

as the removal of state capitals and county seats; the issue of state, county, and municipal bonds; the adoption of city charters, local option, municipal ownership of public utilities, etc., etc.

"Manifestly, the truth is, if the people are fit to delegate power, they are fit to exercise power primarily.

"If such a change is made in our fundamental law as will permit the people at the ballot box to approve or reject certain legislation, those having private interests to serve will not infest these chambers or obstruct the public business. Moreover, the legislature and executive will exercise more care as to the nature of the measures passed and approved if the voters have the power to demand that their voices be heard at the ballot box directly upon these measures.

"I accordingly recommend the submission of a constitutional amendment, providing for direct legislation, in substance and form like the Oregon amendment.

"The professional lobbyist has, I regret to say, become one of the features of legislative assemblies. Do not understand me to suggest that the halls of legislation should be inaccessible to either the individual or the corporation. The lobbyist, however, who is for anything or against anything for hire, whose mission is to promote one measure or defeat another, who haunts the chambers of legislation and taints this atmosphere with his corrupt designs, who sends for members for interviews in the cloak room, who carries a tally sheet and watches for roll call, who shadows the members at their homes and hotels, injecting at all hours and at all places his poison into the public service, is a criminal, whose approach is an insult, and to whom the doors of the capital should never swing inward.

"The initiative and referendum would abolish both.

"It is urged against the initiative and referendum that if it were adopted, only a few of the voters, comparatively, would vote on the questions submitted. I believe this would not be true if the measures so submitted were placed on separate ballots as already suggested.

"One admirable feature of direct legislation is that it would often accomplish good results without being used.

"Before concluding this subject I wish to disclaim in emphatic language any reflection or knowledge which would justify reflection upon the assembly or any member of it. I speak for the future—a future pregnant with hope and fear. No man can tell what the unrestrained modifications now going on in the world of finance, commerce, and transportation may bring forth, what riff-raff the ebb and flow of politics may drift into places of honor and public trust. Against these contingencies, it seems prudent to prepare, while we may, for a system which will put into the possession of the people the constitutional machinery by which eight per cent of the voters can resurrect a good measure which has been summarily pigeon-holed, and by which five per cent of the voters could stop the operation of a bad law until a sovereign people can pass upon it at the ballot box. This, in my opinion, would be an effective check on the killing of good bills and the passage of bad ones.

"Direct legislation has been in operation in South Dakota several years, yet it has never been appealed to; a fact urged against the measure, but, in reality a strong argument in its favor.

"It remains, just the same, a 'flaming sword' in the hands of the people, constantly reminding the unscrupulous lobby and the designing 'boss' that there is a reserve power which, when the occasion demands, can and will be brought into requisition."

Hon. Charles N. Herreid, while governor of South Dakota:

"Since the referendum has been a part of our constitution, we have had no chartermongers or railroad speculators, no wildcat schemes submitted to our legislatures. Formerly our time was occupied by speculative schemes of one kind and another, but since the referendum has been a part of our constitution, these people do not press their schemes on the legislature, and hence there is no necessity for having recourse to the referendum."

Governor Coe I. Crawford, of South Dakota, a republican, and now a member of the United States senate:

"This provision works well in South Dakota and meets with the approval of a great majority of our people, including the most thoughtful

and intelligent. About one-third of our population is foreign-born, but, as a rule, our foreign voters are intelligent and law-abiding citizens and quickly learn the English language and adapt themselves to the customs of the country.

"While we have had the initiative and referendum for a number of years, it has been invoked on a very few occasions. Notwithstanding, it is a tremendous check upon legislative wrongs."

Governor William T. Cobb, of Maine, a republican, in his annual message of 1907:

"The belief in the soundness and efficacy of the principle of the initiative and referendum as a means to enable the citizens to express more directly and promptly their opinions of proposed legislation has become very general in Maine, and has been recognized in the platforms of both political parties. We may safely assume, therefore, that these declarations were made in good faith, and I heartily approve the adoption of a measure that shall give them a practical and binding effect."

From message of Lucius F. C. Garvin, governor of Rhode Island, January, 1903:

"Not only should the people of the state be proffered an opportunity to make a new constitution, but a reasonable minority of the people should also be given the right to propose amendments to the organic law. In this way only can a constitution keep pace with the needs of a progressive civilization. Against the conferring of this power, which is in complete accord with the American doctrine of republican government, no possible argument can be made except that the qualified electors are incapable of governing themselves.

"I therefore recommend the passage, by this general assembly, of a joint resolution proposing a constitutional amendment, which shall provide that a number of electors, not in excess of 5,000, shall be empowered to propose future specific amendments to the constitution and to have them submitted directly to the people for their adoption or rejection by majority vote."

In his message the following year, 1904, Governor Garvin said:

"For several years an amendment to the constitution, so drawn as to confer upon 5,000 voters the power to propose future constitutional amendments, has been before the general assembly. Two years ago the passage of that amendment was petitioned for by twenty-eight organizations in the state, including labor, reform, and religious bodies, representing many thousands of citizens. Upon these petitions no action whatever was taken.

"Experience elsewhere proves that the power conferred upon the electorate in the popular initiative is eminently safe. It has resulted in a gradual and careful progress, and could not possibly lead to such revolutionary follies as irrevocable laws, or the transfer of the appointing power from the executive to one branch of the legislature.

"In view of the wide demand, and in view of its intrinsic merits, I ask you, gentlemen, to give to this wholly non-partisan measure due consideration, and I feel that in so doing no good reason will be found for its rejection. Certainly no one who has faith in a government by the people can logically object to the constitutional initiative."

Message of Governor George W. Donaghey, of Arkansas, January, 1909:

"I recommend that you submit to the people a constitutional amendment providing for the initiative and referendum. I regard such a step a most just protection for a democratic constituency. The sovereign people should have the right to demand any law they want through the initiative, and annul any act by use of the referendum; and the servants of the people should never be backward in granting them the privilege to exercise this prerogative."

ALASKA'S PLEA

Hereinafter will be found a plea issued by the Alaska Territorial club setting forth the claims of Alaska to territorial government. The democratic party declared for a territorial government in its last platform and there is no doubt that the democrats of the nation believe that Alaska is entitled to territorial government. The president, however, and those who are in his confidence, seem to oppose it, and Alaska may have to remain a dependency without a

voice in her own affairs until the democratic party is returned to power:

"It is always with a glow of pride that an American gazes upon the 'stars and stripes.' To this citizen the flag is emblematical of a government by and for the people; to him it signifies a guarantee of those rights and of that liberty for which heroes fought and died in the dawn of our country's history, and to maintain which thousands of men would willingly yield their lives today. Against the denial to them of these fundamental American rights the Alaskans protest, regarding it as contrary to the spirit of our free institutions.

"In the early days, attracted by the lure of gold, many adventurous spirits penetrated into the vast and, to them, practically unknown territory of Alaska. Since then, many other natural resources have been discovered, and various industries sprung into existence. The isolated miner's cabin is now replaced by towns and villages, the blazed trail by wagon roads and railways. From every state in the union, the wives, children, kin, and friends of the first settlers, have come to join them, and helped establish the prosperous communities now dotting every part of the territory. Not mere nomads, these, whose only desire is to get the land of her treasures and then to leave forever, but a permanent population, often following the same vocations pursued in the home state, and living a life similar to that of the average American.

"They have made their homes in Alaska, are carrying on the great work of civilization, bearing cheerfully the discomforts that are the lot of all pioneers; rendering fertile the hitherto unproductive soil; discovering and exploiting the hidden wealth that will prove a blessing to this and to the coming generations; doing their duty as men and women of a progressive nation. Reared amidst free institutions, taught from childhood the value of their rights and privileges as American citizens, they are deprived of, and lose many of those rights when they set foot on Alaskan soil.

"The greater number of Alaskans are adverse to the appointment (as President Taft recommends) of a council to govern the territory, and look upon the proposed election of a minority of that council by the residents of Alaska, as a mere expression of the people's wishes, conferring no power whatsoever to give these wishes effect. No matter how well intentioned strangers may be, they can not possibly know the needs and requirements of a country as do its citizens; the very idea of a legislature, except through proper elective representation, is abhorrent to our natural instincts, and seems contrary to the tenets of our American creed.

"Alaska has a permanent population of over sixty-five thousand white people; a population greater than that of Oregon, Washington, or Dakota, at the time of their being granted territorial government, and greater than that of Wyoming when admitted to statehood. This population is not composed of Indians and felons; but of white Americans, who have done nothing to incur the forfeiture of their rights as citizens. They do not want dictators appointed to rule over them; they do want a local, representative form of government. They know, understand and love Alaska; Alaska with her splendid scenery, her magnificent distances, her towering snow-capped mountains, her majestic rivers, her fertile fields, her great industries of fish, fur, and timber; Alaska with her immense wealth in gold, copper, iron and coal—mineral wealth beyond the dreams of the most imaginative; Alaska with her loyal and God-fearing and patriotic American citizens; with her churches and schools, her towns and villages; her great harbors, her innumerable lakes and countless cascades.

"In the name of all these and more, in the name of justice and the glory of our institutions, Alaska demands the right of home rule, of local self government, and the rights of the territories.

"ALASKA TERRITORIAL CLUB,
By Charles G. Garty, Secretary.
"I. D. FLYNN, President.
"Valdez, Alaska."

The American Homestead, a monthly farm journal of national scope, will be sent to all Commoner subscribers, without additional cost, who renew their subscriptions during the month of May. Take advantage of this offer at once and send in your renewal.