr. Meserve would take such action as he took when their subordinates are solicited for political contributions, the work of this commission in trying to protect Government employees from blackmail would be very materially lightened.

"It seems to me that the papers in this case should be transmitted to the Attorney General for such action as he may deem wise, and I so recommend, for it would appear that Mr. Stevenson has certainly laid himself open to prosecution."

Mr. Roosevelt here states that he caused to be printed, in papers of wide circulation in the three States visited, a notice containing an account of the attempts at blackmail discovered by him and assuring Government employees that they need not contribute to any political party unless they wish so to do.

Another report is given by *Good Government*, bearing on the same subject, but covering only a single case, which was handed in by Mr. Roosevelt Oct. 3, and the papers transmitted at once to the Attorney General and the Postmaster General, as suggested. It runs as follows:

"In accordance with the direction of the commission I stopped at St. Joseph, Mo., to investigate the charges of political assessment in the Post Office at that city made to us in the letters of James T. Beach, written on Dec. 26 and May 31 last. On arrival I found that the Postmaster, Mr. Charles F. Ernst, under whom the assessments had been made, had just died. I could not get a stenographer when I made the investigation, but this made comparatively little difference, as the persons implicated frankly confessed the substantial truth of the accusation.

"Mr. Beach seemed to be a rather extraordinary character, as indeed a glance at his letter of Dec. 26 will show, and he was very unwilling that his name should be brought into the affair at all. Moreover, he seemingly had a personal grudge against the Assistant Postmaster, Mr. Browne, who had done much of the actual collecting of the contributions, while he was equally anxious to protect John Albus, the late Superintendent of City Delivery, who had done most of the remainder of the collecting, and begged me to draw a sharp distinction, which was not warranted by the testimony presented to me, between the cases of the two men, and to have Browne prosecuted and Albus left unmolested.

"It appears that in December last the Postmaster, Mr. Ernst, informed the Assistant Postmaster, Mr. Browne, and several other employees, that \$400 or \$500 were needed from that office for the legitimate expenses of the National Republican Campaign Committee, and that he should be glad to have the contributions handed in either to himself, to Browne, or to Albus.

"Ernst himself contributed \$100, Browne gave \$50 to Ernst, and other employees contributed various amounts.

"It appears that most of the employees did contribute, though they could not remember that they were solicited, but said that there was a general understanding that the money was to be contributed. I examined a dozen different employees, and they all agreed that no coercion was attempted. Several of them said that they had told Ernst and Browne that they could not contribute, and that they were at once told that they need not, and they were never molested for refusing. Charles Posegate was one of these men, also Keyser and Ehrlich. Some of the Democrats were not asked and did not contribute; others did.

"Two of the Democrats, Frank Willis and Robert Glenn, both of them hold-overs from the preceding Administration, contributed. Glenn was a postal clerk in 1888. He then got a letter from the Democratic National Committee, as did all other postal clerks he knew, asking for contributions, and contributed accordingly. When asked to contribute by the Republicans when the Republican Party was in power he contributed again; and in response to my question as to why, if a Democrat, he contributed to the Republican Party, answered that he thought the desk owed so much to the party in power, evidently taking this view in simple good faith.

"He merely held the usual belief which obtains in most offices where the spoils system prevails, to the effect that the office is held, not in trust for the people at large, but by the office holder as a beneficiary of the party in power, which has a corresponding call on his services. It is amusing in view of this very prevalent and general belief to hear spoils-mongering politicians in Congress and elsewhere attempt to discredit the merit system by proclaiming that it makes a man a political eunuch. The direct reverse is true. The spoils system, which makes a man in office feel that he has got to contribute to the party which does not represent his political views and beliefs, is emphatically the system which produces political eunuchs.

"The Assistant Postmaster, Mr. Browne, testified perfectly frankly as to his part in the affair. Mr. Albus having left the office, I could not examine him. Mr. Browne said that he did not know at the time anything about the law, and simply obeyed the instructions of his chief. Of course, ignorance of the law cannot be pleaded as an entire excuse, and it is a question how far it can ever be admitted as an excuse at all. In this case, however, it seems to me difficult to draw any distinction among the various parties who were guilty of violating the law by making, receiving, or soliciting contributions.

"The Postmaster, Mr. Ernst, was undoubtedly the man who should have been held responsible, but he is now dead. I am always in favor, where the facts warrant it, of drawing a distinction between the man who coerces others into contributing illegally and those who thus do contribute illegally. If Mr. Ernst were alive we could thus sharply distinguish between him and all of his employees; but among the latter it seems to me difficult to discriminate, unless we could indeed put Mr. Browne and Mr. Albus on one side as being rather more guilty than the others, they having been the agents of the Postmaster, at least to some extent, in receiving and possibly in collecting the contributions.

"The papers should be submitted to the Attorney General for whatever action he may deem proper under the circumstances, and I suggest that a copy of this report be also sent to the Postmaster General for any action he may deem proper to take in the premises."

TELEGRAPHIC BREVITIES.

—Peter Galler, an inmate of the House of Correction at Philadelphia, was accidentally killed while attempting to escape yesterday morning. He had knotted eight sheets together, and fastening one end of the line to the window of a bathroom attempted to descend to the ground. The sheets parted and he fell forty-five feet, breaking his ribs and rupturing internal organs so that he died in a few minutes. He was only twenty-five years old.

—William A. Barker, a wealthy and aged citizen of Providence, R. I., was found on the track near East Greenwich yesterday, mutilated and dead. He was last seen at 5 o'clock Thursday at Davisville, walking toward East Greenwich, and is supposed to have been run over by a train during the night. He was unmarried, worth about \$100,000, and eighty-three years of age.

—The schooner Frank Leming of Philadelphia, from Lanesville for Philadelphia with a cargo of stone, collided with the sunken yacht Alva at 4 o'clock yesterday morning, knocking out two of the Alva's masts. The schooner's sails, rigging, &c., were damaged. The Leming is not leaking, and will proceed after making temporary repairs.

—Game Protector Willett Kidd of Newburg has sued the American Express Company and the Rowe and Tremper Steamboat Line for carrying game out of season. Thomas Oudeback of Deer Park for keeping an eel rack in a stream stocked with trout, and J. Johnston of Gilman's, Sullivan County, for catching trout in a trap.

—Mrs. Frank J. Pomeroy, aged thirty-five years, a well-known society woman, daughter of Dr. J. Richards, a prominent physician and property owner at Danbury, Conn., was killed by a train while driving across the railroad track near Bethel yesterday afternoon. The carriage was smashed and the horse killed.

—Among other bequests, the will of Granville Fuller of Brighton, Mass., contains provisions of \$2,000 each for the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions and the Massachusetts Home Mission Society.

—William Webster of Bethany, Conn., was sentenced yesterday in the Superior Court at New Haven to two years in State prison for assaulting Mrs. Minnie Remington, the wife of a prominent business man.

—John Lucy, an employee of the American House at Bangor, Me., was fatally burned yesterday. He was going to the cellar and fell down stairs. The lamp he carried was broken and the flame set fire to his clothes.

—John Hall, aged seventy, of Hoiceville, N. Y., lost his balance on Thursday, while balancing up his coat at the head of a pair of stairs, and fell to the bottom, breaking his neck.

—While Charles Schulte of Green Lake, near Kingston, Ontario, was driving his sheep into his yard during a storm Thursday he was struck by lightning and instantly killed.

—A heavy rain fell over Atchison, Kan., Thursday night, and reports at Missouri Pacific headquarters are that it was general throughout the northern part of the State.

—Owing to the break on the sixteen-mile level of the Champlain Canal, no boats are being locked through on the Waterford level.