

HOW COULD IT BE OTHERWISE

Writing in the Atlantic Monthly on "Wealth vs. Democracy," William Allen White says:

After taking as the price of his service to his countrymen every luxury that our civilization affords, for himself and for his household, the American millionaire has taken more. He has taken the power to oppress the people by establishing unnatural commercial and industrial conditions. By compelling the people to pay dividends upon watered stock in unfairly organized corporations, the rich man has unjustly increased the price of land transportation. This is laying a robber's tribute upon the masses, as surely as any baronial tax was ever put upon vassals. The tribute falls upon every article of necessity or of comfort or of luxury that the people use. More than that, the aggrandizement of capital in cheating corporations has made it possible for an usurious direct tax to be levied immorally, even though legally, upon the water that the city dwellers use, upon the light and fuel and power that all the people use. Interest on bogus debts is paid by consumers of the commonest necessities of life, and this unfairly accumulated wealth is used to devise further methods and to legalize them, in order to put the yoke of accumulating capital upon the people. Rich men are but men; they love power as all men love it, and they use it as men. Their money gives them power; it opens a new sport to them, when the mere getting of money palls. This diversion is the control of government.

After saying all this Mr. White adds:

"Thus far in playing that game the rich man has not materially harmed the country. He has played for pleasure rather than for profit."

It is a bad habit some newspaper men have of seeking to minimize evils even after they have, more or less dramatically, described those evils. It is absurd for Mr. White to say that "thus far" the game played by the plutocrats has "not materially harmed the country." With all of the popular protest now being made, the people are resenting only a comparatively small portion of the impositions that have been put upon them. So many of these impositions have operated upon the public welfare in an indirect way that in all too many cases the people are unable to locate the responsibility. But Mr. White's own statements show that the country has been "materially harmed."

How could it be otherwise when—accepting Mr. White's own testimony—the eminent defender of "national honor" has not even been content with demanding "for himself and for his household every luxury that our civilization affords."

How could it be otherwise when, according to Mr. White, these eminent gentlemen have "taken the power to oppress the people by establishing unnatural commercial and industrial conditions?"

How could it be otherwise when, according to Mr. White's own testimony, these men have compelled the people "to pay dividends on

watered stock in unfairly organized corporations, thereby "unjustly increasing the price of land transportation?"

How could it be otherwise when, according to Mr. White's own testimony, these men have "laid a robbers' tribute upon the masses as surely as any baronial tax was ever put upon vassals?"

And even Mr. White tells us that this tribute "falls upon every article of necessity or of comfort or of luxury that the people use."

And how could it be otherwise when, as we are told by Mr. White himself, "the aggrandizement of capital in cheating corporations has made it possible for a usurious direct tax to be levied immorally, even though legally, upon the water that the city dwellers use, and upon the light and fuel and power that all the people use?"

How could it be otherwise when, as we are told by Mr. White, "interest on bogus debts is paid by consumers of the commonest necessities of life," and that this unfairly accumulated wealth "is used to devise further methods and to legalize them, in order to put the yoke of accumulating capital upon the people."

In the beginning Mr. White stated the case well. He made a fair indictment, and by his own testimony it must be clear to intelligent men that these conspirators against the lives and the happiness of the people have "materially harmed the country." It must, also, be clear that unless at an early day the oppressed make bold to defend themselves from the oppressor "failure" will be written in connection with the American experiment in popular government.

A SENATOR'S DUTY

Senators Long of Kansas, and Millard of Nebraska have declined to express an opinion on railway rate legislation, and they are being severely criticised by some of their constituents, while they are also supported by many leading republicans and by some republican newspapers.

The Kansas City Journal defending Senator Long says that he would "belittle his high office" if he announced himself in favor of "whatever the president wants." The Journal expresses the opinion that congress will give the subject "due consideration" and that a measure will be agreed upon that will be "satisfactory to the president."

Of course it would be absurd for a senator to declare himself in favor of "whatever the president wants," but Senator Long would not belittle his high office if he frankly declared his position upon a public question. Senators, like presidents, are mere men and, therefore, not infallible. Senator Long might be mistaken in his views. If he would frankly say to his constituents just what his views are, it is probable that in the public discussion concerning those views the senator would learn considerable to his advantage.

It is significant, however, that among those statesmen who are so fearful about taking their constituents into their confidence lest they "belittle" the high office they hold, no such keen anxiety exists when representatives of special interests seek to learn their views.

Corporations are seldom in doubt concerning the attitude of public men. They readily ascertain the opinion of public men where the people are kept in the dark.

A suspicion seems to be abroad to the effect that Senators Long and Millard are, properly, to be classed among the railroad senators. And under the circumstances this is a reasonable suspicion because in a government like ours the people have a right to know where public servants stand upon questions of vital import. When, upon a question so important as the railway rate question, senators and representatives seek to throw the veil of secrecy around their views and refuse to discuss that question with the people whom they are presumed to represent, it is an indication—as we have learned by experience—that those gentlemen are more concerned in the special advantage of the powerful interests that have for so many years made and unmade senators than they are in any effort to bring about "the greatest good to the greatest number."

WHEN "THE THING" WILL END

In an address delivered at the dinner given to Senator Warner of Missouri, Governor Hoch of Kansas, said:

I want to say to you, not as an alarmist, but as a slight contributor to the American

awakening, that unless we find some effectual remedy for the control of the great trusts and corporations in the interests of all the people, a tidal wave of socialism will sweep over the country one of these days that will do incalculable damage.

Referring to Governor Hoch's remarks the New York World says:

Governor Hoch is not exaggerating the facts. They are so plain that no human being of ordinary intelligence should mistake their meaning. A great wave of discontent is sweeping over the country which is manifesting itself in the form of socialistic remedies for political and economic evils. The great corporations are largely responsible for the radicalism that is rampant everywhere.

The real leaders in this movement are not the Bryans and the Hearsts and the Dunnes and the Johnsons and the Schmitzes, but the Rockefellers, the Armours, the Morgans, the Swifts, the Ryans, the Yerkeses, the McCurdys, the McCalls, the Hydes, the Perkinses and the Harrimans, with their Murphys, McCarrens, Coxes, Durhams and Penroses.

Ten years ago Pingree was denounced as an anarchist. Today Pingree's program would be regarded as mild and conservative. Where is the thing going to end?

Yet for some reason or other, in nearly every contest at the polls the New York World is found battling on the side of the Rockefellers, the Armours, the Morgans, et al.

"The thing" would end very speedily if newspapers like the New York World would, on election day, refuse to lend their powerful influence to "Rockefellerism." The trouble is that the World fights "Rockefellerism" between campaigns and then when the fight is on lends its great influence to the very evils it condemns.

"FREIGHT'S" PETITION

A Naugatuck, W. Va., reader sends to The Commoner a petition circulated by the publication known as "Freight." This petition is designed to give endorsement to the plan providing for the creation of a transportation department, the same to have the sole duty of investigating all complaints concerning unfair practices by the railroads. According to this plan it will be the duty of the transportation department to present the results of their inquiry to a special court of transportation, the judges of which are to be appointed for life. This Commoner reader asks, "Would you recommend the enclosed plan? Comment on same in your paper, as it is extensively circulated."

The Commoner does not endorse the plan referred to in "Freight's" petition. As a general proposition it will not be well for the number

of life judges to be increased. Applied to the railroad problem, the plan is particularly bad. From public experience it is reasonable to believe that a court appointed for life would postpone remedial legislation for years.

The rate-making power should be trusted to men appointed for a limited term, like members of the interstate commerce commission. A man holding his office for a limited term is not so easily controlled by corporate interests, and it would be much easier to make a change in the personality of an administrative body than in that of a judicial body. Those who are anxious to have an effective relief plan adopted will do well to withhold their encouragement from any plan designed to place the power in the hands of a court composed of judges appointed for life. It is important that this power be given to the interstate commerce commission—an administrative body which, in the discharge of a purely administrative duty, may reasonably be expected to respond to public necessities and to deal justly with shippers and consumers.

It is important, also, that when a rate is fixed by this administrative body, the rate go into effect at once and so remain unless removed in the final adjudication of the case by the supreme court.

"SING THE SOUTH"

A handsome book with the title "Sing the South," has just come to The Commoner's desk. It is a collection of poems by Judd Mortimer Lewis, the poet-humorist of the Houston Post, whose work is as familiar to the south as its own balmy breezes and is fast gaining recognition wherever English poetry is read. Mr. Lewis' poetic fancy covers a wide range, but it is in his poems of childhood that he is most entertaining and most convincing. There is a sentiment therein that appeals to the best in every heart, and through the most of it there is a vein of rollicking humor that leaves the reader with a pleasant recollection and a renewed interest in childhood. And when Mr. Lewis does sing a song of the south it is always a song of praise and thanksgiving. Somehow or other his verses always "reach" because they seem to be just what the readers would have written had they taken time to set their thoughts to rhyme. Mr. Lewis is a prolific writer, but his literary output has maintained a uniformly high grade, and he has given, and continues to give, great enjoyment to the newspaper reading public with his column of "Tampering with Trifles," in the Houston Post. His work has been widely quoted, and he compiled and published "Sing the South" because there was a demand for such a collection. An occasional half hour with Judd Mortimer Lewis will fit any man for a better view of life.