# NEW LABOR BILL A TAFT POLICY

## Liability and Compensation Measure Progressive.

## JUSTICE IS ITS OBJECT.

**President Approves Proposed Legislation Making Federal Labor Laws Fit Modern Conditions—Legal Machinery Simplified.**

As the result of the personal interest of President Taft in all matters affecting the workingmen of the country, congress has before it today a comprehensive bill on employers' liability and workmen's compensation which is recognized as one of the most progressive of the many achievements of the Taft administration. The bill was reported by a commission appointed by President Taft pursuant to a joint resolution of congress passed on June 25, 1910, and it was recently sent to congress by the president, accompanied with a message recommending its passage. As drafted the measure provides an exclusive remedy and compensation for accidental injuries resulting in disabilities or death to employees of common carriers engaged in interstate or foreign commerce or in the District of Columbia.

This comprehensive legislation is the direct outcome of the general unsatisfactoriness of labor legislation passed by congress in recent years and is illustrative of the Taft method of reaching an admitted evil by a painstaking investigation followed by carefully considered laws. As is well known, the first employers' liability law passed in the last administration was declared unconstitutional by the courts. A new law to take its place was passed under this administration, but it was generally understood at the time that the comprehensive measure now before congress was to follow, both as to liability and compensation, as soon as the necessary investigation into the subject could be made. The result is that the workingmen of the United States, so far as they can be reached by federal law, will soon be working under one of the most enlightened labor laws on record.

Provision is made in the bill, as drafted tentatively, that every common carrier engaged in interstate or foreign commerce shall pay compensations in the amounts specified in the bill to any of its employees who sustains personal injury by accident arising out of and in the course of his employment and resulting in his disability or to his dependents in case of death.

It is provided in the bill that the injured employee shall have medical attendance and surgical aid when necessary, the last mentioned being limited to $200. The monthly wages of an employee are deemed to be twenty-six times the established day's pay, and $50 is the minimum monthly wage payment. It is also provided that all compensation shall be paid monthly unless computed to a lump sum.

Death benefits are provided for at a specific percentage of the man's wages to be paid to the widow with an increase in the amount when there are dependent children, and in case of no dependents the payment of the burial expenses is required. The matter of personal injury compensation is also covered in a fair and equitable provision.

Another feature of the proposed act is a clear definition of the term "dependent" as well as of what constitutes an "injury" and an "employee." Legal complications are provided for, reports of accidents, payments and operations under the law to the interstate commerce commission are required, and it is declared that the proposed act shall take effect on July 1, 1912, and cited as "the federal compensation act of 1912."

In its investigations of this subject the commission determined at the outset that in substance the doctrines of the common law originating under comparatively simple conditions were unjust as applied to the complex relations of master and servant. The use of complicated machinery, steam and electricity has had the effect of increasing the deplorable antagonism between employer and employee and often giving a few injured employees large and frequently extravagant damages, while the great majority have been left to bear the entire burden without any recompense whatever.

At the time of the adoption of the common law rules of liability industrial conditions were radically different from those of today. The number of employees was smaller because there were few big industrial plants. The business carried on was small in extent, the appliances used in the work consisted largely of hand tools, while the power was simple in character, with little danger to the employee. Under such conditions the rules of common law originated.

Today there is a vast difference. President Taft, in the message which transmitted the report of the commission to congress, aptly says, in speaking of the proposed bill, "that it is one of the great steps of progress toward a satisfactory solution of an important phase of the controversies between employers and employees that have been proposed within the last two or three decades. The old rules of liability under the common law were adapted to a different age and condition and were evidently drawn by men imbued with the importance of preserving the employers from burdensome or unjust liabilities. It was treated as a personal matter of each employee, and the employees were put on a level of dealing which, however it may have been in the past, certainly creates injustice to the employee under the present conditions."

The attention of congress to the great injustice of the present system was called by President Taft. He mentioned the fact that often the recovery of large sums in damage verdicts did not result in actual benefit to the injured person on account of the heavy expenses in litigation. The president expressed the belief that these burdens would disappear with the enactment of the proposed law, since the counsel fees are limited to a reasonable amount.

As further stated by the president, "the great object of the proposed law is to secure justice to the weaker party under existing modern conditions." He also declared that he would use his influence to aid in the enactment of the proposed law before the adjournment of the present session of congress.

### DELEGATES PLEDGED TO TAFT.

On Friday, April 12, 1912, the delegates to the Republican national convention pledged to President Taft were as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Alabama | 22 |
| Alaska | 2 |
| Colorado | 8 |
| District of Columbia | 2 |
| Florida | 12 |
| Georgia | 26 |
| Illinois | 2 |
| Indiana | 20 |
| Iowa | 8 |
| Kentucky | 23 |
| Louisiana | 6 |
| Michigan | 18 |
| Mississippi | 20 |
| Missouri | 14 |
| New Mexico | 7 |
| New York | 83 |
| Oklahoma | 4 |
| Philippines | 2 |
| South Carolina | 16 |
| Tennessee | 16 |
| Vermont | 6 |
| Virginia | 24 |
| Total | 341 |

Pledged to Roosevelt, 113.
Pledged to La Follette, 36.
Pledged to Cummins, 4.
Necessary for choice, 539.

### ROOSEVELT PRAISED TAFT.

**Former President Lauded Successor Before New York Republicans.**

One of the most comprehensive indorsements that the Taft administration has ever received was contained in the speech of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt as temporary chairman of the New York Republican state convention at Saratoga, N. Y., Sept. 27, 1910. The first two paragraphs of the speech were as follows:

"We come here feeling that we have the right to appeal to the people from the standpoint alike of national and state achievement. During the last eighteen months a long list of laws embodying legislation most heartily to be commended as combining wisdom with progress have been enacted by congress and approved by President Taft.

"The amendments to the interstate commerce law, beginning of a national legislative program for the exercise of the taxing power in connection with big corporations doing an interstate business, the appointment of a commission to frame measures that do away with the evils of overcapitalization and of improper and excessive issues of stocks and bonds, the law providing for publicity of campaign expenses, the establishment of the maximum and minimum tariff provisions and the exceedingly able negotiation of the Canadian and other treaties in accordance therewith, the inauguration of the policy of providing for a disinterested revision of tariff schedules through a high class commission of experts which will treat each schedule purely on its own merits with a view to protecting the consumer from excessive prices and to securing the American producer and especially the American wage worker what will represent the difference of cost in production here as compared with the cost of production in countries where labor is less liberally rewarded, the extension of the laws regulating safety appliances for the protection of labor and the creation of a bureau of mines. These and similar laws, backed up by executive action, reflect high credit upon all who succeeded in putting them in their present shape upon the statute books. They represent an earnest of the achievement which is yet to come, and the beneficence and farreaching importance of this work done for the whole people measure the credit which is rightly due to the congress and to our able, upright and distinguished president, William Howard Taft."

**Taft Sure of Nomination.**

Up to and including April 12 494 delegates had been elected to the Republican national convention, which meets in Chicago in June. Of these President Taft has 341 instructed for or pledged to his renomination. There remained to be elected on that date 882 delegates. Of these President Taft needs only 198 and Mr. Roosevelt needs 426. In other words, if President Taft gets one out of every three delegates remaining to be elected he will have within four of enough to nominate, while Mr. Roosevelt must have three out of every four of the delegates remaining in order to secure the nomination. That President Taft will have more than 700 delegates at Chicago is a certainty.

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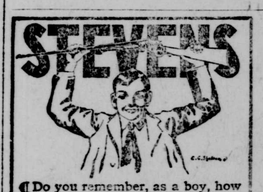

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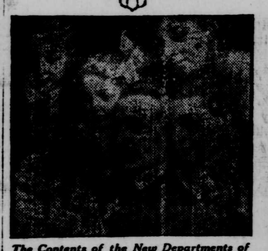

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