

# The Public

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## EDITORIAL

### The Political Panic.

Difficulties and embarrassments multiply about Mr. Taft in his attempt to allay the disaffection in the Republican party, and to bring together its two wings in opposition to what, with very questionable taste in a President of the United States, he called in his speech in New York on the 13th, "our ancient enemy." The implication running through that speech, that he considers himself the chief of a party quite as much as the head of a nation, and his fling at nearly one-half the voters of the country as "a party of words and irresponsible opposition," will not strengthen him either with Independents or with lukewarm Democrats, whose support, or good will at least, he can hardly do without. But the most significant features of his speech were his labored defense of the Aldrich-Payne tariff bill, and his almost pathetic appeal to postpone criticism of it for two years; coupled with his statement that the Republican party "has set itself strongly in the right direction toward lower tariffs."

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We cannot now follow Mr. Taft into his figures and statistics, but they will be analyzed and torn to pieces in a thousand Western newspapers before the month is over. A valuable and striking table compiled by the Chicago Tribune, is proof of this. That table shows that outside of the Democratic press, that is, among Republican

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and independent newspapers only of the West and Middle West, the critics and antagonists of the Aldrich-Payne tariff outnumber its supporters more than four to one. They have not in most cases, we may be sure, taken this position without grounds seeming good to themselves. And those grounds included a belief that the present tariff had increased prices to the consumer. Mr. Taft's figures and statements will not be received without rigid analysis and investigation. But if he should be able to satisfy a portion of his insurgent mutineers that they were unjustly criticizing the tariff bill in calling it a violation of a party platform pledge, what will the protected beneficiaries of privilege and monopoly, who are the pecuniary backbone of his party, say to his declarations that those who uphold a protective tariff system defend it by asserting that it will lead to a reduction in prices which will make the original high tariff unnecessary, and that "the right direction" is towards "lower tariffs." The "right direction," according to the great majority of these gentlemen, is not towards "lower tariffs," and they will let Mr. Taft know it, if we can conceive of his ever really leading a movement in that direction.

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As we have before remarked, Mr. Taft is between Scylla and Charybdis. His escape is impossible if he continues to undertake to look towards both at once. Captain Facing-both-ways is a poor skipper in such straits. For the rest, Mr. Taft's speech plainly enough indicates that whether or not there is to be a business panic soon, there is already a political one, and that he hardly anticipates a Republican majority in the next House.

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### A Judicial Usurpation.

It is not usual for the Senators of the United States to pay more attention to fundamental principles of free parliamentary government than the representatives direct from the people in the Lower House do. But they seem to have done so last week in resisting an order of the Supreme Court of the District of Columbia on the members of a joint committee on printing, to appear in mandamus proceedings brought against them in relation to their legislative committee duties. The Senate directed its members of the joint committee to pay no attention to the Court's order. The House, by a vote in which the Republicans seem to have been joined by numerous Democrats, practically ordered its members to appear. The particular matter at issue in the proceedings may

not seem to have been important, but the principle which the Senate followed is the only one which can ensure legislative independence of the Courts and is very important. Under our system of written constitutions, the Courts surely have already a dangerous power to block legislative action. If parliamentary privileges are to be thrown also into their control, and representatives of the people engaged in their legislative work, to be as to that work, directly or incidentally at the beck and call of an arbitrary judge of a local court in Washington, things have come to an evil pass.

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### Truth by Act of Congress.

There is a difference of opinion between President Taft and Dr. Harvey W. Wiley—the real "Secretary of the Interior"—in regard to the printed matter that should be carried on the outside of a bottle of whisky. "President Taft very reasonably requires that the outside of a whisky bottle shall tell exactly what is inside," says the San Francisco Call. But what right has Congress to compel the manufacturer to be a prophet? No one can tell until the whisky is used whether the bottle contains murder, arson, grand larceny, a street fight or a plain divorce. If President Taft is an advocate of truthful labels, he should recommend that the Pure Food Act be applied to Republican platforms.

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### "Surplus" of Swollen Fortunes.

"Blanket sheets" is an appropriate name for big newspapers that cover small ideas with a blanket of words. "The surplus of a few swollen fortunes," says one of these blanket sheets, "would go far toward completely eradicating tuberculosis from this continent." But what is the "surplus" of a swollen fortune? Isn't a swollen fortune itself a "surplus," an economic tumor—and therefore a mis-fortune instead of a fortune? It is no more a "fortune" than is a carbuncle a physiological fortune. There would be less tuberculosis to worry us if we abolished the conditions that cause "swollen fortunes."

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### Civic Improvement a Landlord Profit.

The fact that every public improvement, and even the prospect of public improvements, adds to the value of land and benefits landowners, is being well illustrated on the Pacific Coast. Oakland has just annexed a large area of suburban district, and real estate dealers report higher prices in the annexed district, where streets are to be