

States' Rights Not Menaced

The discussion of the proposed national prohibition amendments has brought out a new lot of mock heroics on the subject of local self-government. Some of the "wets," in attempt to justify their opposition to national prohibition, express great fear lest the national authority shall trample upon the "imperishable rights of local self-government." What perishable tommy-rot!

The insincerity of these protestations is manifest when it is remembered that the liquor interests are just as jealous of "the imperishable rights of interstate commerce" as they are of "the imperishable local self-government;" it depends entirely upon the case which is being presented.

If a STATE attempts to deal with the liquor question a hoard of saloon sympathizers raise a chorus against the "invasion of the rights of the national government." They insist that "commerce between the states must be protected;" "the arm of the national government must not be paralyzed;" "fanaticism must not be permitted to suspend the traffic between the various commonwealths of the nation," etc., etc.

Whenever, however, the authority of the national government is invoked, we find this same crowd worshipping at the shrine of "States' Rights" and beating their breasts in frantic fear lest the people may be robbed of the sacred right to control their own affairs.

Those who regard the saloon as an unalloyed evil and seek to abate the nuisance need not worry themselves about the hypocritical arguments presented by those who prey upon the welfare of society and make a merchandise of morals. The right to class alcohol as a poison; the right to protect society against those who would make money by administering this poison to their fellowmen—this right can be exercised without any danger either to the authority of the national government or to the rights of local communities. It will be a sad day for this country when the brewers, the distillers, and the saloon keepers are made the custodians of either national or local authority.

The rights of the city are not trampled upon when township option is adopted, as it has been in some states; such legislation simply enlarges the unit and places the control of the liquor traffic in the hands of a greater number of people. The rights of local self-government are not imperiled by legislation which makes the county, instead of the township, the unit—which has been done in a number of states. No more is local self-government menaced when the state is made the unit, as it has been in some fourteen states. The same reasoning holds true when the legislative unit is the nation, instead of the state.

If the readers of The Commoner will take notice they will find that whenever a choice is to be made between two units, the liquor interests always choose the smaller unit—no matter which two are under consideration. If the question is between national prohibition and state prohibition, the liquor interests are the vociferous champions of the state's right to act. When, however, the choice is between state prohibition and county option the liquor interests are just as vehemently in favor of county option. If it is a choice between county option and township option, the liquor interests are out beating their tom-toms and shouting for precinct option; if the choice is between township option and city, town, or village option, the liquor interests bring out their cohorts and make their fight for the least unit, and there is just as much sincerity in their arguments in one case as in any other; but there is no sincerity in their arguments in any case, it is all a matter of pecuniary interest.

To carry the illustration further, they would favor ward option as against city option, and they would favor giving the option to the block instead of to the ward. Finally, they would demand that the option be exercised by the individual rather than by any governmental unit,

and they would do this in the name of "personal liberty," although if the manufacturers of intoxicants were in position to enforce their decrees, they would make drinking compulsory, even if they had to tie their victim and force alcohol down him at stated intervals—they would do it, of course, for the benefit of the victim's health.

When it is understood that the arguments made in favor of the liquor traffic are not the real ones that actuate those who make them, why should the opponents of the saloon pay any attention to them?

Experience has taught that the unit is enlarged in proportion as public sentiment against the saloon increases, and a national prohibition amendment will be submitted as soon as enough states adopt prohibition to make the ratification of the amendment probable. When that time comes, the reserved rights of the states will be just as sacredly guarded as they are now, or ever have been—they will be guarded by intelligent and sober freemen who believe in the theory upon which our government is founded. It only brings "states rights" into ridicule to have the phrase made a mask for a disreputable business which is fighting to perpetuate the privilege of debauching a nation.

W. J. BRYAN.

PENROSE TO THE FRONT

The following letter will give the voters of the country an idea of what to expect from the republican party with Senator Penrose as its leader. The letter is as follows:

PENNSYLVANIA PROTECTIVE UNION
Bell Telephone 1305-6 Real Estate
Walnut 2979 Trust Building,
Philadelphia.

Dear Sir:

At the popular primary on May 19, the electors of the republican party, by an overwhelming vote, chose Boies Penrose as their candidate for the United States Senate. It was a public acknowledgement of his unusual fitness and long efficiency in Washington.

We feel that to know the real Penrose is to support him, and to that end we are enclosing a booklet which we invite you to read carefully.

We earnestly solicit your active interest in the campaign, which is now under way, for the restoration of a protective tariff through the re-election of Boies Penrose to the United States Senate.

Very truly yours,

C. W. HILL,
Secretary.

The protective interests are not going to surrender without a struggle the valuable privilege of taxing the many for the benefit of a few. Every beneficiary of privilege is girding himself for the contest of 1916, a death grapple between the predatory interests and the organized masses. The democratic party is the only champion of the people and it ought to draw to itself the support of a large majority of the voters.

THE PRIMARY LAW

The use of the primary election for the selection of party candidates for office has proven so far superior to the old convention system of trades, deals, and the promises of machine bosses, that the public may be expected to ask to be heard before permitting the modern primary law to be repealed or "doctored." Progress along political lines in the manner of nominating candidates, conducting campaigns, prohibiting certain contributions to campaign funds, limiting the amount of money that may be used in the nominations and elections of public officials, requiring publicity of campaign contributions before elections, and a complete statement of all receipts and expenditures by candidates and political committees, and other similar reforms, has done much to purify elections, give the public a higher class of public servants and the people a more representative government. Here and there a complaint is heard of the modern methods of people's rule government, but it is not likely that any backward step will be taken where these reforms have once been adopted.

QUERY

Can ex-President Roosevelt hate the democratic party loud enough to drown out what he has said against the republican party?

LOCATED AT LAST

Ex-President Roosevelt takes the position that the president should have recognized Huerta. As this partiality for the retired dictator can not be due to lack of abhorrence of the manner in which General Huerta obtained his power—namely, by an act of treason against the president under whom he served, and later by permitting that president to be assassinated while in his custody—the ex-president's admiration must have been aroused by the manner in which Huerta, as executive, absorbed the other departments of the government and made himself "a steward" as the ex-president would say.

It will be remembered that the "new nationalism"—that short lived off-spring of Mr. Roosevelt's brain, which was born at Ossawatimie and died all over the country—had in it something of the flavor of the Huerta regime. The new nationalism was epitomized in the "Outlook" as follows:

"The new nationalism is impatient of the utter confusion that results from local legislatures attempting to treat national issues as local issues."

"It is still more impatient of the impotence which springs from the over-division of government powers."

"This new nationalism regards the executive power as the steward of the public welfare."

W. J. BRYAN.

THE VALUE OF CRITICISM

The democrats behave better in office than the republicans, and they ought to. There are several reasons for this, but there is one, the importance of which has not been sufficiently recognized. The republicans have a great advantage over the democrats in the number of newspapers that they control; in the close states the advantage is many to one. While the constant assault which the republican papers make upon democratic officials is sometimes irritating, it has its value; it puts the democrats on their good behavior. Their natural inclination to do right is fortified and strengthened by knowing that they are closely watched and that any improper act will be heralded to the world. Even the malice which is sometimes displayed—especially noticeable since the last election has inflamed the hopes of the standpatters—renders a certain service; it tends to render the criticism politically harmless, while it is an additional spur against those to whom it is directed.

We have so few democratic papers that it is no wonder the republicans become slovenly and indifferent about their work. They do not get enough criticism; they would be better, in spite of their erroneous theories, if we had a democratic press sufficiently numerous to punish them for their sins of omission and commission.

THE "STATES' RIGHTS" STATES

Analysis of vote cast in the house on the Hobson resolution:

	Yeas	Nays	Not Voting
Alabama	4	4	..
Arkansas	7
Florida	2	..	2
Georgia	7	2	1
Louisiana	1	6	1
Mississippi	7	1	..
North Carolina	6	2	2
South Carolina	7
Tennessee	10
Texas	4	12	2
Virginia	9	7	..
Total, 105.	64	34	7

The parcel post department of the postal system stood the strain of a large Christmas business without a break in the machinery or a delay in the delivery of packages. The success that has followed the development of this branch of the public service is winning many converts to the sound idea that the people are just as capable of running what is essentially their own business as are private individuals.

The first three months of the government's experience with marine insurance against war risks, made necessary by the frightened state of mind of the private companies, shows a profit of \$295,000, made up of \$300,000 received in premiums for fifteen million of risks written, and \$5,000 paid in losses. This is one feature of the administration's work which will not be referred to in republican campaign speeches.