

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

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 has received many replies to this question and some of these are hereinafter printed:

Lorenzo G. Warfield, Editor National Democrat, Washington, D. C.—The reason the people do not rule is because they lack organization. That can be remedied by co-operation with the National Democratic Association, whose war cry is agitation, education, organization. This association aims to form its membership in every voting precinct of the United States, and through them agitate, educate, organize; then, and only then, will the people rule—by this and kindred organizations.

George Hall, Newport, R. I.—How can the people rule when those who vote identify themselves with a party, thereby leaving the party to think for them, when a man places the issue before the party and reasons for himself then the people will rule and not until then. We may then look for popular vote for the president and senators, initiative and referendum, and what is better than all, Henry George's single tax.

E. S. Smith, Fairfield, Fla.—This nation is afflicted with an aggravated case of deplorable I's, to-wit: Indifference, Ignorance and Infernal Iniquity. I trust the foregoing is sufficient brief.

Arthur E. Carr, Seattle, Wash.—Because the people do not stand united, upon the great questions of the day, and rule, as is their privilege and their duty, with a spirit of eternal vigilance. In too many cases the spirit of vigilance has been supplanted by a spirit of indifference toward the great problems of government which are before the people for solution. The people are continually selling their birthright for a mess of pottage.

Daniel Lamb, Chesaw, Wash.—The people rule and do get what the people want because P. T. Barnum once had said "that the American people like to be humbugged." Now to insist on what the people want is merely to continue what they are getting, viz., humbug; they really want it.

T. L. Singleton, Colusa, Calif.—Do the people rule? "Nay, Pauline." Do they get what they want? Yes, in the neck. Reason: why, indifference; they are hugging the old delusive phantom of hope.

F. W. Phelps, Editor American Labor Journal, Seattle, Wash.—Because a large majority of the peoples' trusted representatives are of thin stuff and immediately offer their political birthright to be slaughtered on the bargain counter; the honest people are in the majority though the dishonest representatives manage to, in some way, deceive them.

A. M. Frick, Portsmouth, O.—Because those to act for us in public life are chosen from among those aspiring for the positions, whereas our duties should be to decide on the ones wanted to so act, thus secure their place on the ticket, and later the service of one receiving the greatest popular demand. No person who aspires to a public office should receive the support of the people, the ones who are regarded competent, should be petitioned by the citizens to become candidates to act for them in public affairs.

J. H. Haughwout, Fairmont, Nebr.—The people do not get what they want because they are not "the effective voters." Many are controlled more by party prejudice than principle. While the interests have no party, they elect the man they want and see that he does what they want done; the people elect their party candidate and think because he is of their party all will be well and look no farther to his actions, and in many instances he is bought or otherwise influenced to do the bidding of the interests. This suggests as a remedy the making binding of platform pledges, questioning of candidates and the recall. The initiative and

referendum seems the most effective means in sight of getting what people want in state affairs, which should be backed by the recall in state officers and should extend to congressmen and United States senators. Then when we have an official that does what the people want he should be kept and not turned down on some side issue trumped up by the interests.

D. L. Braucher, Lincoln, Ill.—Well, to my mind, that is comparatively easy. Of course "the people rule." It would humiliate our dignity to "fess up" to the contrary. When younger I was something of a player of checkers. It frequently occurred that I found myself pitted against a novice who could never get a game except I gave it away, and in order to make it interesting it was proposed to play "a give-away game," and I could nearly always beat at that. You see the point without further elucidation. All these years we have been playing "a give-away game" with the trusts, and they accept the honor. We have the least sense for a nation of intelligent (?) people of any on earth. When we play in earnest we can win every game, but to do so we must sidetrack traitors.

L. A. Francis, Beloit, Wis.—The answer is found in the action of the insurgents. They have completely dismantled the secret. Party not principle secures the votes. Every insurgent voted in 1908 against that for which he is now clamoring. The democratic party under the leadership of Mr. Bryan offered them all they are now demanding but the offer was rejected and thus the people rule and though they do not get what they want they get what they vote for. We reap what we sow.

William H. Dech, Ithaca, Neb.—Because the class is organized and the mass is not a disciplined army pitted against a mob. But we must not fail to take cognizance of the fact that while the masses are seemingly organized, in church, political parties, and other organizations, these organizations are made the whippers in for the parent capitalistic organization. This with few exceptions, king craft, money craft and church craft, is the trio that has dictated the policies of the nations; they are the crutches on which hamestranged humanity leans.

J. C. Padgett, Independence, Va.—The people really do not rule. The American ballot box is intimidated and controlled by predatory wealth. We have reached the commercial age; our government is a monarchy and gold is king.

Dr. J. D. Reilly, Milton, N. D.—One of the reasons why the people do not get what they want is the farmer vote. Farmers do not analyze the situation, and are not organized and despite the fact that as consumers they pay most of tariff, encourage trust exactions, on account of expansion of land values, and the prices of farm products. They are willing to put off the day of reckoning. The remedy is, organize the farmer.

Clarence Martinie, Palo Alto, Calif.—Because the people do not really rule; they appear to rule, but underlying the surface the worm of corporate greed is eating out the core of the nation. The people are not represented by honest, conscientious, upright men who dare to be true to their government. Our congress is controlled by the trusts of the country. The republican party hands out to the people a crust with a plum upon it and gives the pie to their retainers in office. Direct legislation by the people in every form and a purely democratic government will get for the people what they want.

A. E. Merchant, Deer Creek, Ill.—On the vital questions of government, such as tariff, trusts, income tax, postal savings, etc., the great mass of the people are a unit, and if their wishes were exercised all of these questions which are now settled wrong would be settled right. The one thing that prevents this is the strong party prejudice of the voter; when he goes to cast his ballot, instead of looking for reasons why he should not vote the party ticket of his father or grandfather, he at once commences to find excuses as to why he should vote the same ticket they have and, like a drowning man, grasps the first straw coming his way, using it as an excuse for remaining with the old ship. Politicians understand this phase of human nature, and proceed to make promises, apparently, fair to the people, but with no intention of allowing them to go any farther than the stump of a campaign and the voter in his eagerness to remain

with the old party is tickled to death in finding some unreasonable excuse for casting the same old ticket, whereas if he had looked for reasons why he should not have voted the old ticket, he would probably have discovered that that same old party has always by its actions while in power stood for just the opposite of what he now desires and that with each succeeding victory has grown more arrogant with less regard for the desires of the people. This, in my opinion, is the main reason the people do not get what they want.

W. H. Williams, Toronto, Kan.—P. T. Barnum said the American people liked to be humbugged; as evidence that they prefer to be look at the thousands who would return Roosevelt to the head of affairs nationally again. It would not be surprising for an old standpatter, but alas, when a bright intellect like LaFollette can be fooled by him, what of the average citizen?

Daniel Kiefer, Cincinnati, O.—It is not quite correct to say in answer that the people do not rule, but it is very nearly so. Popular rule in the United States is subjected to so many restrictions and limitations that it can only be exercised with great difficulty. That is one reason why the people do not get what they want. Another is that many of their desires are contradictory. They want the trusts abolished and cost of living reduced; at the same time they want the protective tariff retained. They want transportation charges to be fair and reasonable, but they also want railroads to remain in the hands of private corporations. They want good times and high wages, but they also want natural resources to remain private property, and they furthermore favor the taxation of industry and its products. They want freedom, but they also want a lot of restrictive laws, arbitrarily regulating nearly everything under the sun. They want graft eliminated from the government, but at the same time want all kinds of opportunities for graft to remain in official hands and even demand the creation of new opportunities of the same kind. To get what they want, the people must not only discard all restrictions from the free exercise of their will, but they must also cease to harbor desires which can not be fulfilled without interfering with the fulfillment of other desires.

Thomas A. Ames, Clinton, Wis.—It reminds me of the question, why is one political party all right and another all wrong? When my political opponent sprung this on me I thought of no other way to enlighten him but to let him answer it himself; so I asked him why an ox was so much quicker than lightning? Quickly and thoughtlessly he said "it ain't." I said your answer is correct for both. It was said that one man could always get just exactly what he wanted if he always exercised good judgment and didn't want what he could not get. If a man rules in hell he ought not to pretend that he wants to serve in heaven. If the people really rule they can not, they can not get both graft and square deal.

William W. Carder, Green Spring, W. Va.—In answer to the first question, I can say conscientiously that the people do not rule. Why they do not rule and get what they want, because the people do not read and study the Bible enough irrespective of creed, so as to impress upon their minds the greatness of God and how to live the lives we should live, so as to become good citizens, which will cause us to take more interest in our republic so as to make it one of the best on earth. The people do not take an interest in the question as to what is the best for them and their government and ask their representatives to do what they should have done in the way of making laws for the benefit and good of all the people, and ask each candidate before he is nominated and elected what he or they stand for, also ascertain if they are doing their best to secure in the way of legislation after they are elected what they promised the people before they were elected. Before election, some of the people get a little interested in their government, but after it is all over, they become quiet, do not feel interested, but leave it all to the politician to fix things to suit themselves and not for the people. The people are money mad and wild, throw all their Christianity and interest aside, that they should have in their government for the sake of the dollar. If the people would interest themselves in what they should have in the way of legislation, they would get it, and we would have a Christian republic as it can not be a good one for the people unless it be a Christian