

## The Commoner.

only receive half that sum, and out of it have to pay their campaign expenses and their travelling expenses (excepting, of course, travelling covered by mileage). Members of the cabinet who hold office for but four years receive less than our supreme judges, while their work is more confining, and their living expenses greater, not to speak of the interruption to their business. Thus it will be seen that from a purely money standpoint the supreme court judges are better paid than most of our public servants.

There is another phase of the subject, however, that ought to be considered, and it is even more important than the money consideration. If the salary of supreme court judges is increased it will have its influence upon the selection of judges. When the president comes to make an appointment he will be urged to appoint some one whose professional income is large—for those who are anxious to increase salaries are prone to measure men by the income which they enjoy. If a judge on the supreme court bench of one of the states has made a good record and is urged for a place upon the supreme bench, he will have little chance in competition with city lawyers who have made large incomes out of corporation cases, and no attorney in a city of the second class will stand any chance at all. The lawyers who are enjoying big incomes today are the corporation lawyers, and when a paper says, as the *Globe* does, that "no lawyer of high standing and experience in his calling would regard ten thousand dollars as an entirely satisfactory rate of compensation," it means to say that the railroad and trust attorneys of the country would not be willing to accept positions on the supreme bench at the present salary, and the inference naturally follows that we must raise the salaries if we expect to draw the big corporation attorneys away from their clients. A judge, however honest he may be, has his prejudice and bias like any other individual, and his prejudice and bias naturally and inevitably make him lean toward the people with whom he is familiar. All judges are influenced more or less by public opinion, but it is the public opinion with which they come into actual contact. A man who has a life position with even ten thousand dollars a year soon makes for himself an environment that gives him a one-sided view of the world. Those whom he meets in society, at home, at the summer resorts and at the winter resorts are the well-to-do and the prosperous, and he is more or less impregnated with the views entertained by those with whom he associates. This at the present time gives to the rich and well-known suitor a considerable advantage over the poor and obscure one. If we increase the salary and thus limit the appointment of judges to men whose incomes have already separated them from the wealth-producing masses, we make even more remote the average citizen's chance of securing absolute justice.

The proposed increase in the salary of the judges will in fact prove a death warrant to the ambition of thousands of attorneys who live in the smaller cities where no one can possibly earn an income large enough to bring him within the range of vision of those who measure legal ability and judicial capacity by the size of the lawyer's fees. The higher salaries will also increase the advantage which great corporations and large financial interests will have in the supreme court when it is presided over by men who have received their training as advocates of corporations, and have from those corporations received salaries large enough to commend them to high salaried positions.

### The Debtor's Option.

A reader of *The Commoner* commenting on the definition of bimetalism which recently appeared in the columns of this paper, asks why no mention was made of what is known as the debtor's option. The answer is that the subject was

discussed from the standpoint of coinage and this phase of the subject was not under consideration. That the debtor has the right to select the coin of payment is a necessary part of bimetalism, so necessary that no one can believe in bimetalism without recognizing the debtor's right to the option. If the creditor has the right to demand the dearer metal he will do so, and this demand, increasing the former demand for the dearer metal, will make that metal dearer still and thus constantly increase the gap, if there be one, between the metals. If, on the other hand, the debtor has the option, his demand for the cheaper metal will increase the former demand for that metal, and decrease the demand for the dearer metal, thus tending to close the gap between the metals, if there be one.

It may be assumed that the creditor and debtor are alike selfish, but the selfishness of the creditor, if permitted to indulge itself, would destroy the parity between the metals, while the selfishness of the debtor, if permitted to indulge itself, preserves the parity between the metals.

Society, without desiring to benefit either debtor or creditor, must for its own protection take the side of the debtor, for in no other way can the two metals be kept in circulation.

### Respectable Criminals.

The interstate commerce commission, in its fifteenth annual report recently submitted to congress, presents a scorching indictment of the methods employed by railroad officials to evade and violate the laws of the United States. The following extract ought to challenge public attention and serious consideration:

These statements apply with added force to the present situation. In repeating the views thus expressed the commission believes that its duty in respect of recommendations is most suitably performed.

Referring to recent investigations made into the movement of packing house products and the movement of grain and grain products, the commission says that the facts therein developed are of such a character that no thoughtful person can contemplate them with indifference. That the leading traffic officials of many of the principal railway lines, men occupying high positions and charged with the most important duties, should deliberately violate the statute law of the land, and in some cases agree with each other to do so; that it should be thought by them necessary to destroy vouchers and to so manipulate bookkeeping as to obliterate evidence of the transactions; that hundreds of thousands of dollars should be paid in unlawful rebates to a few great packing houses; that the business of railroad transportation, the most important but one in the country today, paying the highest salaries and holding out to young men the greatest inducements, should to such an extent be conducted in open disregard of law, must be surprising and offensive to all right-minded persons. Equally startling at least is the fact that the owners of these packing houses, men whose names are known throughout the commercial world, should seemingly be eager to augment their gains with the enormous amounts of these rebates which they receive in plain defiance of a federal statute. These facts carry their own comment, and nothing said by us can add to their significance.

Here are the respectable criminals. They stand high in business, in politics, in society and in the church, but they are violating the law, conspiring with others to violate the law, granting rebates and making discriminations that bankrupt some business men and make enormous fortunes for others. All these things are being done and yet how little attention the public gives to the matter. If a man steals a pig he is arrested and all the forces of society are bent to his immediate conviction and punishment. But when great wrongs are committed the processes of justice are neither swift nor certain. For several years the interstate commerce commission has been calling attention to the violation of law. It has been asking for power to bring these criminals to jus-

tice, but the corporations have so completely dominated the republican party and so thoroughly controlled congress that no attention has been paid to the reports of the commission or to the interests of the public.

The Kansas City platform contained the following plank:

We favor an enlargement of the scope of the interstate commerce law as will enable the commission to protect individuals and communities from discriminations and the public from unjust and unfair transportation rates.

This plank was written as an indorsement of the demand made by the interstate commerce commission—a bi-partisan body having a republican majority—but how many votes were influenced by the plank? The corporations understood the situation and supported the republican party, but republican farmers, business men and laboring men seemed indifferent to the whole matter. Will they remain indifferent? Can they read the charges preferred by the interstate commerce commission and still consent to a condition wherein the corporations support the republican party in return for the immunity which the republican party grants to the corporations?

When the republicans are legislating on the subject of anarchy it is to be hoped that they will make their anti-anarchy measure comprehensive enough to embrace the crimes of these high-toned, influential and so-called respectable violators of the law.

### Do They Earn It?

The Philadelphia Press of a recent issue contains a lengthy article describing the enormous profits realized by some of the bankers and trust promoters. For instance, it is reported that J. Pierpont Morgan's firm earned (or rather enjoyed) an income of seventeen millions of dollars, exclusive of the profits derived from the organization of the steel trust. Of this the senior partner is said to have received 75 per cent.

The First National Bank of New York declared dividends aggregating nearly two thousand per cent on the capital. It is also reported that those who "promoted" and "financed" the steel trust received more than fifty millions of stock as a bonus.

Are these sums earned? Do those who receive them furnish to society any adequate return for the money paid to them? And is this earning power, or collecting power, due to natural ability, to superior intellect, to higher character, or to privileges conferred by the government? As the farmer endures exposure in the care of his stock, or wearies himself following the plow, he can study these figures and ask himself whether the government of which he is a part is being administered according to the doctrine of equal rights to all and special privileges to none. As the mechanic is laboring nine or ten hours a day, buoyed up by the hope of an eight hour day but conscious that severe sickness in the family would soon exhaust his savings, let him consider whether his votes have been cast for the protection of his own interests or for the advancement of syndicates.

As the country merchant goes early to his store and returns late, let him consider whether there is as great a difference, as the difference between their incomes would indicate, between his services to society and the services rendered by those who are in position to exact millions in return.

As the professional man and the teacher consume standard oil and wear away the night in study, let them devote a little time to the problem presented by a comparison of their services and salaries with the services rendered by and salaries paid to Morgan and Schwab.

If the farmer, the artisan, the merchant and the professional man will give a little time to the study of this interesting question they will not