

### If the People Rule Why Don't They Get What They Want?

#### TRY YOUR HAND AT THIS

In his great speech delivered in the United States senate Senator Owen of Oklahoma asked, "If the people really rule why don't the people get what they want?"

The Commoner will be glad to print brief answers to this question.

Make your answer brief and to the point.

This question is in reality the most important question that may be considered by the American people. Plainly something is wrong with the American government; plainly the people do not get what they want although they are presumed to rule. What is the matter? The Commoner readers have the opportunity of contributing to the solution of this problem.—(From The Commoner of June 17.)

J. E. Keverline, President, Pa.—My answer to Senator Owen's question is: Because most of the people do not try hard enough. This holds good in more than politics, but always ends in the nation's welfare.

Sterling T. Bond, St. Louis, Mo.—My answer to the question is because the people are led astray by that fundamental fallacy, "principles, not men." "Principles and men" should be the battle cry and pole star of all our actions. Principles of government never were and never will be stronger or better than the strongest and wisest public men and servants of the nation.

Claude L. Cloger, Editor Sharp County Record, Evening Shade, Ark.—Senator Owen's question is a very pertinent one. No one can attempt to answer this query without becoming entangled in the fact that the people do not rule. If the people did rule, the people would have what they want. However, if recent events are not deceptive, machine rule is on tottering ground and in line for a rebuke long overdue.

J. Q. Robins, Tupelo, Miss.—Because the representatives of special interests in public and semi-public positions deceive many people as to the true conditions. The people do not get what they want because they do not know the facts, and they do not know the facts because they allow the agents and representatives of special interests to fill the public offices, and allow the means of information, the metropolitan press, to be controlled by the special interests.

Rev. S. T. Davis, Argentine, Kan.—First, they do not vote for what they want. The ballot rules. They vote party instead of "want." Second, they read only one side. They ought to read The Commoner and other papers and get posted. Oh, men! will you think? Third, too many have lost the spirit of piety and patriotism, instead of "give me liberty or give me death." Fourth, too many put the dollar above the man—dollars above liberty. Fifth, the liquor men hold the balance of power and use it. They elect too many men, a majority. Sixth, but truth will prevail, sure as God is God.

J. S. Wailes, M. D., Mystic, Ia.—If the people really rule why don't they get what they want? First, the people don't rule. Second, the reason they don't get what they want is because they don't rule, and the reason they don't rule is because they have not evolved out of ignorance into a stage of common horse sense. To begin with, we declared all men were born free and equal, etc., and fought seven years to maintain that idea and then at once we enslaved a whole race. We declared taxation without representation was unjust and fought seven years to prove our sincerity in that doctrine and then disfranchised one-half of our own race. But let no one be discouraged, for necessity has ever been the mother of invention, and it will be so to the end of time. We now allow thousands of idiots, paupers and moral degenerates to vote and disfranchise millions of intelligent, virtuous taxpayers, and our great statesmen, politicians, and public orators (I here include W. J. Bryan) either approve of it or say nothing at all. When we get the initiative and referendum and recall and elect all officers by direct ballot of the people, not only senators but all court judges, and make a national constitution that favors the masses and not the grafters, then we will get what we want, not before. Just as long as candidates for office

can promise one thing in the campaign and do just the opposite after they are in office and draw their pay and serve their time out the people won't get what they want, neither will they rule. The initiative, referendum and recall is absolutely the only thing that will put the people in the saddle. The initiative, referendum and recall should apply from president, and supreme court down to road boss. Let the people rule, or come off the dump—let them shoot or give up the gun, and anoint a king. Roosevelt would be a good one; he loves to strut before the kings so well. Cannon or Aldrich would be better—for the special interests. We have been fiddling for self government for 135 years, have we made any progress?

Charles Cottrell, Pensacola, Florida.—How are we to know what the people want? A majority, as shown by the result of the last national election, were in favor of the program of the g. o. p.—a more or less hazy promise as to tariff revision—against the guarantee of bank deposits, etc. It seems almost impossible to get an expression of the real thoughts and desires of the people at the ballot box. So many counter influences are at work—misinformation, intimidation, threats of those who wield power in the business world to produce "bad times" if times are good, or to make "times worse" if "times are bad." The average voter not being any too well informed, therefore, not sure of his own conclusions, falls an easy victim to the persuasion and eloquent tone of those who have a great deal at stake, and they are very persistent in their advocacy of the policies that will work to their profit. If the people don't get what they want, I fear it is because they don't tell what they want. They at least get what they vote for—legislation by the republican party.

S. H. Record, Worcester, Mass.—The people do not really rule. The people do not make the laws. They never did. The most they can do is to vote for somebody else to make the laws for them. The representatives (?) elected by the people to enact laws, make such laws as the monied interests make it for the representative's personal interest to enact. Our revolutionary fathers rebelled because they were taxed without representation. We are taxed still more severely than they and to an alarming extent under misrepresentation. Count Tolstoy is quoted as saying that "The only salvation of a democratic form of government is more democracy." It is safe to predict that the people will never get what they want unless they take into their own hands the veto power of bad laws, and the initiation of righteous laws, by the initiative and referendum, and the power to recall their representatives when they fail to discharge faithfully the duties for which they were elected. But the people can not expect to "get what they want" so long as a large minority of our chosen law makers are "bought and sold like fish in the market."

"W. W.," Minneapolis, Minn.—In answering this question, it is not wide of the mark to say that the people do not rule. Such a statement is no dodge. If I were to assume that the people rule, I should assume a political falsehood. The common law, which is supposed to embody the perfection of reason, places as a vested right all public utilities in monarchical governments in the hands of the sovereign; in republics, in the hands of the people. Here the people have divested themselves of these vested rights, and conferred them upon private individuals—creating special privileges to the few, and disfranchising the many. This fact raises the question, "Are the people capable of self-government?" Look at it. Who controls our 125,000 miles of inter-state railways, representing thirteen billions of dollars of capital, with nearly 2,000,000 employees; 8,000 national banks, controlling the people's money; nearly 1,000,000 government pensioners drawing \$160,000,000 from the treasury; 60,000 federal postmasters; the patronage of thirty-seven states with no limit to revenue, and 5,000 millionaires with 300 trusts capitalized at seven billions of dollars. Why, private parties direct and control this immense power, and more, there is not a public man of prominence in congress who dares to suggest that the people take control of public utilities. And yet every man of common sense knows that the use of this immense power enables the private persons to form trusts and to dictate laws for the government of the country. Thirty-two states have asked congress to let the people elect United States senators. The senate can be controlled in the interest of mon-

opolies; if a few republicans gig, a few dollars can fill the gap with honest democratic members. The question asked is too broad for 100 words to answer. But one fact is certain in my opinion, namely, that the grip which monopolists have upon the legislation of the country, will never be loosened without bloody revolution. Today the dominant party has more than four millions of veteran voters, who are subject to the orders of the 100 men who control the thousands of millions of capital invested in monopolies and trusts. These are let loose on the remaining twelve millions at a general election and the result is certain—for money and numbers will tell. They naturally combine against the people and rob them while pretending to advance their interests. It must be admitted, however, that its men who control our vast public utilities have wonderfully brought to the surface the vast wealth of the earth while pocketing by means of transportation the profits arising therefrom. Let me add with public ownership of public utilities, lock-outs and quarrels between unionists and non-unionists would cease. But possibly greater evils might develop. In the meantime, let us wait until our masters give us a chance to vote for United States senators.

A. F. Allen, Vinland, Kan.—The people do not rule and any man who knows what our financial system really is knows why the people do not rule. The use of money is by legal enactment made a necessity. Government compels its use but refuses to make it available. The people surrender all authority when they surrender the control of money to private parties while leaving themselves under a legal obligation of obtaining it for use, and that an obligation which requires them to surrender all they possess of other utilities if they fail to obtain money for use. A product rightfully belongs to the party who produces it. Government produces money, gives it all the efficacy as a medium of exchange which it possesses and stands behind it to make it good. Government is the only party that should be recognized as the absolute owner of money. As the government requires the use of this government product government should be held responsible for its availability. This most important tool of civilization is without a responsible source of supply. No party is held responsible to the people for a supply and still less is any party held responsible for its availability. Let your readers study the relation of this fact to the business and the politics of the country and they will know "what is the matter."

G. M. Alves, Henderson, Ky.—The fact is, contrary to general belief, the people do not really rule in our country. Aside from occasional matters, our people have no opportunity to register their wishes on questions of government or public policy. We continuously boast of a popular government, ignorant of the knowledge, that almost every constitutional government in Europe furnishes better opportunity for its people to make their wishes felt. There, when proposed measures do not meet with success in their legislatures, resignations take place, and the particular measures by new elections are submitted to the people. Here, such methods are impossible. Our forms of government are iron-clad and unyielding. About all the average man can do is to take his choice of certain candidates, which he probably had no voice in setting up, and of whom he likely knows nothing of how they will vote on particular public measures. Clearly, if the people in this country are ever to really rule, then some means must be devised of submitting important legislation to their direct votes. In the meantime, not in any pessimistic spirit, but in a spirit of candid truth let us acknowledge that in our country the wishes of the people find little effect—that as a government ours is weak in the sense of being by the people.

A. B. Choate, Minneapolis, Minn.—It is said of President Taft that he is an amiable, good man, surrounded by men who know just what they want. This description of Taft suggests the answer to the question. The men who surround President Taft get what they want because they know just what they want, unite in demanding it and make it uncomfortable for office holders if they don't get it. The people don't get what they want, because they don't know just what they want, and are contending among themselves about what they ought to have and thus give public officials an excuse for giving them nothing