

## REFORMING THE COURTS

During the rate bill discussion in the senate Mr. Tillman remarked that "if the supreme court should hold that congress had no power to control inferior courts the people would elect a congress that would enact legislation that would bring relief to the people."

Mr. Spooner interpreted this expression to mean that "if the supreme court did not square its opinions with the cornfield law of the senator from South Carolina it must be reformed."

The distinguished senator from Wisconsin may think that he is very serious on this point, but he might well look at the situation even in a more serious way. It is all very well to talk about "the cornfield law," but it would be well if we could have more court decisions given in accordance with what Mr. Spooner calls "cornfield law" which, being interpreted, means common sense and simple justice.

It must have occurred to Mr. Spooner as it has, we believe, to the masses of the American people, that it is strange that although our government was ordained "to establish justice, insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity" it seems well nigh impossible, under the present regime, to have the law enforced so it will call to account the rich as well as the poor, and to have statutes interpreted so they will inflict punishment upon the strong and the influential as well as upon the weak and helpless.

Every day in the great city of New York, for instance, men, women and children charged with small offenses are being sent to prison. The woman who steals a loaf of bread, or the man who steals a peck of coal, finds no mercy. There is no delicate weighing of technicalities in such cases. Indictments are promptly obtained, prosecution is swift and imprisonment certain. But the rich rascals who have plundered the policyholders go scott free, while the powerful monopolists in whose interests juries have been bribed and city councils purchased, and the men who, as members of the beef trust, conspire against the very lives of the people, are not prosecuted.

It ought to be plain to every intelligent person that the American people will not long tolerate the condition of things with which they are today confronted. It would be absurd to say that the people are powerless in the presence of these great combinations of capital, because the courts, being interpreters of law, hold, generally, with special interests. The people are supposed to make and unmake laws. They are supposed to make and unmake congressmen, governors, legislatures and presidents. The time is rapidly approaching when this will not be mere supposition, and the people will retire to private life those whose inclinations tend toward special privileges and whose sympathies are with special interests. They will then elevate from the rank and file men who may be trusted to act with the view of obtaining the greatest good to the greatest number; and in that day courts will be reformed if necessary. Indeed, one of the essential reforms of today is the abolition of the life tenure federal judiciary.

## REMEMBERED TRUE FRIENDS

The Commoner does not take kindly to the criticisms heaped upon the late George C. Watts of Chicago, who devised the sum of \$20,000 to his faithful dog, "Bill." In the very nature of things "Bill" can not live long, as he is already past the average age of canines, and as he was a tried and true friend of his master it seems fitting that the master should have provided in his will for the future care and comfort of the dog. It is cheerfully admitted that such a sum of money would add immensely to the care and comfort of many human beings who are deserving of help, but behind all of that is a sentiment the possession of which does credit to the memory of Mr. Watts. No matter how low a man may fall in the social scale; no matter how poor he may become through the blows of adverse fortune; no matter how unfortunate a man may be, if he owns a dog he has one friend who will stick to him through thick and thin, through storm and stress, through good and evil report. And true friends in these days of Mammon are entirely too scarce to be forgotten, even though they be four-footed friends. "Bill" was given to Mr. Watts by his mother, and she asked her son to take good care of the family dog. Mr. Watts has done this, and by so doing he has carried out the wishes of his mother and at the same time shown his gratitude for a friendship that never wavered. Men, no matter what their station, could learn some valuable

lessons in unselfish friendship from humble dogs like "Bill." Nor must it be forgotten that the much abused Watts made provision to the extent of \$300 per year for his faithful horse; and then it was provided in his will that when the horse and dog die the estate should be divided in equal parts between the Old People's Home, the Chicago orphan asylum, the Home for Incurables, and the Salvation Army. So whatever one's point of view there is small room for criticizing the Watts will.

## A REPUBLICAN STORY

An eastern newspaper is authority for the statement that Representative Grosvenor of Ohio recently told "a disgruntled member of congress" this story:

"One day Representative Woodman called on Speaker Reed and requested permission to call up for consideration in the house a bill providing for a public improvement in his district.

"Now, what do you want to do that for, Charlie? Haven't you trouble enough now? Haven't you introduced the bill?"

"Yes," responded Mr. Woodman.

"Well, then," said the Maine statesman, 'you had better let the matter rest there. Half of the people in your district have never heard of the bill, and the other half believe it became a law when you introduced it. What's the use of calling their attention to it and making trouble for yourself?'"

Mr. Thomas B. Reed, who was at the time regarded as a very able man, may or may not have made this statement. It is, however, a good story and perhaps it describes the estimate which Representative Grosvenor of Ohio places upon the intelligence of the American people. It is characteristically a republican politician's story. Republican leaders have had such remarkable success in pulling the wool over the eyes of the people, aided as they have been by a series of fortuitous circumstances, that it is no wonder that men trained in the school in which Mr. Grosvenor has grown gray—and also reckless—underestimate the popular intelligence.

While it is true the people have at times seemed indifferent to public affairs, it is also true that when once aroused they are thoroughly capable of telling a hawk from a hand-saw. Once impressed with the fact that men have violated their confidence and have imposed upon them, they are quite able to distinguish the false from the true.

Republican politicians will yet learn that all of the intelligence of the country is not concealed within the pates of the self-elected "defenders of national honor" in Wall street, nor within the craniums of the remarkably successful politicians in Washington.

Mr. Grosvenor told this story prior to his defeat for renomination. It is safe to say that he does not now place great reliance in the thought concealed in the Reed story. He has discovered that the people of his congressional district have a fairly accurate idea of the services he has rendered to the people and a fairly accurate idea, also, concerning the services he has rendered to the special interests.

## A 1900 PREDICTION

The recent death of David B. Henderson, formerly speaker of the house of representatives, recalls the prediction he made during the campaign of 1900. Mr. Henderson, unlike some of his republican associates, did not undertake to deny that the republican party was carrying the people along strange paths, and he bluntly declared: "The doctrines of Hamilton must be the textword of the hour."

The New York Press, a republican paper in an issue printed in September, 1900, approved Speaker Henderson's statement and declared that the Hamilton idea had "conquered" the country. Referring to the Hamilton doctrine, the Press added:

"It promises completely to possess the country. The last vestige of the Jeffersonian tradition, that this land was destined for a thousand years to be a peaceful, agricultural polity, shipping its farm products abroad, receiving manufactured goods in return, and abstaining from all political contact with the great world beyond its borders—is likely to be effaced in the coming election."

We have had more than five years—since Speaker Henderson made the declaration referred to—of persistent cultivation of the Hamilton idea, and we have recently come into "political contact with the great world" to an extent that would

not have been tolerated even in 1900. The dominant party has utterly ignored the teachings of Jefferson, the warnings of Washington and the counsels of other men who founded this government and had the foresight to see the temptations to power confronting the men of today.

If the republican party could have its way "the last vestige of the Jeffersonian tradition would be effaced," but it is plain that the good sense of the American people is making itself felt, and there is a disposition on the part of men generally to return to old-time doctrines and to protest against innovations. The Hamilton idea is not adapted to a government of, for and by the people. Those who adhere to that idea have met with remarkable success in politics, but the American people are devoted to Jefferson's principles and cannot be persuaded to permanently abandon "the Jefferson tradition."

## MR. ROOSEVELT AND THE SUBSIDY

Washington dispatches say that President Roosevelt is deeply interested in the ship subsidy bill which recently passed the senate, and that he is very anxious that that measure be adopted by the house. It is difficult to understand how a president who perhaps more than any other man since Jackson's time has been made to realize the difficulties encountered by the people in grappling with arrogant monopolies can bring himself to support one of the most vicious of all the subsidy schemes ever offered to a people.

Mr. Roosevelt asked for and received the cooperation of men of all political parties when he announced his determination to bring about a reform in the matter of railway legislation. Men having no axes to grind looked to the president's support. They were governed by principle, and it is regrettable that the president, who has been the beneficiary of such general support by the American people abandons the high position he has taken and gives support to a vicious scheme.

Mr. Roosevelt has done many strange things since he entered the White House, and if he does not know it now he will yet learn that his efforts to put through the ship subsidy scheme bode no good to his standing among the American people who, partly through his own agitation of the monopoly question, have grown more and more unfavorable to plans devised to enrich the few at the expense of the many.

## WHY NOT PROSECUTE THEM?

Insurance commissioners for Tennessee, Kentucky, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Minnesota, recently made a joint examination of the New York Life Insurance company. The report of these commissioners shows that during the investigation Edmund D. Randolph, treasurer of the New York Life, was, on February 19, 1906, asked this question: "Has the company at any time in the past loaned any of its non-taxable securities to any banking corporation or person for the purpose of enabling the borrower to avoid taxation, or for any other purposes?"

Mr. Randolph's answer was as follows:

"The First National bank of New York, from October 13, 1902, to June 2, 1904, borrowed from the company New York City bonds of the state of Massachusetts aggregating \$5,100,000, and as security for their return, deposited with the company satisfactory collateral which it at all times kept good. These bonds, under a special ruling made by the secretary of the treasury of the United States, were lodged with the treasurer of the United States in trust for the First National bank of New York, to enable the bank to receive additional government deposits. The transaction was finally closed on June 2, 1904, all of said bonds having been returned to the company. As consideration for the loan of said bonds, the bank paid the company \$70,742.23. The company also itself, meantime collecting, directly and retaining as its own, all the interest the bonds by their terms bore, as the interest accrued, the bonds having continued meanwhile to stand registered in the name of the company."

The report further showed that E. H. Harri-man borrowed \$500,000 from the New York Life and used that large sum of money without paying any interest whatever.

Although the inquiry by the New York insurance committee was presumed to be thorough it is plain that with all of the revelations showing fraud and corruption on the part of these "defenders of national-honor" the half has been told. It is strange that no serious crisis has been made by District Attorney Jerson a call to account these influential law-breakers