

CURRENT TOPICS

EVERYWHERE DIRECT legislation is receiving encouragement. The Chicago Daily News prints this editorial: "Illinois democrats who met in Lincoln this week to consider methods of removing from the democratic party the taint of Lorimerism, like the citizens who attended the recent non-partisan conference in Peoria called to consider the breakdown of representative government in Illinois, gave approval to the initiative and the referendum. They are regarded as important aids in restoring to the people control of their government. There are conservative persons whose minds recoil from the idea of the initiative and the referendum, particularly the initiative. The referendum is already an established feature of American government. It is not new in principle. The only question involved is that of the extension of its application. The initiative is an importation from Switzerland, but it is a fitting companion to the referendum. Our legislative bodies are breaking down under the strain to which they are subjected. The effort to replace with strong and capable men the legislators who show signs of venality or weakness is not wholly successful. In Illinois we now have the spectacle of notorious grafters offering themselves to the voters for renomination and re-election. Further, the stories of corruption in the legislature have aroused in unfit men now without any legislative experience the desire to become members of a body that offers such opportunities for plunder. Some of the venal candidates doubtless will be successful in their ambitions, especially in view of the minority representation system which exists in this state. With the initiative and the referendum in operation the possibilities of plunder by men holding representative positions would be much restricted. The people would be in a position to assert themselves at any time."

AN ASTOUNDING tale of graft, affecting the management of the Illinois Central Railroad company was told at a hearing in Chicago before Roswell B. Mason, master in chancery. The Chicago Record-Herald's report follows: "A most astounding tale of graft was unfolded when Harold A. Sims, former traveling car inspector for the railroad and later in the employ of one of the five car repairing companies that are charged with the fraud, told in detail how the railroad furnished new cars to be torn to pieces for use in the building of one of the repair plants and the repair of old cars and then paid padded bills, not only for the work done, but also for the materials and time consumed in dismantling the new cars. To simplify the robbing of itself the railroad company induced Sims to enter the employ of the alleged robbers. Here are some of the things as disclosed by the evidence, that the alleged conspirators did: Dismantled Illinois Central freight cars to procure material to put into the construction of the plant of the Memphis Car company and then charged the Illinois Central road for repairing the dismantled cars. Took many parts from Illinois Central cars that were in good repair and used the parts to repair cars that were in bad order, charging the railroad company for the stolen parts. Repaired good order cars from which parts were stolen to repair bad order cars, charging the company with the material used in both and for the labor of robbing the cars as well as repairing them. Secured materials from the Illinois Central company's shops at Memphis with which to make repairs and then charged the Illinois Central for the material. Had much of the wood work necessary in the repair of cars done in the shops of the Illinois Central at Memphis and then charged the Illinois Central for doing the work for itself. Charged for repairing one-half the brakes that came in, irrespective of whether or not any brakes were repaired. Padded the bills for labor approximately forty per cent. Made a uniform charge for fourteen gallons of paint to a car, irrespective of whether any paint was used and regardless of the fact that a flat car requires only from two to three gallons. Sims, it appears, was the man who had charge of the repair yards of the Memphis Car company, which was the second company organized by Henry C. Ostermann with the alleged

view to defrauding the Illinois Central. When the investigation began Sims had quarreled with the manager of the car company and was living in Kansas City, where detectives found him and induced him to agree to turn state's evidence. The story as retailed by Sims disclosed such a 'raw' method of grafting that it was declared to be little short of marvelous that the conspiracy ran so long as it did without being discovered."

WILLIAM H. BERRY, former state treasurer of Pennsylvania is the new "keystone" party candidate for governor. Newspapers representing the Penrose republican machine charged that Berry had borrowed money from Guffey, a democratic "boss." Mr. Berry has issued a statement in which he says that these notes were given for money borrowed by him to fight extraordinary demands on the state treasury, incidental to his expose of the capitol steal. The state refused him an appropriation, so he spent his own money, he says, and then borrowed more. With this aid, he declares, he saved the state \$250,000 in bills he refused to pay.

IN HIS STATEMENT Mr. Berry says some things of general interest. He says: "During my incumbency as treasurer I was subject to extraordinary expense in exposing the capitol steal. There was no way in which I could use state funds. The legislature refused me an appropriation, although it spent a large sum in 'investigating' the case after I had exposed it, confirming my work almost to the letter. Having exhausted my own means, I accepted the financial help of several democrats, each without the knowledge of the others, and among them Mr. Guffey. With this help I was able to render the state a substantial service, saving at least \$250,000 in the bills that I refused to pay. This help was given me in a spirit of the highest patriotism. I felt under obligations to these men, especially to Mr. Guffey, so much so that I incurred the displeasure of my Bryanite friends by refusing to join in the personal assault on him at Denver. I still hold him in the highest personal regard. I did not think, however, that my obligation to Mr. Guffey was such as to make me 'take orders' in the offensive sense in which the term is now used, and asserted my liberty by helping to choose Bryan delegates throughout the state against his wishes. I was duly punished for this at the state convention in 1908, and took the medicine without a murmur. Though not the real reason, my alleged Bryanism was made a partial excuse for a further drubbing at Allentown, and I am not sure but what I am due to get more of it in the future. To believe in and follow a Roosevelt or a Bryan in preference to some of the other types of statesmen who figure in our politics seems to be a mortal sin in the eyes of some people, but I sincerely trust that it is not those folks who are now circulating this story about my private business. I have stood for local option, and do not ask or expect quarter from those who deny this right of the people."

POSTAL SAVINGS banks are not materializing as rapidly as some of the advocates of that reform would wish. A writer in the Chicago Examiner says: "The announcement from Postmaster General Hitchcock that postal savings banks under the new law will not be generally established 'for a long time,' coupled with apparently authorized information that the board of trustees which has the matter in charge will first try the system out in three or four of our larger cities—meantime seeking information as to methods in Europe—is distinctly disappointing! The measure has been a long time coming. Nearly forty years ago (1871) Postmaster General Creswell recommended the system; and his successors—Maynard, James, Howe, Gary, Wanamaker, Meyer and Hitchcock—made similar recommendations. From 1873 down to the present congress fifty bills for the creation of the institution were introduced in the house and thirty in the senate—all of which fell by the wayside! Finally the popular demand for

postal banks became so pronounced that the republican and democratic parties both expressly promised the institution as a long-delayed concession to the wishes of the people. Now it appears the people must wait for an indefinite time before they can expect to see the general establishment of the banks contemplated in the law. The Examiner can see no good reason for such excessive caution. Thirty-one of the leading nations of the earth have the system in triumphant operation with no apparent notion of going back. On the contrary the official reports very uniformly show that the postal banks wherever established have been highly popular and that the constant tendency is to broaden the field of their operations. The experiment, too, has been sufficiently tried out. In Great Britain, for instance, the system has been in operation since 1861—with such success that after nearly thirty years of trial Gladstone said in the house of commons: "The postoffice savings bank is the most important institution which has been created in the last fifty years for the welfare of the people and the state. I consider the act of 1861, which called this institution into existence, as the most useful and fruitful of my long career!" Postal banks are no novelty, and the practical methods of their operation are not an unknown science. The paths have been beaten plain long ago; and, if our officials shall trifle time away and keep the American people waiting long years for a realization of their wishes in this matter, the conclusion will naturally be reached that the delay is due, not to a reasonable spirit of caution, but to the same organized hostility which has kept the country waiting for a generation past. It required a long time for the people to get their law passed. It now seems that a further tax must be laid upon their patience before they will get their law enforced. If this be so it will be necessary for the people to get busy—early and energetically!"

REFERRING TO the democratic conference recently held at Lincoln, Ill., the Chicago Record-Herald says: "The democrats who assembled at Lincoln refused to puzzle themselves with doubtful distinctions and condemned all the democratic members of the general assembly who voted for Lorimer. This was the logical and eminently proper thing to do. Lorimer was not a people's candidate, not a statesman of such colossal proportions that he fairly bulged over party lines and took the enemy captive by virtue of his genius; not an independent who appealed to all but extreme partisans. He was a regular by profession, a reactionary in practice, without the gift of eloquence or personal magnetism, without knowledge of history and political economy, without intellectual interests. No doubt he arouses a certain kind of enthusiasm when he is busy on his organization among his ward lieutenants, but he would not have received a popular call to the senate in a thousand years. Put him out among the people and he would chill, not thrill, them. Despite all that has happened, it seems almost cruel to speak of him in the same breath with Lincoln and Douglas and Palmer and Oglesby. The man being what he is, it is really more difficult to understand the frame of mind of those who are said to have voted for him honestly than to accept the depravity of those who have confessed that they supported him for money. What could a democrat see in this republican reactionary who had never been anything but a machine politician, who had often been accused of using his political power for sinister purposes, whose blight was on every part of the public service that he touched? The democrat who supported this republican, bribe or no bribe, forfeited all claim to democratic votes and all claim to republican respect. The effect should be to take him completely out of politics, and the feeling of the democrats at Lincoln on that subject does credit to them. Give us legislators now with a straight vision. Let them be called democrats or republicans according to their party affiliations, but let them be men, first, last and all the time; men of integrity, fidelity, of proved honesty. Then we need not worry much about the party labels or have much fear of partisan or bipartisan conspiracies."