

The Commoner.

ISSUED WEEKLY

Entered at the Postoffice at Lincoln, Nebraska, as second-class matter.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN Editor and Proprietor
 RICHARD L. METCALFE Associate Editor
 CHARLES W. BRYAN Publisher
 Editorial Rooms and Business Office 324-330 South 12th Street

One Year.....\$1.00
 Six Months......50
 In Clubs of Five or more, per year... .75
 Three Months..... .25
 Single Copy..... .05
 Sample Copies Free.
 Foreign Post. 5c Extra.

SUBSCRIPTIONS can be sent direct to The Commoner. They can also be sent through newspapers which have advertised a clubbing rate, or through local agents, where sub-agents have been appointed. All remittances should be sent by postoffice money order, express order, or by bank draft on New York or Chicago. Do not send individual checks, stamps or money.

DISCONTINUANCES—It is found that a large majority of our subscribers prefer not to have their subscriptions interrupted and their files broken in case they fail to remit before expiration. It is therefore assumed that continuance is desired unless subscribers order discontinuance, either when subscribing or at any time during the year.

PRESENTATION COPIES—Many persons subscribe for friends, intending that the paper shall stop at the end of the year. If instructions are given to that effect they will receive attention at the proper time.

RENEWALS—The date on your wrapper shows the time to which your subscription is paid. Thus January 21, '10, means that payment has been received to and including the last issue of January, 1910. Two weeks are required after money has been received before the date on wrapper can be changed.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS—Subscribers requesting a change of address must give old as well as new address.

ADVERTISING—Rates will be furnished upon application.

Address all communications to

THE COMMONER, Lincoln, Neb.

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:

Frank H. Howe, Columbus, Ohio.—The people rule, but do not get what they want for the same reason that a parent can not get dutiful conduct from a spoiled child. Back in the "sixties" the republican party (the child) performed a splendid service for the parent (the people) and the indulgent parent has ever since believed the child could do no intentional wrong; and each time the child does a wrong act, and promises to do better next time, the parent withholds the proper punishment and gives the child new liberties. Once the parent did give the child a good spanking and sent it into the dark closet for awhile. Then its other child (the democratic party) was indulged, but disobeyed its parent by forsaking the tariff issue, for which it has been severely punished ever since. If the people want to rule all the time, the parent must ever keep before its children the necessity for doing that which the parent desires (this can be done with the initiative and referendum) and the certainty of punishment if the children do not obey, (this can be done with the recall). Until we can get the initiative and referendum text book and the recall switch into use we may expect that the "kids" will play "hookey," rob orchards, play marbles for keeps and do sundry other things that unruly children without a firm guiding hand are wont to do.

C. F. Michael, Hartford, Conn.—If anyone thinks today that anybody rules but the special interests they are indeed to be pitied. They own so completely both republican and democrat parties and the parties own so completely the voters, that to me the case looks hopeless. Let me illustrate my position. In the first place I want to say that I don't think there is a man living that admires Mr. Bryan more than I do, and when in the spring of 1904, before the national convention, Mr. Bryan gave his reason why Judge Parker was not eligible as a candidate for president on the democratic ticket in the columns of The Commoner, every word was

true and Mr. Bryan made the mistake of his life when, after the convention, he gave the lie to his utterances before the convention and swallowed Parker, gold brick and all. I only mention this to show what an awful thing this allegiance to party is. Had Mr. Bryan left the rotten crowd then, things would be entirely different now. The people need a Moses to lead them out of the wilderness, and I believe Mr. Bryan is the Moses, but we have lost eight years of valuable time by Mr. Bryan's sad mistake. If Mr. Bryan or any man like him should get the nomination on the democratic ticket two years hence he will have the whole gang of machine democrats against him and of course unless he should be elected by an overwhelming majority he will never be allowed to fill the office.

James K. McClung, Jackson, Ohio.—On this question the people, as a whole, may be divided into two classes—those who know and those who do not know what they are voting for or against. Of this latter class, the vast majority would make no mistake at the ballot box, if their want of knowledge on the issues was not taken advantage of during the campaign by the former class, and they blindly lead to do at the polls just what they would not do if left alone, and free to follow the bent of their own simple judgment as they in their simple honesty form them. The first class is the real danger class. They know; and they are the fellows who lead this common herd astray at the polls. Of this class is the present insurgents. Every one of these men have voted, at each presidential and congressional election ever since they have been voters to bring about the very condition of which they now complain; and at the last three elections when the question was squarely put they voted for the doctrine of the standpatters, not only that but were the cause of leading this honest, but ignorant class with them. The reason the people do not get what they want is because party with these insurgents is still dearer than principle. Between elections they wall hard of the iniquities of the standpatters, but on election day they forget it all, and vote for party. The remedy lies in these men forgetting party during the campaign, and at the ballot box, working as a unit for principle and voting as they speak. They will then take this class they have been deceiving into becoming a party asset with them, and then will elections begin to be carried for the people and the people will not only get what they want but rule in fact.

L. J. McDaniel, South Kankana, Wis.—In answer to Senator Owen's query, I will answer that there is, outside of the progressive element, a very small portion that know just what they want and get it through Cannon and Aldrich. The rest of the people don't know what they want, as is demonstrated at the polls. The American people like to be fooled; they enjoy it; they are for party not for principle. The question of today is, when shall the people rule?

Henry Baer, York, Neb.—Let us have the initiative and referendum and the power of recall, nation-wide, state and municipal, and the people will rule to such wide an extent as is possible in a peoples' government.

A. J. McDonald, Clayton, N. M.—The people do not get what they want, because they do not rule. The wealthy few rule by employing specialists in the science of government to obtain for them what they want. The people do not rule for several reasons: First, our political and industrial systems are so complicated that none but a specialist in their study can understand them. This makes it easy for one so inclined to mislead the people. Second, our competitive system makes it to the interest of one man or set of men to mislead another man or set of men. It makes it to the interest of the man or set first mentioned to make our political and industrial systems still more complicated, so that they may still further and more easily mislead the people. Third, this same haphazard competitive system of production and distribution causes the mere making of a living to occupy so much of a man's time that he has none left in which to acquire an understanding of the systems mentioned. Here again the self interest of the first mentioned class steps in and tries to lengthen the hours of labor and thus perpetuate ignorance. There is a vicious circle. The indifference of many, and the aloofness of others, are due largely to the above. Remedy: The initiative and the referendum, to bring the people at large closer to their law making; education to enable them to use

the initiative and the referendum to better and always better advantage; the elimination of the conflict of interests, and the simplification of our political and industrial systems, by means of a nearer, though of course gradual, approach to pure socialism.

J. Paul Jones, Kempton, Okla.—The people do not rule. Money rules. Money, the life blood of the nation, stamped and guaranteed by the government to be good, is absolutely controlled by private institutions. Interest should never reach a point higher than the necessary expense it takes to carry on the exchange. The government should control the output at cost and the money changer should be put to work at some useful avocation. As it is he is a blood sucker and a drone on society. Public ownership of public utilities must come and will come. The initiative and referendum and right of recall! Don't it look queer to us who have been clamoring so long for it to see democrats and even republicans advocating it? We were called crazy and wild-eyed, but it's different now.

R. H. Distin, Orange, Conn.—In answer to Senator Owen's query, "If the people rule why don't they get what they want?" would like to recall the proverb, the difference between a politician and a statesman is that a politician gives the people what they want and a statesman gives them what they need. If this is a proper diagnosis, should say they get what they want and then are not satisfied. However, in my mind it can be summed up in the fact that the people should have been misled by garrulous babbling, they have not yet learned to judge between a clear headed statesman on the one hand and a loquacious politician on the other.

J. D. Golightly, Winchester, Va.—The people do not rule. They pose as sovereigns of elections which sounds harmonious to the ear, but when they get their share of justice from the government it is broken to the sense. They get peonage instead; their sovereignty is a satire; they have no hold on the men they put in office; they do just as they like or are bought; there must be a law to recall all such servants as do not do what they are elected to do. The president has too much power and the people too little. If the question was put to the people, would you rather wear shoddy clothes than clothes made out of pure wool and cotton, surely they would choose the latter.

E. G. Kline, Hartville, Ohio.—As to Senator Owen's question, it appears to me that the people i. e., the majority, get exactly what they want. In our last national campaign one party promised tariff revision downward, the other revision only, the best definition for which was only, probably downward. They preferred the doubtful, and got it. Why buy seed of a dealer who says his seed is probably pure when you can get it of a dealer who guarantees his seed to be pure. No wonder Mr. Barnum said: "The American people like to be humbugged." I think one reason why the people do not get what they want is that too many people are "party blind." They read their own party papers only, attend only speeches of their own party. There are people who boast that they never voted a mixed ticket. If people would study both sides, there would soon be more independent voters. Then the initiative and referendum would be an assured thing, and then we could get what we want. I believe that in our independent vote lies our salvation. The only safe way now is to vote only for a candidate who will be bound by his platform, for if he will not say that before election he will surely not be bound by it if elected. People also become discouraged because they are betrayed so often, as is the case in Ohio now. If our convention would have endorsed a senatorial candidate, we would have a chance to say what we want and might get it, but as it is, in case of democratic success we might get what we don't want. The way to do, is to go to the primaries, attend the caucus, instruct delegates to conventions, obtain pledges from candidates that a platform is binding, study politics, and vote for the best interests of the country. Our country is greater than our party. Let those who see the truth work fearlessly for it, like Mr. Bryan is doing, and by and by we will know what we want, and get it.

"One Florida Cracker Subscriber," Haines City, Fla.—Seeing the answers of the Commoner's readers to Senator Gore's question, "Do the people rule?" I submit the following: Yes—ignorantly, carelessly and clumsily. The minority rules at present with the majority's consent.