

Jimmie's Infant Industry

By CHARLES JOHNSON POST

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At a profit of only one cent, each, which it is proposed to add to the cost of growing and marketing, they would produce a net profit of eight million dollars! Should the proper political and trade conditions be secured, a profit of two cents each may be considered which will, of course, increase the dividend to one hundred and sixty million dollars for the first year. The banana will bear the first year, under proper conditions.

Jimmie sat down; his part in the meeting was now over. His father leaned forward impressively and spoke:

"I want to say that those last figures on the profits are wrong." He paused as if to note the effect. There was none, for that highly sophisticated group knew the old man too well to be startled by anything except a loss; and he never lost. "They're wrong," he continued, "they're too small. It will cost, roughly, fifty thousand dollars an acre to put the land under glass. In order to make a return of ten per cent. on that investment it will be necessary to add six and a quarter cents to each banana above the cost of production. And there'll be nothing to stop us making it more—within reason, of course."

The head of the Sheet Glass Trust rattled his copy of the charter and looked over his glasses fustily.

"Six and a quarter cents apiece for a banana, Mr. Gore, is a pretty high price, even if it is extra fine and hothouse grown. They're six for a nickel generally around my office—sometimes less." He was a thrifty man of noted thrifty habits, and a quiet smile went around the group.

The old man cracked his knuckles cheerfully: "Six and a quarter cents apiece! Who said six and a quarter cents apiece! I said six and a quarter cents above the cost—net profit—and probably more. I propose, Mr. Parkinson—and gentlemen—that our first crop shall sell for thirty cents apiece! It'll cost twenty-one cents each to grow 'em—can't be done for less under glass."

A gentleman in a white waistcoat leaned forward interestedly; he was the Consolidated Steel Trust.

"I take it," he remarked, "that you have, Mr. Gore, of course considered the question and the relation of the present supply of bananas from the tropical countries? They are quite ample, and quite cheap, I believe?"

"Yes, I've considered it," returned the old man, "and I don't propose that another banana shall be landed on these shores. What's a tariff for, hey? Ain't it to protect American industry and capital, hey? I propose to have it made as dangerous to bring a banana into the United States as it is to forge a check, commit bigamy, or smuggle a petticoat!"

It was the president of the Consolidated Woollen and Textile Trust who chuckled dryly from the lower end of the table. "I follow you all right, Gore, but isn't it a trifle, so to speak—ah—drastic? Thirty cents a banana—pshaw!"

"Well, if it is," retorted the old man indignantly, "it ought to interest you good and plenty. If you textile people can get rubber arctics tariff-taxed as

woollen goods and then get a duty on them or forty-four cents a pound and sixty per cent. additional, this ought to be right in your line. If there's anything more drastic or fantastic than that, it ain't in my banana proposition!" He prodded the table with a big forefinger in emphasis. "Forty-four cents a pound on woollen clothing is more than I'd have the nerve to ask for a tariff on bananas, let alone that sixty per cent. additional that you fellows put through!"

The other leaned back good-humoredly. "Oh, that's all right, Gore, I guess. It can be fixed for bananas, too, probably. Let's hear a little more. This begins to sound pretty good already."

"If Mr. Gore will allow me," spoke up the gaunt, saturnine chief consultant at his left, "I will run over this scheme briefly as it has been worked out and as it relates to our common interests."

The old man nodded, and Foote went on:

"Our charter, as you note, is extreme-

project depends on the passage of an adequate tariff act, and I need not suggest that at first our united efforts must be centred in that direction. Our political party has been pledged for years to this great principle of protection for our American industry in every line, so that we can confidently look to it for support now, as in the past."

The Senators and the Congressmen nodded an indorsement. A little desultory discussion followed, and then the company was formally organized, its laws were adopted, the officers elected, and the little blanks, now filled in with pledged subscriptions, were passed over to Jimmie, in his official capacity, to file.

After the last magnate had departed, Jimmie turned to his father, who was standing before the onyx fireplace and rubbing his big-boned hands together in the way that Jimmie knew denoted perfect satisfaction.

"I say, Dad, at thirty cents a banana

them! Isn't there more money in circulation! Ain't that prosperity! Bananas cost more; more money in circulation; more prosperity—don't that stand to reason, hey?"

"I see," said Jimmie. "And the higher we sell bananas, the higher wages we can pay, so that the prosperity gets distributed!"

The old man chuckled abruptly. "Don't be foolish. You just pray for a proper tariff to keep bananas out o' the country, and immigration and the natural birth rate 'll take care o' what wages we pay—that's the natural state o' man in this world—competition."

"Still, Dad, it's kind of tough on those that can't afford bananas, isn't it?"

"Business is business," returned the old man briefly. "When you go, tell Ma I'll be home early," he added significantly, and Jimmie took the hint and left.

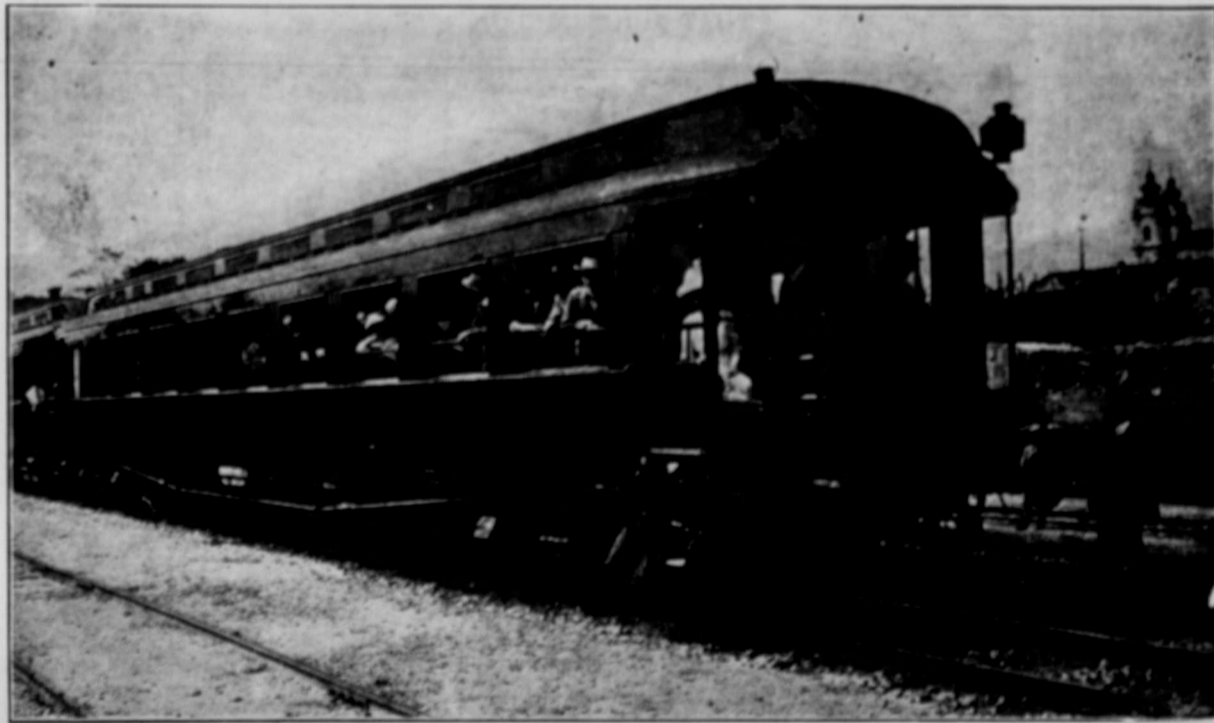
With a score of able influences at work, it was not long before visible

signs of the new business could be noted. The special Sunday editions of the daily papers throughout the country began to display blurred half-tones showing typical abandoned farms and desolate stretches of burned timber tracts with their blackened, sprawling ghosts of dead trees. Interspersed were imaginative drawings of vast greenhouses, the whole enclosed in a decoration of palm leaves and bananas. Later, the Sunday specials became more definitely informative; they were crowded with comparative statistics in p sugar-coated form—a ragged peon holding a bunch of fruit with a diminutive Uncle Sam gazing longingly at it. This was the present. The future showed the comparative size reversed, while a prosperous, square-capped workman clasped the avuncular hand across a colossal banana. Occasionally the magazines drifted into the field, emblazoned with banana half-tones.

Rapidly sentiment roused itself on the great issue of a national, American banana and the inevitable prosperity that would follow the properly tariff-taxed fruit.

In the rural districts farmers' associations indorsed the banana and its protective tariff. In those same districts justices of the peace, road supervisors, school boards, poundmasters, and constables were elected—and occasionally defeated—on this burning issue of a national industrial patriotism. It was not long before the sentiment for the American banana seemed to spring from the very bosom of the people and merely to be reflected in the pages of the daily press, from the stalwart metropolitan journals on down to the little country sheet with its "patent insides."

The tariff must be revised; a tariff tax must be placed on the foreign, tropical banana that would effectually prevent its competing with the proposed national project; no longer could the country submit to the demoralizing effects of the exotic, pauper-grown fruit. The demand was specific, insistent, and there was no doubt that Congress would



C.P.R. IN AUSTRIA

This is a photograph taken in Austria showing one of the observation cars which the Canadian Pacific Railway is operating in Austria. The C.P.R. complains of lack of money to finance the needs of the Canadian West, yet has money enough (made out of the Canadian people) to provide luxuries for foreigners.

ly broad. It will take a large amount of capital, and Mr. Gore agrees to finance the enterprise; it is also desired that you co-operate. Besides your assistance, there is a large amount of European capital that stands ready to come in as soon as we can secure a proper protective tariff on bananas. Such a tariff will of course settle the question of competition and make our market iron-clad. In fact, the foreign banks stand ready to take up heavily the bonds of the Consolidated Tropical Fruit Products Development company.

"We propose to place the contracts for these greenhouses and their equipment entirely with you representative gentlemen. Incidentally, I may point out that on the strength of these very profitable orders you will be enabled to make an extra issue of stock; to put it bluntly, add a little water."

The little group nodded appreciatively.

"Also, the moment these heavy orders become public, your water will become instantly a good, digested security. Of course the success of this

The Payne-Aldrich Tariff Tax Law of 1909 taxes woollen clothing at forty-four cents a pound and sixty per cent. additional and rubber arctics have been included in that classification.

a lot of people will have to give up eating them, won't they?"

"Well," said the old man good-naturedly, "if they can't afford them—why not?"

Jimmie thought of the office and messenger boys with their lunch of frankfurter and banana topped off with a spoonful of "hokey pokey"; also of the typewriters in his own outer office who brought their lunch in a paper, with the banana as the final effect. He could not help thinking that they could just afford them now.

Shrewdly the old man divined Jimmie's thoughts. "Jimmie, son, don't get swayed off by any sentimentality over individual cases. One's got to think o' things—big things—as a whole. Why, son, the minute I float that foreign bond issue abroad and the money's deposited here to the credit o' the Consolidated Tropical Fruit Products Development company, the per capita wealth of this United States will be increased over one hundred dollars a head, man, woman and child! Think o' that wealth, hey!—ain't that national prosperity? I tell ye, Jimmie, the Big Business men here are the country's greatest benefactors. What difference does it make even if fewer bananas are eaten by them that can't afford them, hey, if those that can, pay more for