

not only not interfere with the local weeklies but it ought to work in harmony with them. Newspaper literature is the cheapest that there is, and as nearly every voter takes several papers there is no reason why he should not take a weekly giving the news of the community and discussing local issues, and in addition subscribe for a state weekly which will defend his interests in all matters of state importance. The Commoner cannot cover the ground of the state weekly because it is a national rather than a state paper and its columns are devoted to the discussion of questions of national importance. It will co-operate with the state weeklies and the local weeklies, for each has a sphere of its own and all can work together for the promulgation of democratic principles, for the advancement of democratic policies and for the preservation of a government "of the people, by the people and for the people."

The democrats of each state are urged to consider the question of establishing a weekly democratic paper, and the sooner the work is commenced the better. We ought to have these papers now to lay the groundwork for the coming campaign.

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### MUZZLED

Not long ago Second Assistant Postmaster General Shellanbarger notified the United States postal clerks that they were not to be given the right to petition for relief from their grievances. They were told that they must not apply to congress for reform. And now we read in the Kansas City Journal of February 17 this special dispatch from Washington: "Railway postal clerks now know why they are 'muzzled.' Second Assistant Postmaster General Shellanbarger, in a communication to congress, tells all about it. He says that the department has to 'muzzle' its postal clerks in the interests of the service. If there is a wreck anywhere and a postal clerk gets himself interviewed he will be suspended, if the department sees the interview, and it no doubt will. 'A postal clerk can discuss everybody in the United States, from the president down,' said Mr. Shellanbarger, 'or anything from the Philippines up, but he must not talk about any wreck in which his train is involved; that is, talk for publication. He can tell his troubles to the department. In that way we will be able to adjust our troubles with the railroads without much friction.'"

It is easy to understand why railroad employes are muzzled when it comes to railroad wrecks but it is difficult to understand why, or by what authority, the second assistant postmaster general seeks to put a muzzle on the postal clerks.

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### YET IT CLAIMS LINCOLN

The Washington correspondent for the New York Evening Post quotes Secretary of War Taft as having described the opponents of our Philippine policy as "Those who asserting that the acquisition of the Philippines is a departure from the traditional policy of the government in assuming sovereignty over an alien people, at present certainly ill adapted to exercising statehood, are utterly opposed to continuing any connection with the government of the Philippine Islands at all and are strongly in favor of an immediate abandonment of them whatever the result to the people of those islands. They contend that the principle that all just government must depend upon the consent of the governed, is a moral one and makes our occupation of the islands immoral."

Then the Post correspondent says that Secretary Taft added: "I have great respect for persons who sincerely entertain that view. The republican party, however, differs wholly from them in their construction of the Declaration of Independence."

"Government with the consent of the governed" is not necessarily a discreditable view, but, according to the republican secretary of war, "the republican party differs wholly with that construction of the Declaration of Independence." And this is the party that claims Abraham Lincoln as its patron saint!

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### RAILROAD MANAGEMENT

The argument against the government ownership of railroads has been that the roads can be managed more wisely by private individuals controlled by their private interests. If this argument fails, who will be able to defend private ownership, and yet, during the last few months the public has been forced to the consideration of the question: Do the railroad managers manage wisely? The coal famine has brought great suffering in different sections, and the people say: Why are the railroads unable to furnish coal to the people who need coal? There has been car shortage, grain has waited in the elevators for transportation and merchandise has stood for weeks

upon the sidetracks, and the people ask, Why is it that the managers do not provide transportation facilities? Is it a shortage of cars or a shortage of motive power, or both, and if a shortage, why? Has money been spent in dividends that ought to have been spent in equipment? Will the railroads seriously affirm that they are under no obligation to move merchandise when the holders of the merchandise want it moved? Will the railroads accommodate the people or must the people accommodate themselves to the railroads? Are the railroads built for the people or do people live for the purpose of earning dividends for the railroads?

And what about watered stock? Are the people not to be considered in the capitalization of the railroads? Whenever the dividends of a railroad get high enough to attract attention, the stock is watered so that the earnings can be spread over a larger capitalization, and then the managers get to work to raise the dividends again. This is an endless chain, and it continues to draw money out of the pockets of the people and carry it to the pockets of the railroad managers. Is there no limit to the amount of extortion that can be practiced? Every time the authorities attempt to reduce railroad rates, whether passenger or freight, a cry goes up from the railroad managers but every protest that is made against reasonable reductions helps to open the eyes of the public to the selfishness that characterizes railroad management. Competition is being throttled, small roads are being forced into great combinations, and the manipulators of the railroads are piling up their fortunes by juggling with railroad securities.

An important question arises, namely: Can railroad management be made honest while it remains in private hands? The railroad managers are doing their best to force the people to answer, No. Will the railroads regard themselves as common carriers and undertake to perform their duty in a reasonable way and for a reasonable compensation? The railroad managers are not yet prepared to answer, Yes.

If the people are driven reluctantly to seek in public ownership a remedy for the evils of private management, the blame will not be upon the reformer but upon the railroad manager. While the reformer is trying to make private ownership tolerable by reasonable regulation, the railroad manager is defying public sentiment, disregarding public interests and continuing the exploitation of those who are forced to use the roads.

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### THAT OLD SLOGAN

"Let well enough alone" has been the favorite slogan of republican leaders. Those who yielded to this cry during political campaigns now have the opportunity of learning what it means. Those who have heretofore failed to recognize the truth must now understand that while the republican leaders are shouting "let well enough alone" and insisting that nothing be done to change the tariff laws or the trust laws, they are proceeding upon such a change in the statutes as will give greater privileges to special interests.

Republican leaders are not willing to be bound by their own logic. They are not willing to "let well enough alone" in the matter of ship subsidy; they want to take from the taxpayers enormous subsidies to fill the purses of a few big steam boat owners. They are not willing to "let well enough alone" in our financial laws; they want to give larger privileges to the bankers and greater favors to the gold brokers of Wall street.

When the republican leader cries "let well enough alone" he means to make a protest against any effort to disturb the special interests in the advantages they already enjoy.

"Let well enough alone" is to be used as an answer to the people's cry for relief when it is not employed as a snare to lure the thoughtless voter to the support of a party which, deriving its campaign funds from the special interests, holds the word of promise to the people's ear only to break it to their hope.

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### UP TO THE ARMY

At last it has been decided to give the work of constructing the Panama canal into the hands of the United States army. Having decided in the first place to construct a canal along a route admittedly inferior to the Nicaragua route, it seems rather strange that the work was not immediately given into the hands of the army engineers. They know what their duty is, and they have been trained to perform their duty regardless of outside pressure or interests. The American army contains some of the finest engineers in the world, civil and construction. And while the American army may be subject to criticism along certain lines, it will have to be admitted that up to date it has not failed to perform satisfactorily every task given into its charge. Now that Uncle Sam's uniformed engineers have taken hold of the canal work there comes a faint gleam

of hope that the canal will be completed in time for our children's children to visit the isthmus and see the ships go through.

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### WHY NOT ORDERS?

A citizen from San Francisco writing to the New York Evening Post says: "The California legislature is overwhelmingly republican. Why does not President Roosevelt request the California legislature to repeal the California school law?"

Mr. Roosevelt might order the legislature to repeal the objectionable school laws.

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### ONLY TOO TRUE

President Truesdale of the Lackawana railroad has uttered a great truth, the only trouble being that he did not mean it exactly as it sounded. "The daily attacks on the railroad companies are killing public confidence," said President Truesdale. Not confidence in the advisability of being honest, Mr. Truesdale. Not confidence in the wisdom of dealing justice with an even hand. It is, however, killing confidence in the honesty of the gentlemen who have the management of our huge railway systems. As the attacks grow the revelations of graft and intrigue grow. And these revelations are killing public confidence in the protestations of the eminent "captains of finance." But Mr. Truesdale did not mean it just that way.

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### FOR INSTANCE

Dr. Jacob Gould Schurman, president of Cornell university, says: "I do not want to see a government despotism in the United States. I dread the bureaucracy which the government ownership of American railroads would make inevitable. I can see nothing but folly in a policy which would call for government loans of billions of dollars to purchase the railroads and which would entail the loss of billions of dollars in mismanagement and corruption under the political control after the roads had been taken over by the federal and state governments."

Dr. Schurman would add to the general interest of his lecture if he would describe the "bureaucracy" established by the postal department. He might also give an estimate of the amount of money lost in the postal department through "mismanagement and corruption."

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### ENTERING WEDGES

The conduct of the republican leaders with respect to the ship subsidy bill and the asset currency bill is in keeping with their conduct toward all measures of that class.

In 1896 the republican leaders declared in favor of international bimetalism and then after they had won their victory, they interpreted the result as an indorsement of the single gold standard. Four years later they boldly declared for the single gold standard. Nearly every republican orator in the country has assured us for a number of years that there was no danger whatever of the passage of any measure like the asset currency bill.

The republican habit is to keep these measures before the people, denying responsibility for them for a time and finally, when they think it opportune, they boldly embrace the plan, seeking to justify their position on the ground of "great national necessity."

They have met this "great national necessity" by attempting to pass the Grosvenor ship subsidy bill which would have been but the forerunner of the greater ship subsidy bill for which the special interests have so long contended and the passage of the Aldrich currency bill which is the entering wedge for asset currency legislation.

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### SHIP SUBSIDY BILL BRIBERY

The constituents of every congressman who voted in favor of the ship subsidy bill will be interested in the serious yet undenied story told upon the floor of the house by Representative Birdsall of Iowa. The following report is taken from the Omaha World-Herald: "The inwardness of a story of attempted corruption of congressmen in the interest of the ship subsidy bill came out on the floor of the house today in a speech by Congressman Birdsall of Iowa in opposition to the subsidy measure. Early in the session the story got circulated in Washington that in the congressional campaign last fall the advocates of subsidy had made themselves offensive to congressmen whose support they were especially anxious to enlist. Among these was Mr. Hinshaw of Nebraska, to whom was sent a check for \$200 with the suggestion that it might be useful as a contribution to the campaign fund. Mr. Hinshaw sent it back. Report is that some other checks of the same sort were sent to other people, who didn't bother to return them. Anyhow the story has been threatening a sensation ever since the