

CURRENT TOPICS

AT THE recent session of the Texas legislature a primary election law was passed. This law contains an initiative clause as follows: "Section 140. Whenever delegates are to be selected by any political party to any state or county convention by primary election or primary convention or candidates are instructed for or nominated, it shall be the duty of the chairman of the county or precinct executive committee of said political party upon the application of ten per cent of the members of said party (who are legally qualified voters in said county or precinct) to submit at the time and place of selecting said delegates any proposition desired to be voted upon by said voters, and the delegates selected at that time shall be considered instructed for whichever proposition for which a majority of the votes are cast; provided, that the number of voters belonging to said political party shall be determined by the votes cast for the party nominee for governor at the preceding election; and provided further, that said application is filed with the county or precinct chairman at least five days before the tickets are to be printed, and the chairman may require a sworn statement that the names of said applicants are genuine; provided, further, that all additional expense of printing any proposition on the official primary ballot shall be paid for by the parties requesting the same."

WALTON PETEET, editor of the San Antonio (Texas) Dispatch, referring to the initiative feature of the Texas primary election law says that it is highly important because it will enable the voters of the party to make party platforms. Mr. Peteet says that "the credit for this provision is in large measure due to Hon. M. A. Kennedy, of Mart, Texas. Mr. Kennedy was a member of the lower house and the adoption of the initiative paragraph was due "more to personal efforts than to any widespread sentiment—although of course the education of the public generally has prepared the way and lessened opposition."

THE AUTHOR of the initiative feature, M. A. Kennedy, of Mart, Texas, referring to the measure says: "You will observe that it simply applies to parties holding primaries or conventions for nominating delegates or candidates. The sole object of this clause is to secure an expression from the voters direct on platform demands. In this state for several years past a committee of thirty-one has usually made the platforms for the dominant party, and the result has been the party platforms are looked upon with suspicion and alarm by a great many legislators and others. Recently the salaries of district judges were increased \$500 annually 'in the name of the people of Texas' when not one-fifth of them wanted the change. To meet this condition is the reason why I prepared the feature alluded to. I don't look for it to be invoked for a few years yet, but ultimately it will be used in two-thirds of the counties in the state. It is also a safe proposition that three years from now it will be invoked against the delivery of the Texas democrats to our friends Belmont, McCarren et al. Whilst the idea, so far as placing it in the election bill was concerned, was original with me, still there was on a final show-down absolutely no opposition to it. True, it was left out of the senate substitute for the house bill, but the house put it in the bill by a unanimous vote and in the free conference committee it was agreed to with surprising unanimity."

A CLUB has been organized at Caruthersville, Pemiscot county, Mo., whose purpose it is to aid in bringing about a reduction in the prices paid the railroads for the transportation of the mails. Corydon Garrett, editor of the Pemiscot Press, one of the leading spirits in this organization, says that they have communicated with senators and congressmen, and in many instances have had much encouragement, though some members are evasive while others have not taken the trouble to reply.

THE LEADERS of this club have gathered considerable valuable information. One of the club members writing to The Commoner explains: "The rate of pay on 'star routes' for carrying the

mails is not per hundred nor per ton; star route bidders are informed that they are supposed to carry all the mail (be it large or small) from one certain point to another certain point for so many dollars, the amount being their bid, and as many as may wish can make a bid to carry the mail, but one whose bid is the lowest gets the contract for four years, at the end of which time the contract is relet to the lowest bidder. Thus it is that the pay on star routes are being continually reduced every four years. The amount of mail carried on star routes varies from 50 to 500 pounds, but no attention is paid to the amount of the mail; it is the trip which is supposed to be paid for. All postoffices that have star routes are supplied with a book showing every star route in the state that said postoffice is in and the distance and amount paid on each route. From such books you can get the desired information on star routes. Now the pay to railroads for carrying the mails is different, they are paid twice for carrying the same mails, once per hundred pounds per mile and once per car mile. Go to the postmaster and ask for his postal laws and regulations of 1902; see sections 1,164, 1,165 and 1,166 on pages 536 and 537 and you will find that the railroads are allowed from \$42.75 per mile per annum for carrying 200 pounds of mail to \$192.37 per mile per annum for carrying 7,000 pounds of mail. Now in addition to that see section 4,004 R. S., act of March 3, 1873 and you will find that the railroads receive from \$25 per mile per annum for furnishing a forty foot car in which to carry the mails to \$50 per car per mile per annum for furnishing a sixty foot car in which to carry the mails. Thus you will see the railroads are paid twice for the same service."

IN ORDER to show what this double pay amounts to, this same authority says: "Suppose on a line 100 miles long the railroad company should carry an average of 200 pounds of mail daily; that would amount to \$42.75 per mile per annum and in addition to that suppose the car furnished for carrying this 200 pounds of mail be a forty foot car that would be \$25 per mile also, which would be a total of \$67.75 per mile per annum for carrying 200 pounds of mail. Suppose again that a line 100 miles long carry an average of 2,000 pounds of mail each day; that would be \$128.25 per mile per annum and the same size car that it took to carry the 200 pounds of mail will also carry the 2,000 pounds of mail at not one cent more cost to the railroads for carrying the 2,000 pounds of mail, and I see no reason why this government should pay them any more. The total cost for carrying 200 pounds of mail per hundred pounds and per car is \$67.75 per mile. The total cost for carrying 2,000 pounds of mail both per hundred and per car is \$153.25 per mile. Notwithstanding the fact that it costs the railroad company not one cent more to carry the 2,000 pounds of mail than it does to carry the 200 pounds of mail still they are paid almost \$100 per mile more for said service. It is a great puzzle to my feeble mind why we should pay per 100 at all for carrying the mail if the amount per car is right and vice versa why we should pay per car at all if the amount per hundred is right. Now it seems to me that the wiser plan would be to do away with the rate per hundred per mile and leave the rate per car per mile stand what it is as it is easy to see that the only additional pay the railroads should receive for carrying the mail is when the amount should be so much that it should become necessary to attach an additional car. Another fact which should not be overlooked is that the express companies get their express carried on all railroad lines at a less cost than this government pays for the cars in which the mails are carried. It seems to me that it should not cost this government any more to have the mails carried than it does cost the express companies to have the express carried. The amount of express carried over every railroad line is much greater than the amount of mail."

JUDGE HOLDOM of Milwaukee recently made a temporary order, giving a two-year-old child into the custody of his mother. The parents disputed for the possession of the child. In making the order Judge Holdom said: "There is

nothing that would compensate for the loss of mother-love and protection, and this court has to do with the welfare of the child and not the parent." The newspaper reports say: "While the hearing was going on the boy, who was in charge of Mrs. Krause's brother, toddled over to his father, where he sat cooling and laughing at his mother across the courtroom. As counsel retired to draw up terms for a settlement, Judge Holdom came down from the bench and took the child in his arms. The baby laughed and patted his cheek. 'I don't see why in the world you people can't get along with a baby like this to play with,' said the judge shaking his head. By the order of the court the father will be allowed to see his child as often as he pleases. The mother is forbidden to take the child from under the jurisdiction of the court until some definite settlement of the case is made."

THAT an alliance between the United States, Great Britain and Japan is not unlikely to be developed in the near future is the opinion expressed by the Washington Post. The Post refers to this as "a great and exciting issue," and says: "In its self-evident greatness it will, if or when it comes, dwarf all other questions of foreign or domestic policy. In its capacity to produce excitement it will have no equal. If any suggestion as to national policy could be depended upon to excite, to startle, not to say shock, the people of this country, it would be the proposition, seriously pressed, of such a departure from the counsels of Washington as that. To the contention that our unfortunate, our deplorable departure from traditions and precedents in acquiring sovereignty over the Philippine islands and their 8,000,000 of people necessitates this departure, as one false step calls for another, the people may not have a satisfactory answer, for they see that in the event of war with Japan our retention of the Philippines would be extremely difficult, if not quite impossible. But no argument would reconcile this nation to any foreign alliance. The people, not only the 'plain people,' but the other kinds, with few exceptions, would make any administration or party extremely uncomfortable if it should attempt to consummate such an international compact. Still we think the issue is coming—is well on its way, and will arrive before many months shall have passed."

THE ASSESSOR at Newport has discovered and listed for taxation \$13,313,100 of personal property which has not been taxed before. Referring to this fact the Saturday Evening Post says: "The amount of the tax, if grossly measured in dollars and cents, is a bagatelle to Newport, but the galling fact that these particular owners of personal property were unable to escape paying these taxes must sadden and humiliate them as often as they recall it—intruding its grinning head at their richest feasts and derisively poking them in the ribs as they lie on their downy beds. It is something that few self-respecting property owners can stand. Many millionaires have been driven from their homes by it, and gone wandering from state to state, and township to township in order to escape."

ONCE THERE was a resident of Chicago who listed all her personal property for taxation. Recalling the instance the Saturday Evening Post says: "The local newspapers put it on the front page under scare heads. Such a thing had never happened before. People date reminiscences from it now, as from the year of the great fire, or the winter of the deep snow. Opinion was divided. Some thought this miraculous property owner was merely eccentric, others argued for insanity. It was pointed out that the total personal property returned for taxation was less than it had been thirty years before when the city had a third of the population and a sixth of the wealth. The episode made a record, as they say in sporting circles. To date nobody seems ambitious to match it. There is a trifling formality in connection with the personal property schedule. It consists of the affidavit at the bottom where the property owner does solemnly swear that he has listed above all his taxable possessions. On account of this some timorous gentlemen draw their balances out of the bank the day before, put the money in a safe deposit