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Mr. Taft at Work

Who shall measure the sweep and area of Mr. Taft's peregrinations? Let the job be given to that master of applied mathematics—if there be any such master in the world—who has plotted the way of an eagle in the air of a serpent upon the rock, of a ship in the midst of the sea, of a man with a maid. To the general public the president seems to be in constant and bewildering motion. His orbit is full of strange kinks and unexpected deviations. He is seen through a perpetual haze of locomotive smoke. His gripsack seems to be ever in his hand. He is always either coming or going.

No doubt this impression of him is founded upon two other impressions—the one being that he is invariably absent from Washington when the administration gets into trouble and the other being that the administration is always getting into trouble. The result is injustice to Mr. Taft. The notion that he is eternally fleeing from his post of duty is far from true. He spends a good deal more of his time in Washington than he is given credit for. Taking one month with another, he is actually at his desk more than five days out of seven. Even during that dizzy first year of his term, from March 4, 1909, to March 4, 1910, he was in Washington two days out of three. And even during the last six months of 1909 he was there two days out of five.

But let the actual figures defend him. Here is a little table that tells the tale. The first column shows the months that have passed since his inauguration, the second shows the number of day in each, the third shows the days spent by Mr. Taft at work in Washington and the fourth shows the days he has devoted to various more or less restful pilgrimages. To wit:

Months	Days	In Washington	On Tour
1909			
March	28	26	2
April	30	26	4
May	31	26	5
June	30	24	7
July	31	24	7
August	31	6	25
September	30	0	30
October	31	0	31
November	30	18	12
December	31	28	3

1910

January	31	31	0
February	28	25	3
March	31	28	3
April	30	30	3
May	31	24	7
June	3	1	2
Total	457	319	138

This table shows that during the first few months of Mr. Taft's term he stuck to his desk with quite laudable assiduity. It was not until the hot weather came on that he began to grow restless. Up to July 1 he was absent but 12 days, and several of them were Sundays. But in July he took a whole week off, and after that, for three months, Washington saw very little of him.

He was, in fact, away upon his 13,000-mile swing around the circle, and for three months no work was done at the White House. Down to the end of 1909, in fact, he spent but 183 days in Washington. The balance of the time between March 4 and December 31—120 days in all—was devoted to wayfaring.

During the whole of his first year in office—that is to say, from March 4, 1909, to March 4 of the present year—he spent 239 days in Washington and 123 days on the road. Since June 30, 1909, the beginning of the current fiscal year, he has spent no less than 126 days in travel, and the fiscal year has yet nearly a month to run. No wonder his allowance of \$25,000 for traveling expenses has disappeared and left a heavy deficit to be paid out of next year's appropriation!

It costs a President fully \$250 a day to travel, and so the \$25,000 appropriation allows him but 100 days' holiday a year. That apparently is not quite enough for Mr. Taft. His average vacation so far has been exactly 110-1/2 days a year—and in that estimate no account is taken of odd half-das. Very frequently, for example, Mr. Taft leaves Washington in the middle of the afternoon or arrives home in the middle of the morning, and thus breaks into his workday. But in making the above table all such broken days were counted as full working days.

After his inauguration the president remained in Washington continuously for exactly two weeks, organizing his Cabinet, receiving visitors and conferring with the Republican leaders in Congress regarding the tariff bill. On March 17 that bill was introduced in the House by Mr. Payne, and the next day Mr. Taft took flight to New York, where he delivered an address at the Cleveland memorial service in Carnegie Hall. March 19 he went to New Haven to attend the annual meeting of the Yale Corporation. Next day he was back in Washington, and there he remained until April 14, giving dinners and wrestling with Congress.

April 14 he went to New York again, and next day he made another visit to New Haven. Then he returned to Washington and remained for 10 days, when he took a day off to go to Philadelphia. Three days afterward he took another day off, this time to be the star of a celebration in honor of George Washington, at Alexandria, Va., just across the Potomac from Washington. During the first half of May he remained at his desk, but on May 18 he set out upon a two-day jaunt to Petersburg and Charlotte, and on May 29, 30 and 31 he was in Pennsylvania, at Pittsburg and Gettysburg, where he made several speeches.

June 1 he was back at the capital, and there he remained until the last day of the month, when he went to New Haven once more (his third trip there in three months) to attend the Yale commencement. He remained two days, returning to Washington bright and early on July 2. But he was off again next day, going to Beverly, Mass., to rent a summer cottage for his family, and afterward making stops at Norwich, Conn., Lake Champlain, Plattsburg, N.Y., and Burlington, Vt.

On July 9 he was at his desk once more, and there he remained for nearly a month, busy with conferences about the tariff. It was not until August 6 that he could leave for Beverly, but once he had departed Washington did not see him again until November 11. During those three months and five days he made his sensational journey into the West and South, visiting 30 States and a hundred cities.

November 19, after having been at home for eight long days, he felt the need of a holiday again, and so went to Norfolk and Hampton, where he spent two days. Then he remained at his desk for three weeks—or until December 13—when he set out upon a fourth journey to New Haven, stopping in New York on the way to buy Christmas presents. Three days after his return he was called to Watertown, N.Y., to attend the funeral of a relative.

When he got back he found the Ballinger-Pinchot row in a critical stage, and spent two weeks trying to patch it up. January 1 he received the plain people of the United States at the White House, shaking hands with 5,575 of them. January 7 he dismissed Pinchot, and during the whole of the following month he was kept busy by the ensuing scandal. It was not until February 2 that he found an opportunity to escape, even for half a day. That half day—or, rather, evening—he spent in Baltimore at the opera.

February 12 he took to the road again, going to New York to confer with the state leaders regarding the Allds-Conger exposures. He devoted two days to the task, and then returned to Washington, where he remained until March 13, when he went to Pittsburg to attend another funeral. Later in the month he went to Albany for a two-day visit to Governor Hughes. So much for March.

On April 1 he left Washington again to visit his aunt in Milbury, Mass., returning April 4. During the rest of the month he remained in Washington, with nothing but golf to break the monotony, but on April 30 he set out for Buffalo upon a six-day tour of the Middle West extending as far as St. Louis. He got back on May 6 and remained there until May 30, when he took another little trip, this time of two days. Yesterday he started out again.

(Source: Parks Media Center, Iowa State University, microfilm collection)