

The Commoner.

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VOL. 10, NO. 18

Lincoln, Nebraska, May 13, 1910

Whole Number 486

Direct Legislation

The people of Nebraska are just now deeply interested in the initiative and referendum and they find that here as in other cases, the great reform is bitterly opposed by the representatives of special interests. In Nebraska it is opposed by the liquor interests whose representatives helped to defeat it at the last session of the Nebraska legislature. They are equally active in opposing it at this time. The initiative and referendum is in brief a method of bringing about direct legislation. It means the bringing of the government nearer to the people—the making of the government more responsive to the will of the people. The initiative, as its name implies, describes the governmental process by which the voters compel the submission of a question upon which they desire to vote; while the referendum, true to its name, describes the machinery by which a measure is referred to the people for their decision. The initiative and referendum do not overthrow representative government, they merely bring the representative under the control of his constituents. The people will not resort to the initiative and referendum so long as the legislators do their duty, and give voice to public sentiment. The initiative and referendum are, as it were, a club held over the representatives to compel them to recognize their responsibility and give expression to the wishes of those who elect them. Representatives will be more apt to vote for needed laws when they know that the people can secure these laws in spite of the legislature, and will secure them; and representatives will be restrained from voting for bad laws when they know that the voters themselves have the right of veto.

It is perfectly natural that sentiment in favor of the initiative and referendum should grow because the masses are democratic by instinct and by education. They may be deceived for a while by the special interests, but they can not be deceived always. As soon as they understand what the initiative and referendum are, and why they are proposed, they at once become advocates of them.

The sentiment in favor of the initiative and referendum is far stronger than any party, and it is not an exaggeration to say that if a vote could be taken among the people of any state, after a thorough discussion of the subject, no other reform now before the country would receive so large a percentage of the total vote.

In Missouri, for instance, the initiative and referendum were adopted by a large majority even though the state went republican, and republican states, like Oregon, South Dakota and Maine have adopted it, as well as a democratic state like Oklahoma. Even in Ohio the friends of the initiative and referendum came within a vote or two of securing the submission of the amendment. While it is impossible to fix with accuracy the date upon which any reform, however meritorious, will be secured, no

one who understands the trend of events will doubt that the initiative and referendum will spread until all the states have adopted it. Enough states have already acted favorably to prove that it is not limited by latitude or longitude. Maine in the east, Oregon in the west, South Dakota in the north, Oklahoma in the south and Missouri in the center—these states represent extremes in every sense, and yet they are one in recognizing the strength of the argument in favor of direct legislation.

THE DEMOCRATIC SPIRIT

The Commoner commends to the consideration of its readers the spirit shown by Hon. John E. Lamb in his fight in the Indiana convention. He was a candidate for the United States senate and his services to the party justified him in aspiring to that honorable position. He believes in honest politics and in daylight democracy, and when Governor Marshall came out in favor of the nomination of a senator by the state convention Mr. Lamb immediately joined him in the fight and was the governor's right-hand man. It did not matter to Lamb that he had to attack with vigor those who were attempting to force the party into an indefensible position. He put principle above his own interests, and fought with the courage of a gladiator. The battle was won, and the democracy of Indiana was saved from humiliation.

It was only natural that his friends would expect him to enjoy the fruits of the victory to which he had so largely contributed, but another factor entered into the contest. Kern had been betrayed two years ago, and the indignation of the democrats throughout the state was such that they demanded the nomination of Kern as a vindication of honest politics, as well as a reward for his long continued and distinguished services. When Lamb saw that this was the temper of the convention he withdrew and threw his influence to Kern. Like a true democrat he emerges from the contest without soreness and without loss of interest in politics. In an interview he says: "The convention acted wisely. The enmities incurred by me would have followed me through the contest, while Mr. Kern will go into the fight with a united party and will be triumphantly elected to the United States senate."

This utterance is just what Mr. Lamb's friends expected from him. He is brave in battle and unruffled by defeat. If his heart had been set upon his own advancement he could not have been so sweet-tempered when he saw his ambition thwarted, but as his heart was set on larger things he was happy in the belief that another might bear the standard to victory, and that triumph is to him a sufficient reward. Would that we had more Lambs in the democratic party—more who are as steadfast during the conflict and as serene in defeat!

UNDEMOCRATIC

The readers of The Commoner will remember that in a recent issue a table was given showing that a number of democratic editors had expressed a preference for ex-President Roosevelt as the democratic candidate. While The Commoner is not informed as to the reasons which lead the democratic editors to express a preference for Mr. Roosevelt, it ventures to say that at present there is no indication that the suggestion will be taken seriously. While Mr. Roosevelt has stood for some things that are democratic he stands for so many things that are undemocratic that he is not likely to aspire to be or be accepted as the standard bearer of the democratic party.

WHO ARE THEY?

Mr. Aldrich says that he has enough votes to carry the railroad bill, and among the number includes "a number of democratic senators" who, according to Senator Aldrich, stand ready to oppose the amendment which the progressives have been presenting. All right, let us get another look at the Aldrich democrats. They are becoming pretty well known, but another exhibit of them would not hurt. It tends to impress their names upon the public memory.

The King's Last Words

The last words uttered by King Edward were: "I think I have done my duty." What greater consolation can one have, when the shadows of life are closing about him, than to feel that he has bravely borne the responsibilities of life and conscientiously performed his duty?

The mother looks back over a long life of service, recalls the infancy of her children and their growth into manhood and womanhood, remembers how she has labored to develop character as well as brain power, and feels that she has done her duty, even if her children have not measured up to her hopes and expectations.

The father, too, finds consolation in the consciousness that he has done his duty, even though wayward sons have brought his gray hairs down in sorrow to the grave, if he has set an example worthy of imitation and, by wise counsel, done all within his power to guide his children aright.

And the citizen, also, must rest for comfort in the closing hours upon the conviction that he has lived up to the obligations imposed upon him by citizenship—has been true to every public trust and has not shirked the voter's duty.

The pathos of death reaches its maximum when one enters the unknown world distracted by the mocking memory of fleeting pleasures purchased by sin; even those who find that they have done their duty can approach the grave "like one who wraps the drapery of his couch about him and lies down to pleasant dreams."

TURN ON THE LIGHT

The press dispatches report that three members of the Illinois legislature have confessed to receiving pay for their vote for Lorimer in the senatorial contest of last year. This is very gratifying news. Everyone who has known anything of the contest has felt certain that it was one of the most corrupt senatorial contests that has disgraced the political history of this country. The Commoner said at the time that the reason for the conduct of these democrats would probably develop later.

The trouble about such cases is that it is difficult to get actual proof of bribery even when the suspicion amounts to a practical certainty. In the Illinois case the facts have now been secured, and the prosecution should be carried to the end. As it is much more important to punish the bribe-givers than those who receive the bribes, it might be well for the prosecution to offer immunity to those who would come in at once and acknowledge their guilt and assist in the prosecution of the big offenders. This was done in Pittsburg, and it resulted in unearthing one of the worst municipal scandals that the press has had to record. Mercy can well be shown to the weak men who yielded to temptation and sold their votes if through leniency to them the crime can be fixed upon the men higher up and justice be meted out to those who corrupt on a large scale.

MR. JUSTICE HUGHES

In a speech delivered at St. Louis, President Taft resented with some show of bitterness Mr. Bryan's suggestion that Governor Hughes of New York has been too closely identified with corporations and with the ideas for which corporations stand to warrant the people in great rejoicing over his appointment to the supreme bench.

Mr. Bryan is not the only one that must be called to task on this point. For instance, the income tax amendment was defeated in the New York legislature and the Albany correspondent for the New York World said that this undesirable result was brought about by "the combination of Hughes reform leaders and the 'straight goods' republican bosses formed to prevent the endorsement of the income tax amendment."

In the weekly financial review issued by W. E. Hutton & Co., and printed in the Cincinnati Enquirer of Sunday May 1, the following appeared:

"The new week opened rather better than the

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