

CONSTITUTION IN SPOTLIGHT

Promises To Be a Major
Issue in Coming
Campaign

(Special To The Press-Maconian)

WASHINGTON, June 19.—The Constitution of the United States has not received so much attention in Washington as it is now getting, since the historic occasion when the Hon. Tim Campbell, one of the early Tammany Congressmen, propounded on the floor of the House the classic question:

"What's the Constitution between friends?"

From being a shadowy something in the background of the political picture, the Constitution has become the theme of almost every conversation. It promises to be the liveliest political issue that the voters of the country have had to wrangle about in forty years. Not since the free silver issue, upon which the Presidential election of 1896 turned, has any fundamental question stirred up such wide-spread popular interest, as the question raised by the Supreme Court's decision invalidating the NRA.

Eyes on "Grass Rooters"

It is not stretching the facts to assert that a very considerable number of Senators and Representatives who have been willing and even eager to go along with the Administration are beginning to be seriously concerned over the outlook for next year's election.

The promptness with which the "Grass Roots" conference of Mid-Western Republicans seized upon the Constitutional issue, and the apparent enthusiasm with which the action of that group has been received by the rank and file of the Republican party, has set the boys on Capitol Hill to wondering whether the Elephant was really as dead as they thought it was.

What they are seemingly hunting for now is ways of carrying out the basic idea of a National Government centralized in and administered from Washington, without running afoul again of the nine gentlemen of the United States Supreme Court.

There are good constitutional lawyers in both parties and in both houses of Congress. For various reasons, chiefly concerned with their own political futures, most of these have kept their mouths shut. Now their colleagues are running to them for advice in the effort to find out what the Constitution does and does not permit them to do.

Supreme Court Record

Some of these constitutional lawyers have been digging into the record and have put a pretty effectual stop to the early outbursts against the power of the Supreme Court.

The figures show that in the 146 years since the Constitution has been in effect the Supreme Court has passed upon 24,016 public laws passed by Congress, and has decided that only 59 of them were unconstitutional. In 27 of these cases the decision of the Court was unanimous. There have been only 10 of the much criticized "five to four" decisions.

Some of the constitutional sharks are getting a laugh by pointing out that 19 of the laws declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court were enacted between 1920 and 1929, a period in which the Republican Party was in complete control of Congress and the Executive. What is sauce for the goose, is pointed out, is equally good sauce for the gander.

Matter of Constitution

As this is being written there appears to be no abandonment of the idea for a general policy of tightening Federal control over relations which have heretofore been left to the state to regulate. How much of this sort of thing can be done constitutionally is the question.

There is talk of promoting interstate agreements which could be ratified by Congress; there is also talk of strengthening and extending the powers of the Federal Trade Commission, which has been functioning effectively for more than 20 years in settling trade disputes and enforcing fair business practices.

The question whether even the states have the power to regulate hours of labor and wages has com-

At "Grass-Roots" Meet



SPRINGFIELD, Ill. . . . Above is Harrison E. Spangler of Cedar Rapids, Ia., who was general chairman of the mid-western states "grass roots" conference of Republicans, called to deliberate on 1936 campaign issues. Ten prairie states were represented by 6500 delegates.

to light with the re-examination of Supreme Court decisions. Several cases are cited in which the Court held that no state had such power, and one in which an act of Congress establishing minimum wages for women and children in the District of Columbia to be unconstitutional.

There are very few constitutional lawyers in or out of Congress who believe that the Wagner Labor Disputes bill is constitutional, but under the pressure of the Labor Lobby it possibly will be passed.

Cabinet Changes Rumored

Some idea of confusion in Washington at this time is conveyed by

the revival of gossip about changes in the administrative set-up. The latest rumor is that Postmaster General Farley is getting out in the fall and that Dan Roper will succeed him in the Post Office; that Frank C. Walker will follow Roper as Secretary of Commerce.

Rumors that Madam Secretary Perkins and Attorney General Cummings are about to resign are unverified. There are at least three men after the job of Secretary of War, from which, gossip has it, Mr. Dern will shortly retire. General Hugh Johnson is credited with cabinet aspirations. So is Joseph C. Kennedy, chairman of the Securities Exchange Commission and Frank Murphy, Governor-General of the Philippines.

In the meantime, it can be set down as a fact that the Administration is having trouble finding good projects upon which to spend the President's four billion dollars Work Relief fund. It is rumored a personal feud is developing between Harold Ickes and Relief Administrator Harry Hopkins. Smart observers are betting on Hopkins to win.

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