

"Political Bunk and Jealousy in Business" In Latest Howling of Critics of Ferguson, Says Mefo

After several weeks absence from Texas, during which time he visited several other states and even invaded Canada, where he saw ancient and historic structures, happy people and prosperous business, "Mefo," of the Houston Chronicle has returned to his desk. In resuming his chat about "Our City" and about state affairs he finds that the hot weather has not dulled the zeal and malice of critics of the state administration, but that they have found additional food upon which to fatten their batting average of hate and bitterness.

"Mefo" does not fail to remind these malevolent critics of their overlooking truth about the penitentiary system and the hopeful conditions which promise a cotton crop that will yield \$2,000,000 or more of cash with which to meet the obligations of the prison commission and pay off the heavy legacy of debt left by the Neffian administration, which boasted of not granting pardons. "Mefo" comments in this way upon the situation he finds upon his return from his summer vacation:

"And they are still romping on Governor Ferguson for pardoning a lot of poor devils who had reformed and seemingly redeemed themselves while in the penitentiary and were recommended by the pardon board as deserving of executive clemency. Some of her critics are saintly and sanctimonious. One in Houston teaches a Bible class on Sundays and works a lot of girls 12 hours daily on week days. Maybe he thinks that is one way to keep them out of mischief. They are so tired when they get home each night that they rush to bed to grab a few hours sleep before the next long day begins.

"Maybe the pardoning power is abused, and perhaps that is one reason why we have so many criminals, but the facts do not seem to show it. Do you recall the three years of klan terror we had in Texas during the previous administration? That governor didn't believe in pardons. He issued fewer than any state administration for many, many years. Did it decrease crime? It did not. Then there has been a regular orgy of crime in New York and Chicago. Did pardoning reformed criminals have anything to do with it? No one has so claimed.

"You can always score a point against an officeholder if you hate him. There are a lot of people in Texas who still hate the Fergusons.

"If it isn't one thing, it's something else. When they tire of talking about the evils of the pardoning power they begin on the highway commission. Probably in letting contracts in all parts of the state some fellow gets one who isn't as scrupulously honest and as careful as he should be, but taken as a whole, conditions have shown a remarkable improvement. When the Fergusons took charge of the state's affairs there was—well, let's call it carelessness—from one end of Texas to the other, and there was extravagance and waste on our highways that looked pretty bad. Jim Ferguson found the state's machinery on farms and in use on private work here and there. He found an army of employes, many of whom were not earning their salt. Acting for Governor Ferguson, he changed things. Everything is now done by contract, and the state will be saved vast sums of money. In bringing that about some mistakes will no doubt be made, but in the total he promises the state better roads and better upkeep at less expense than heretofore. Let's see if it does it. When he fails to deliver it will be time to yell from the housetops.

"Some of the criticisms seem to be the proverbial 'much ado about nothing.' Sherman & Youmans used their own machinery on state work and thought they therefore had the right to use state equipment on a private contract. Probably they should not have done so. They stopped when it was questioned. That could have been accomplished by an order or request from the highway department. Doesn't seem that it was necessary to call on the attorney general and all the legal powers of the state. There is a big per cent of political bunk and business jealousy in much of the talk.

"A newspaper of dissatisfied politician—has said a word about the Fergusons' record on penitentiary management. The fact that the prisons have been made self-supporting and that the farms will produce products worth more than \$2,000,000—well, that's another story. Probably they will say nature deserves all the credit. If there had been a crop failure, though, things would have been different. That would have been the Ferguson's fault."