

## If the People Rule Why Don't They Get What They Want?

In his great speech, delivered in the United States senate, Senator Owen of Oklahoma asked, "If the people really rule why don't the people get what they want?"

The Commoner has received many replies to this question and some of these are hereinafter printed:

K. C. Oldat, Seattle, Wash.—Yes, the people do rule, after a fashion. Why, then, do they not get what they want? There are just two reasons: The first is that a large minority of the people—enough to hold the balance of power—mistake a party name for party principles. Too many republicans "vote 'er straight" and with eyes shut imagine they are following right in Lincoln's footsteps. Too many democrats would rather win than be right, and therefore are prone to listen to the siren voice of certain eastern plutocrats, who make rosy promises of success at the polls. The second reason is that the machinery of our government with which the people are supposed to rule is too old and antiquated for present day usage by all the people. We have outgrown it. There is room for only a few at the helm, and the plutes are there, too firmly established to be easily dislodged by the common people. The supreme court, intended by the founders of the republic to be co-ordinate with the legislative and executive branches of the government, has arrogantly assumed the authority to over-ride the expressed will of the people. And moreover the court has grown to be regarded as a sort of fetish. In other words the old-time "divine right of kings" bobs up here in free America as the "divine right of the courts," with the legal fraternity taking the place of the titled aristocracy as its worshippers and champions. Even the last democratic national platform makers got down on their knees, kissed the ground on which the court stands, and professed all sorts of faith in it, before they dared formulate and express their position on a question which involved that court's former decisions. Too many lawyers in that convention. Our government is lawyer-cursed. Less than one-tenth of one per cent of our people are lawyers. More than ninety per cent of our public servants (exclusive of merely clerical appointees) are lawyers and the rest are bankers and capitalists. Who, then, represent the farmers, merchants, laborers, teachers, artisans, doctors? And with our cumbersome political machinery, the people can't help it. Not that lawyers are dishonest, but that their legal training and practice unfits them for seeing but one side of a question—that of their client. Let's have a constitutional convention, which shall deal with modern conditions in an up-to-now plain, straightforward manner.

C. G. Jennings, Broadway, Va.—The question is a hypothetical one and since in a republican form of government the privilege or opportunity to rule is equivalent to ruling this question is relieved of its hypothesis and becomes a simple statement, "The people do rule and necessarily do get what they want." To illustrate say, in round numbers, five million voters are, or think they are, benefited in different degrees by trusts, high protection, railroad monopolies, non-publicity, etc., they vote the republican ticket to get what they want but they are not a majority. Now seven million voters

are opposed to the above and in order to get what they want vote the democratic ticket, but they are not a majority. Then comes along three million voters who want \$2.50, "that and nothing more." Now it is not necessary to say where they vote. Who has the money to give them? Who can get it back? Five and three are eight—eight millions are a majority. Do not they get what they want? If a man wants to get drunk and has an opportunity he gets drunk of course.

J. D. Writsman, Los Angeles, Cal.—Because: First, some of the people vote for what they want, but being in a minority do not get what they vote for. Second, some of the people get what they vote for, but through intimidation and the power of capital are afraid to vote for what they want. Third, some of the people vote for what they want and get what they vote for. The second and third vote the same ticket, which makes a majority. If the influence of capital and intimidation were eliminated the first and second would vote the same ticket, making a large majority, and would get what they want. Until the people are educated to this fact and put it into practice government by the people will be a dismal failure.

Frank Boalen, Miltonvale, Kan.—The people lost the chance to rule in 1896, when the great commoner struck the vital chord of bimetallism, when the money power of the world was arrayed against him. The people took their choice at that time, voting for the single standard of money. Give us the double standard and as Andrew Jackson said: "By the eternal we'll see who rules," the money power or the people.

D. W. Summers, Milo, Iowa.—I believe the reason the people do not get what they want is that they do not in the first place take the interest that should be taken by them in the selection of party candidates, and often their party candidates have been selected by a few politicians in their party, being too prejudiced to measure their own party candidates' qualifications with the qualifications of candidates of other parties. They go to the polls and vote their straight party ticket regardless of the kind of men they are voting for. For this reason the people do not elect men of their own choice, but help to elect men who are shoved on to them as candidates by the very men whose principles we should be fighting. When we come to the point where we have no party prejudices, and can always vote for men and principles instead of for party, the people will then get what they want.

J. L. McMinn, Ontario, Cal.—Do the people rule?—Yes. Why cry out against a usurpation of power when we ourselves vested the offender with the power to do the things we complain of? Willful neglect to properly perform our political duties is the cause of all our political ills. We are not lacking in sufficient intelligence, knowledge and information, if we desire to be informed, to act intelligently in all matters affecting our political welfare. Being a democrat, and for more than thirty-two years a resident of Nebraska, I feel justified in saying a word concerning the recent democratic state convention which met at Grand Island. The adoption of the clause

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