

The Commoner

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THE COMMONER, LINCOLN, NEB.

TO REGULATE INTERSTATE PASSENGER RATES

Congressman Hilliard of Colorado introduced the following bill in the house of representatives January 2, 1917, which was referred to the committee on interstate and foreign commerce and ordered to be printed:

A bill fixing interstate passenger rates in certain circumstances.

Be it enacted by the senate and house of representatives of the United States of America in congress assembled, That hereafter no person, association, company, or corporation engaged in interstate public passenger-carrying service shall charge, exact, or receive for the transportation of a passenger from one state to another state or through any number of states any sum in excess of the sum of the local passenger-carrying rates over the line of travel covered by the interstate trip.

Sec. 2. That any violation of the provisions of the first section hereof by the agent or other representative of any such public carrier of passengers shall constitute a misdemeanor, and conviction thereof in any court of competent jurisdiction shall subject the offender to a fine of not more than \$100 nor less than \$25, and by imprisonment for not more than six months nor less than thirty days: Provided, That violations of this act by the agent shall be held and deemed to have been done by such agent and by the owner and principal executive officers of any such public carrier of passengers.

The Commoner will be glad to keep in touch with the papers throughout the country that are advocating prohibition, and to that end will be pleased to exchange with such papers upon application. Such exchanges are invited to make such use as they like of anything that appears in The Commoner, whether editorial or news matter, and The Commoner will, in like manner, collect from other papers to the extent it has room for reproduction.

This is the season of the year when the green legislator and the equally well informed editor declare that the time is ripe for the wiping out of a lot of useless statutes instead of adding more to the laws already in force. The criticism would have greater force if the critics would be able to agree what laws are useless. A farmer might have a different opinion on the subject than a railroad president.

COMMONER READERS: WILL YOU KINDLY SEND TO THIS OFFICE THE NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF ALL DEMOCRATIC AND INDEPENDENT VOTERS WHOM YOU BELIEVE WILL ASSIST MR. BRYAN IN DRIVING THE LIQUOR INTERESTS OUT OF THE NATION. MAY HE DEPEND UPON YOU TO DO THIS AT ONCE.

To the Governors and Legislatures of the Various States

I beg to bring to your attention an imperative need in the hope that consideration of the subject will lead to action during this winter's legislative sessions.

Ours is a government deriving its just powers from the consent of the governed—a government in which the people rule. The principle is not only accepted in this country but it is growing throughout the world and is destined to become the basis of all governments.

The value of representative government, however, depends very largely upon the intelligence with which the voters decide questions submitted to them and select those who are to speak for them; and intelligence rests upon information. No man can act intelligently upon a subject until he is informed in regard to it. It would seem, therefore, to be the imperative duty of the government to insure, insofar as it can, the spread of accurate information in regard to the questions that are at issue.

So far we have relied entirely upon the public press, without giving sufficient consideration of the fact that those who own the newspapers are not always interested in aiding the public to a clear understanding of the subject discussed. Even if we could assume that those in control of the newspapers always desired to deal fairly with the subjects under discussion, there are two general causes which may prevent the carrying out of the good purpose of the publisher. The first is, partisanship. The owner of the newspaper has, as a rule, a political bias, and that bias may unconsciously, even if not consciously, lead him to present his side more fully than the side of the opposition. But what is more serious, the newspaper may have a pecuniary interest on one side that, consciously or unconsciously, may prevent the bringing before the public of very important facts.

In view of the situation as we now find it, I venture to suggest the propriety of establishing in every commonwealth a state bulletin published at intervals of, say, one month, or even

quarterly between campaigns, and at shorter intervals during campaigns. The management of this publication should be in the hands of a bipartisan board so that it will not be conducted along partisan lines.

I would suggest a board composed of three persons, one selected by the governor, one selected by the majority in the legislature and one selected by the minority in the legislature. This would always insure representation of any considerable opposition, as well as representation of the dominant party. The publication ought to set forth all of the important things done by the state government—and, what is not less important, should give sufficient space for editorials—the editorial space to be divided between the parties, of recognized standing, in proportion to the voting strength of the parties at the last general election.

Such a publication, sent free to every voter, would make it possible for every citizen to understand just what his government was doing, and the editorial discussion would enable him to know what was to be said for and against the course pursued by the dominant party. In this way every voter would have the information necessary for intelligent action and no one who has the interest of his state at heart can oppose any means necessary to the enlightenment of those upon whom the state has cast responsibility for the control of the government.

The plan is presented in brief, with no intention of suggesting details, but the idea is capable of application to the federal government as well as to the state government, and is applicable also to municipal governments as well, where the cities are large enough to raise the presumption that the individual citizens need such a direct avenue of information.

W. J. BRYAN.

(Note: Readers of The Commoner who approve will please bring the above editorial to the attention of the officials for whom it is intended.)

FEDERAL COUNCIL OF CHURCHES ACTS

The following resolution was adopted at the quadrennial meeting of the Federal Council of the Church of Christ, held at St. Louis in December, 1916:

"The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, composed of members appointed by Christian bodies with eighteen millions of communicants, extends to the Christian brethren in countries now engaged in war its deepest sympathy, born of Christian faith and brotherhood. Our hearts have been touched as we have learned of the sufferings that war has brought, and have been stirred by the reports of the deepening of the Christian spirit through sorrow and self-devotion.

"We pray that their tragic experience may inspire us all to a deeper loyalty to the spiritual realities in which believers in Christ are one, and that the time may soon come when differences between nations shall be adjusted in the spirit of the gospel of Christ rather than by appeal to arms. Especially do we hope that the present war may come to a speedy end, and call upon all Christians throughout the world to co-operate in an effort to establish a peace that shall be lasting because based on justice and goodwill.

"We, therefore, instruct our executive committee to extend this expression of our Christian sympathy and this appeal to the churches of Christ to the brethren beyond the seas, and authorize it to adopt such methods in so doing as may seem to it effective and expedient."

Charles L. Stelzle, Federal Council of Churches, New York.

The peace conference, when it assembles, will furnish the representatives of Christianity an opportunity to offer the philosophy of Christ in the place of the philosophy of Pilate—the philosophy which is responsible for the present war. The nations of the old world have built their

hope of peace on their ability to excite fear; they have tried to terrorize each other into peace. They have allowed militarists to set up false standards of honor and to give a threatening tone to their diplomacy. The time is ripe for the substitution of love for hatred and the spirit of co-operation for the spirit of combat. It has been popular to argue that justice must come before love. That is not the order on Christ's teachings. "Love you enemies" was the law he proclaimed. Love comes first and brings justice with it. The churches will have a supreme opportunity to put their religion to the test; it is of the highest importance that they measure up to the opportunity.

W. J. BRYAN.

The national capital representatives of the New York newspaper and periodical press seem to have grown tired of trying to submarine Secretary Daniels of the navy department. At least they have not been launching any torpedoes in his direction lately. It is a remarkable fact that none of them discovered how incompetent a man Mr. Daniels was as head of the navy until he issued his order banishing booze from the war vessels that float the flag. The surest sign of being a "liberal" on the booze question is the immediate proscription of a public man who strikes a blow at the liquor traffic.

It would be interesting to know if those strong advocates of universal military training who have been insisting that the proper way to ascertain whether woman suffrage was desirable was to submit the matter to a vote of the women of the country would be willing to leave it to the fathers and mothers of the country whether they desired their boys to be trained for war.

It is suspected that none of the daily newspapers allowed their fear of a white-paper famine to communicate itself to the gentlemen who paid for the holiday advertising.