

[page 1]

May 10, 1928.

Senator Jas. A. Reed,
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Reed:

We are all interested in Dr. Porter's ambition to become coroner, and I have been trying to learn what the real situation is here. From what I hear, it seems to me that conditions are not right for Porter to get the nomination.

As you know, some two years ago Judge Cas Welch, with his two wards and a following all over the city, abandoned Shannon and joined the Pendergast camp. Judge Welch no longer regards himself as a lieutenant, and has strong ambitions to be on an equality with Pendergast and Shannon. So far Pendergast has been able to prevent such a situation. Shannon is attempting to stage a comeback, and, as I view it, Pendergast is not any too sure of Welch.

While he was a Shannon lieutenant Welch always controlled the Hospital patronage, which consists of a vast number of jobs of all kinds. When the Democrats captured the city administration Welch demanded the Health Department. Mike Pendergast claimed that Department as his part of the patronage, and insisted on the appointment of Dr. Caveness, a leader in the Mike Pendergast faction, as Health Director. A very bitter row ensued, and finally Caveness was appointed. Since that time Welch has made every effort to bring about a situation which would compel the resignation of Caveness, and the appointment of one of his constituents to the place.

The Council, as you know, stands five to four, and Welch's man on the Council (Burns) gives the Democrats their majority. Burns, at Welch's instigation, has on several occasions threatened to align himself with the Republicans, which would, of course,

completely overturn the city government. Welch has continued in his demands for the elimination of Caveness, and there is a sort of armed neutrality at the present time.

[page 2]

Senator Jas. A. Reed -2-

5/10/1928.

A new situation developed on the day of the Bond Election. A rebellion, apparently successful, was launched against the leadership of Judge Ross in the old Fifth Ward. All of Ross's lieutenants were kidnapped, and other smaller fry were driven away from the polls at the point of guns. This rebellion was lead by Italian by the name of Lazia. Lazia is a henchman of Jim Aylward, who in turn is Judge Welch's very close political friend. The opinion in some quarters is that this Italian rebellion was instigated by Welch. This seems plausible.

The result of all this is to frighten Mr. Pendergast to such an extent that he is willing to have Caveness discharged, and Welch's man put in as City Health Director. This will satisfy Welch, and may atop the Italian troubles against Judge Ross. If this policy is adopted, then Caveness will be named for coroner. Some of the members of the city administration and the Mike Pendergast faction oppose the deposition of Caveness.

From all the circumstances, it seems to me very logical for Mr. Pendergast in self-preservation to give Welch the Health Department, and to make Caveness coroner. If this is done, then, of course, Dr. Porter is eliminated.

Before you make any further insistence that Porter be put on the ticket, I think you ought to know the conditions here. What I have given you is rumor, and I am inclined to think, with the impress of truth. If you think it desirable I will call on Mr. Pendergast, and talk over the situation with him frankly.

Pendergast has assured Porter that he would, in the event of Francis Wilson being

Governor, back Porter for almost any State Job in his line. This, of course, is a long shot, as Wilson may not be elected, and if elected, might heed nobody's suggestion as to appointments.

If the situation is such that Porter cannot be named as coroner, then I would like to negotiate around, and see what sort of a job would be possible for him under the Wilson administration. For a number of years I had no patience with Dr. Porter,

[page 3]

Senator Jas. A, Reed -3-
5/10/1928.

but in the last year or so he has gotten down to business, and is trying mighty hard to beat back in his profession. He has a pretty good practice, but is not able to collect much, and is having a mighty difficult time to get by. For the first time in his professional life he is required to take the street-cars to call on patients.

I will await any suggestions you might have before doing anything in the matter, and will suggest to Dr. Porter that he keep more or less quiet about it for a week or two.

Sincerely yours,