

The Commoner.

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Senate Organization

The Commoner congratulates the democrats of the United States senate. In democratic caucus they prepared for the organization of the senate on up-to-date lines. Disregarding the chains which champions of the "seniority" rule would put upon them, they built their organization with an eye single to the public welfare and the accomplishment of the purpose of making the senate what Senator Kern of Indiana calls "democratic not only in name but in practical results."

In its issue of December 27th The Commoner, protesting against the blight of "seniority," urged the organization of the senate upon progressive lines: Following is an extract from that editorial: "If it were a personal matter the new senators might prefer to yield to the older ones but a man who acts in a representative capacity is not at liberty to be courteous at the expense of his constituents. The democrats of the senate owe it to the party to make the senate organization represent the prevailing sentiment of the party and thus enable it to work in harmony with the administration. To do this the rule of seniority should be ignored. Assignments to committees should be made upon the basis of fitness and with a view to giving faithful expression to the will of the majority. No democrat is deserving of preferment who puts his personal interests above the general welfare. If our party is to earn a long lease of power it must regard the rights of the people as paramount. The same rule ought to be applied in the house. **THE COMMITTEE APPOINTED TO SELECT COMMITTEES SHOULD BE MADE UP TO SUIT THE NEW CONGRESS.** There is no good reason why hold-overs on the ways and means committee should consider themselves entitled, **AS A MATTER OF RIGHT,** to appointment on the new committee. The democratic caucus should feel free to select this committee without regard to its present membership—just as free as if the committee was being selected for the first time and from members entering upon their first term. If a new congress is to be bound by the committee selections made by a former congress, the change in the rules will prove of doubtful advantage. If the rule of seniority is to be invoked in behalf of the reappointment of those now on the committee the selection of committees should be entrusted to a special committee whose existence will cease when its work is done; and whether the right to recommend members for the various committees is conferred on the ways and means committee or upon a special committee, chosen for the purpose, the caucus should feel free to reject any recommendations made. The democratic party is pledged to the doctrine of representative government—the doctrine of seniority is destructive of both the theory and the practice of representative government."

CONTENTS

SENATE ORGANIZATION
BROTHERHOOD
ENFORCE THE LAW
PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF TELEPHONES
KECKLEY'S RAILROAD BILL
FIRST WEEK OF THE WILSON
ADMINISTRATION
GOVERNOR HODGES' NOVEL PLAN
FOR KANSAS
ARE LOW WAGES ENTIRELY TO
BLAME?
CURRENT TOPICS
HOME DEPARTMENT
NEWS OF THE WEEK
WASHINGTON NEWS

THE COUNTY TELEPHONE BILL

The Nebraska house of representatives have passed the Fuller county telephone bill, a copy of which is reproduced in another column of this issue. Desperate efforts to defeat this measure in the senate are being made by the telephone lobby. The measure should be enacted into law. It will provide the people with the means of protecting themselves from the exaction and schemes of powerful private telephone monopoly.

The criticisms offered against the Fuller telephone bill were well met in the inaugural address of Edward F. Dunne, governor of Illinois. On that occasion Governor Dunne said:

"The sole aim of all private corporations, unregulated by law, is to make money for their stockholders, and the most money can be made by poor service at a high rate to the consumer.

"The only question, then, is whether the public shall own and operate through state or local agencies, or whether it shall allow these utilities to remain in the ownership and control of private corporations and regulate them by law.

"After a careful investigation, through funds contributed by various vested interests, the committee on municipal v. private operation of public utilities, appointed in 1906, by the national civic federation, reported nineteen to one:

"To protect the rights of the people, we recommend that the various states should give to their municipalities authority, upon popular vote, under reasonable regulations, to build and operate public utilities, or to build and lease the same, or to take over works already constructed. In no other way can the people be put upon a fair trading basis, and obtain from the individual companies such rights as they ought to have."

"In other words, this commission, of which a majority at the start were strongly in sympathy with, or identified with private ownership, held the right of municipal ownership to be more important than any form of regulation.

"While most cities of Illinois may not be ready, as yet, to undertake municipal operation of other than waterworks, legislation should be enacted immediately, giving all cities the right to build or buy, and to operate their utilities. For this purpose, cities should be empowered to issue bonds, subject to a referendum and such other reasonable safeguards as may be necessary. If such rights are given, it will force private corporations, now furnishing these utilities, to give decent service at decent rates, or face the alternative of public ownership."

GOOD FOR TEXAS

Texas has ratified the amendment providing for election of senators by popular vote. Mr. W. A. Tarver of the Texas legislature writes: "I am very glad, indeed, to have had the honor to assist in the passage of this resolution ratifying the amendment to the constitution of the United States providing for the election of United States senators by the direct vote of the people. I hope you will give to Texas due credit for her action in this matter in your next issue of The Commoner. The resolution passed the senate some three weeks ago and Texas was, therefore, one of the first states to ratify the amendment. Congratulations upon the continued success and usefulness of The Commoner and its great editor."

ENFORCE THE LAW

Postmaster General Burleson has notified newspaper publishers that the law requiring that they give information concerning their ownership will be enforced. If they do not comply with the law their papers will be barred from the mail. This is an excellent law, and Mr. Burleson does well to enforce it. Most of the newspapers have complied with the law and the very fact that some of them show disposition to avoid it suggests good reason for the publication.

Brotherhood

Mr. Bryan delivered a speech recently under the auspices of the Washington Y. M. C. A. His remarks were delivered in introducing J. A. McDonald, editor of the Toronto Globe. In presenting Mr. McDonald to his audience, Secretary Bryan said: "Emerson wrote an essay on 'Compensation,' which made a deep impression upon me when I read it and has often come into my memory since. Every position that one occupies, whether in private or in public life, has its responsibilities and its pleasures, and I suppose that this represents the most pleasant part of the position with which I am connected. I am a connecting link between the president and the outside world, and as such I suppose it is not unfitting that I should appear upon such an occasion as this. This might be called a semi-official appearance, and my first in public. It is fitting for several reasons. First this is an international association. The speaker on this occasion is a citizen of another land. That makes it appropriate that he should be welcomed to this platform in the nation's capital by one who represents the government in its foreign relations. It is extremely pleasant to me to appear on this occasion and bid welcome to one who is not only a distinguished citizen of a neighboring country but is one whom I am glad to count among my personal friends. If it were proper for me to say so, I might tell you that he stands in Canada as Gladstone for so many years stood in Great Britain, the representative of Christianity applied to government. The fact that he comes from a country so close to us gives me an added enjoyment. He comes as a representative of a country, a neighbor, with whom we have been at peace now almost one hundred years. Laurier, the great premier of that country for so many years, expressed a beautiful sentiment. I can not use his exact language, but I shall not forget the thought that his language expressed. When some one in his country expressed a fear that closer commercial relations might suggest national unity, he answered that there was even a nobler idea than a country continent-wide in extent. It was two countries with but an imaginary line between and yet living as friends side by side with no rivalry except in goodwill. But there is another reason why I am glad to make this my first appearance since the acceptance of the portfolio of state. It is because this is a religious occasion. As I know of no foundation upon which a moral code can be built except religion, so I know of no foundation upon which remaining international peace can be built except that spirit of brotherhood which the founder of our religion taught us."

ALWAYS THE PROPHET

Writing in the Louisville Courier-Journal, Henry Watterson says: "Of the new secretary of state it is not necessary here to speak. The Courier-Journal has fully expressed itself on Mr. Bryan's assumption of that portfolio and awaits with interest the consequences."

Is this another prediction that the "democracy will march through a slaughter house to a bloody grave?"

HERE IS YOUR OPPORTUNITY

It is probable that by the time this issue of The Commoner reaches the readers, twenty-nine states will have ratified the proposed constitutional amendment providing for election of senators by the people. Every Commoner reader living in a state where the legislature is now in session, and where this amendment has not been ratified, should act as a committee of one to urge members of his legislature to take prompt action with respect to the indorsement of this important constitutional amendment.

Attend to this duty immediately.