

The Commoner.

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Popular Elections

The Chicago Record-Herald, a republican paper, refers to the fact that the federal grand jury returned indictments against Senators Mitchell, Burton and Dietrich, and says: "In each of these deplorable instances the charges involve corruption and moral turpitude—a bitter reflection for a legislative body proud of its traditions and jealous of its prerogatives and reputation. The low tone of political morality receives a painful and striking illustration in these successive blows to senatorial prestige."

The Record-Herald adds: "The possibility of further disgrace and degradation would be greatly diminished by substituting for indirect elections the plan of popular election of federal senators."

The Record-Herald might also have said that the fact that there are a number of prominent United States senators who have not yet been reached by indictment and will perhaps never be reached by indictment who serve on the senate floor as the representatives of special interests provides another striking argument in favor of the popular election of senators.

The Record-Herald might also have said that the fact that New York, Minnesota and Nebraska have during the present year elected to the senate men who were picked by the railroads provides another strong argument in favor of the popular election of senators.

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A Free Press

It is reported that the Czar is contemplating several reforms—among them the removal of all restrictions on the press. This is an item of the very greatest importance, if true. A free press will prove to be the beginning of other reforms. No abuse can successfully resist the influence of public discussion and no ruler who desires to serve the best interests of his people can afford to silence criticism. Give an opponent freedom to speak and he will speak frankly. He will point out faults that friends conceal. Even exaggeration is useful, for like a microscope it enables us to see that which might otherwise escape notice. No well meaning official need fear harm from a free press and objections from any other kind of an official need not be considered.

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Asset Currency

A Prairie City, Iowa, reader writes: "Why not asset currency? Answer in Commoner if convenient."

The term "asset currency" is used to describe the currency which some of the financiers are now proposing, namely a currency which does not rest upon government bonds as the present currency does, but merely upon the assets of the bank. The currency is printed by the government and issued to the bank with no security fund back of it, other than a general lien upon the assets of the bank. If the government does not guarantee the currency it may become worthless if the officials of the bank abscond with the assets. If, on the other hand, the government guarantees the currency, as is advised by most advocates of asset currency, the bank gets the benefit at the expense of the people and if the government does guarantee the currency the government will have a first lien upon the assets among which the deposits are to be considered, and so not only the government, but the depositors are to be considered; and so not only the government, but the depositors will carry the risk and in the event of disaster foot the bill.

MORE ROPE---MORE DELAY



Why not try the one you've got, Mr. Roosevelt?

BACK TO THE PEOPLE

The tide is turning. For a quarter of a century corporate influence in politics has been increasing; campaign funds have grown larger and larger, and the circle of political corruption has been constantly extended. Voters were bought; city councils were bribed; state legislators became the tools of railroads and monopolies, and the instrumentalities of the federal government were turned to private gain. Three United States senators have been indicted for the misuse of their influence within the last two years, and officials in high places have been found guilty of plundering the treasury while drawing salaries from the people.

The public conscience was apparently benumbed, and men joked about corruption that ought to have excited alarm. But light is breaking. In 1892 the populist party pointed out the drift of the country toward plutocracy; in 1896 the democratic party fought a herculean struggle and turned its face toward reform. It dared to do what few parties had before attempted—namely, repudiate an administration at the primaries. It

wrote a platform so distinctly a people's platform, that it alienated the plutocratic element of the party, and when that element deserted it carried with it a great many democrats really in sympathy with the people, but misled by the prominence of some of the leaders. And yet in spite of desertion the democratic party, with the aid of the populists and silver republicans, polled a million more votes than it had ever polled before—in fact a million more votes than any party had ever polled before. There was a tremendous increase in the total vote in 1896—an increase so remarkable that, taken in connection with the fact that there has been no increase since, leads to the suspicion that more votes were counted than polled.

The movement started in 1896 would have been successful in 1900 but for two unexpected factors that entered into the campaign. First, the increased production of gold, which by enlarging the volume of money improved industrial conditions; and second, the Spanish war which not only tended, as wars do, to raise prices but turned the