

GOV. RITCHIE AND THE PRESIDENCY

Criticism has been directed at Governor Albert C. Ritchie for the lynching of the Negro Williams here on December 4th and in some quarters it has been insinuated, if not openly expressed, that the occurrence will injure the governor's chances for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Among thoughtful people such statements should be accepted as another form of idle political gossip that has not the slightest foundation in fact. Traced to its source it will be found to originate from the governor's critics who seek to capitalize upon the lynching as a step in retarding the progress of popular acceptance of the Maryland executive as a presidential possibility.

It is to the credit of the Maryland governor that his adversaries can find no other issues to use against him.

Governor Ritchie could not have stopped the lynching, for the crime struck with such suddenness that even local authorities—with an unquestioned record for efficiency—were found unprepared, and so quietly that only a very small proportion of the city's populace knew what had happened until the whole affair was over.

Under the Maryland Constitution adopted in 1876, he went to the extremity of his gubernatorial authority when he instructed the Attorney-General to co-operate with the county State's Attorney in an investigation to establish the identity of the mob leaders.

As for bringing the offenders to trail—in the event they are identified—and as for procuring convictions, that rests exclusively with the jurors in this county. No state or federal authority can intervene.

No one thought of impeaching the president of the United States when a shot from a Coast Guard vessel killed a member of the crew of the rum runner "I'm Alone". The president's responsibility in that case is even more firmly fixed than is Governor Ritchie's in connection with the lynching.

The positions of the Governor of Maryland and the Governor of New York are somewhat analogous. The former's connection with the lynching case is as far removed as the latter's responsibility for the overt acts charged against certain courts and public officials in New York city by the legislative investigating committee of that state.

Considering the facts as they actually exist, what, we might ask, does the lynching episode have to do with Governor Ritchie's ability to act upon such vital matters of national import as: a moratorium of inter-governmental debts, cancellation of war reparations, whether a high or moderately low tariff is for the best interests of American industry and the working man, government or private ownership of public utilities, farm relief, unemployment relief, world disarmament, settlement of the controversy over national prohibition, balancing of the federal budget, conservation of national resources, and the thousand and one other major problems before the American people today.

Compared with these vital matters the lynching, even though there had existed a fixed responsibility upon the governor, is certainly an infinitesimal issue.

The lynching here was nothing more or less than a local revolt against Communistic influences that had made its appearance for several weeks previously. Inspired by such teachings, the mob's victim, by his own confession, killed his employer and planned to murder "four or five other people."

We have yet to hear in this city or in other Eastern Shore counties mob violence condoned as a method of supplanting established courts of justice.