

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

VOL. 11, NO. 12

Lincoln, Nebraska, March 31, 1911

Whole Number 532

## Senate Reorganization

The democrats of the senate have a duty to perform at the very opening of the extra session, namely—the reorganization of that body. The democrats are still in the minority, but they will have the selection of the democratic members of the various committees, and acting with the progressive republicans, they can not only secure increased representation on the committees, but they can make the committees represent the sentiment of the senate. There are some standpat democrats in the senate whose sympathies are with the standpat republicans rather than with the progressive republicans but there are not as many of these standpat democrats as there were before the fourth of March, and there will probably not be as many two years from now as there are now.

The standpat democrats and republicans are now in control of the best committee assignments, and they may expect to keep them in spite of the fact that they no longer represent the sentiment of a majority in that body. It seems likely to be a question of seniority versus public interest—a question of individual ambition versus the welfare of the people. It is not difficult to determine which side to take in such a controversy. It may flatter a man's vanity to allow him to misrepresent his party or his country, but it is not democracy. If public officials—even senators—are public servants; if they are selected to do for the people what the people want done—then there can be no question that committees should be made up, not merely to pay personal compliments, but to carry out the people's will.

The rule of seniority does not respect states or even sections; it rests upon the length of the service and is therefore purely a personal asset. If one holding an important committee appointment dies, the office does not, according to the rule of seniority, go to his successor but to the oldest in the service. It is based on the theory that efficiency increases with length of service, but suppose the senator opposed his party? In that case the more efficient he is the more harm he can do his party. Even the rule of seniority recognizes the right of the majority party to rule, and the chairman of a committee, no matter how long his term of service, takes a subordinate place when another party comes into control of the body. That is just the situation that confronts the senate now; a change has taken place in that body. The stand-pat sentiment which controlled it in the last congress gives way to a progressive sentiment unless there are enough stand-pat democrats to offset the progressive republicans. A change in the dominant sentiment in the senate ought to reflect itself through a change in the committees. The change is as marked as if it were a change in parties, for the difference between a progressive republican and a stand-pat republican is much greater than the difference between the stand-pat republican and the stand-pat democrat. If the seniority rule has invoked an excuse for keeping the committees under control of the stand-pat element of the two parties, the voters who have elected progressives to the senate will be greatly disappointed. The worship of the letter should not be permitted to destroy the spirit of representative government. To allow seniority to control in the selection of committees would be a case where "the letter killeth."

Men are naturally inclined to follow the line of least resistance, and the progressives will be promised praise and commendation and will be described as eminently fair if they will only betray their constituents and leave the stand-patters in control of the senate, but that is not what the progressives were elected for. In many cases they were selected because they were essentially different from the senators or candidates whom they defeated.

It is not sufficient that a senator shall vote right on questions that come before him. The committees largely determine what questions shall come before the senators. The commit-

tees, therefore, should be brought into harmony with the controlling sentiment of the senate; the progressives in both parties owe this to the rising tide which demands remedial legislation. If the standpat element in the two parties unite to prevent a reorganization of the committees, the progressives should insist that the union shall be open and in the light so that the country will know what is going on. It will help the people to act more intelligently at the next election. This is no time for senatorial courtesy; the people mean business, and they mean that the senate shall help to attend to the business of the whole public. Reorganization of the senate is its immediate need; reforms will then be possible.

### WHY NOT RIDDER?

Mr. Herman Ridder is being mentioned in connection with the New York senatorship. Why not? The following is a sketch of his life, published in the press dispatches:

Herman Ridder is a native of New York city and has lived there all his life. He was born of German parents on March 5, 1851, at 400 Greenwich street. At the age of eleven he went to work in a hat store and soon after secured a position with a Wall street firm, where he remained until his thirteenth year, when he entered the employ of the Tradesmen's Fire Insurance Company. His connection with that company lasted for fourteen years, the last seven of which he spent as an agent.

In 1878 he left the insurance business to take up newspaper work and founded the Katholisches Volksblatt. In 1886 he established the Catholic News, which in a short time was recognized as the leading Catholic paper of the country.

Mr. Ridder became a stockholder in the New York Staats-Zeitung in 1890, and was elected a director and the treasurer and manager. These offices he filled until he became the president of the corporation, which office he now holds.

Mr. Ridder has taken an active part in politics as an independent democrat, and he has long been an ardent advocate of tariff reform. He was a prominent participant in the Cleveland campaigns and in the various reform movements in New York City. He was treasurer of the democratic national committee during the 1908 campaign.

He is a trustee of the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank, the Mutual Life Insurance Company, the German Hospital and the Catholic Protective, and a member of the New York City Publishers' Association. He is a director of the Associated Press and the president of the American Newspaper Publishers' Association.

Mr. Ridder is a member of the Chamber of Commerce and of the Manhattan, Liederkrantz, Arion, Catholic, Reform, Democratic, City, New York Press, German Press and Hardware Clubs and also of the Deutscher Verein.

Much time has been devoted by Mr. Ridder to charitable work. He is a member of the Charity Organization Society, the Isabella Heimath, the German Society, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Legal Aid Society and a number of similar organizations.

He is a member also of the American Natural History Society and of the Metropolitan museum of art and is connected with other societies of like character.

Mr. Ridder was presiding vice-president of the Hudson-Fulton celebration commission and as such he took a very active part in that great celebration.

### JUDGE McCABE DEAD

Death has again entered Mr. Bryan's circle of friends, and stricken down Judge McCabe, of Williamsport, Ind. The distinguished democrat and jurist, whose death we are called upon to chronicle, was a member of the resolutions committee in the national convention of 1896, and during the years since he and Mr. Bryan have been co-laborers they have borne their disappointments together when reforms have been postponed, and they have rejoiced together as during recent years those reforms have been

making such satisfactory progress. Judge McCabe is one whose place will be hard to fill. Peace to his ashes, sympathy to the sorrowing family!

### THE INCOME TAX AMENDMENT

The amendment to the constitution specifically authorizing an income tax, has been ratified by the legislatures of twenty-five states in all. The Chicago Tribune says: "So little has been said of late about the income tax constitutional amendment that it is worth while to call attention to the progress it has made toward ratification. Up to date it has had the approval of Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, South Carolina, North Carolina, California, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Iowa, North Dakota, Nebraska, Nevada, Wisconsin, Vermont, Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Alabama, Kentucky, Missouri, Georgia, Maryland and Mississippi."

As we shall have forty-eight states when Arizona and New Mexico are admitted—as they will be within a few weeks—it will require the affirmative vote of thirty-six states to make the amendment a part of the constitution. More than half of the states, as will be seen, have already acted favorably, leaving eleven more necessary to the adoption of the amendment. Of the twenty-three states remaining, eight, New York, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, Virginia, West Virginia, Arkansas, Louisiana and Utah, have rejected the amendment. In several of these states, however, one branch of the legislature favored ratification and in New York ratification failed by a single vote. It is quite likely that Arkansas and Virginia will yet ratify, leaving only nine votes to be secured from the states that have not acted. It is entirely possible that New York may ratify this year, there being a new legislature in session. If Arkansas, Virginia and New York ratify, only eight more states are necessary and Colorado, Wyoming, South Dakota, Minnesota, Michigan, Arizona, New Mexico and Florida ought to furnish them. But as some of these states may fail and as New York, Arizona and Virginia may not reverse themselves, it behooves the friends of the amendment to get to work in every state in which no action has been taken or in which the amendment has been rejected. No time is to be lost.

What is the matter with New Jersey? The state has a democratic governor and a democratic legislature. Do the democrats of New Jersey stand on the last democratic national platform? That platform declared for an income tax amendment and not a vote was cast against it in the convention. Ratification may turn on one state. Is Governor Wilson willing that his state shall have the unenviable distinction of turning the scales against so just a reform, demanded unanimously by the democratic party, endorsed already by a majority of the states and sure to be endorsed by states representing a majority of the people? And what does Maine say? Is her democratic victory to count for democracy or against it on this important issue? Can Governor Foss secure ratification at the hands of the Massachusetts legislature? And New York—the country can forgive delay in electing a senator if the income tax amendment is ratified.

In the states that have not acted the voters should at once write to their governors and representatives. In the states that have acted adversely to the income tax, clubs should be formed and all candidates for the legislature should be pledged to vote for ratification. Here is a great epoch making reform within reach—the people can secure it if they will only act. They should act NOW.

### FRIENDS AT HIS BEDSIDE

It should afford ex-Mayor Tom L. Johnson some comfort to know that a host of friends are his companions in thought and sympathy as he struggles with the serious disease that confines him to his home. They read the papers each morning for words of encouragement and pray that his life may be spared many years to continue the noble work which has given him so conspicuous a place among his fellows.