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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON INTERSTATE COMMERCE

Washington, D. C. February 21, 1939

Mr. William A. Kitchen 728 Delaware Street Kansas City, Missouri

Dear Bill:

Appreciate very much yours of the Eighteenth regarding the WPA editorial in the Armstrong Herald. You know, of course that old Bob Walton has always been my friend, but you also know that the Governor appointed him to the job of Superintendent of the Confederate Home at Higginsville, and also gave him a blue uniform and made him a Colonel on his staff. I think that he will be for the Governor when the split actually comes.

That WPA controversy was an honest one. It had nothing whatever to do with politics. There were unexpended balances in the hands of WPA amounting to over two hundred million dollars. There were more than three million people on WPA rolls, a million more than were on the rolls in January, 1937, when conditions were worse, from a business standpoint, than they are today; and yet we were asked to continue that situation. All of us felt that with the unexpended balances and the \$725,000,000.00 and the anticipated opening up of conditions, no one would be hurt by the cut, and goodness knows the country needs some sort of a gesture toward the cutting down of government expenses. The sob-sisters, of course, made great use of the cut.

If you will read the Sheppard Report on Pennsylvania, New York and Kentucky you can't help but feel that WPA rolls in all these States and in several more were unmercifully padded during the election.

There is never a mail that comes in that doesn't contain letters from farmers over the State that complain about their inability to get farm hands, due to the fact that the Workers' Alliance, a CIO affiliate, has organized all WPA workers and won't let them work for farm wages. It is pretty hard to face a condition like that in a country district. I think we are going to have to do something about it.

The Democratic Caucus, as far as I can find out, was an airing of Democratic grievances. Like every major party in the House of Representatives after it has been in power about six or eight years, grievances pile up, and the President hasn't been very diplomatic with his majorities in either the House or the Senate. He has treated them just like rubber stamps. While that was all right during the first two or three years of emergency, it can't go on forever.

The Republican members of the House are nearly all new. The Sessions are a novelty to them, and they all attend. Some of the Democrats, on the other hand, have been kicked in the face so often that they don't care whether Congress meets or not. That is just as true on the Senate side as it is on the House side, some of us who are interested in the welfare of the Democratic Party have been trying to find a remedy for the situation. It is rather difficult, however, when the concessions have to all be made on one side. You don't usually arrive at a bargain by that means.

I'll be glad to talk the situation over with you some time, particularly as it affects

Missouri.

Harry S. Truman

HST/cb