

A GREAT STATE IN THE MAKING

Oklahoma City, Okla., April 5.—Citizens of all classes who are seeking those reforms which shall make for better citizenship and therefore better things, are deeply concerned in the work of the constitution makers who have just wrought so well for the soon-to-be great state of Oklahoma. No other constitutional convention ever had such great opportunities; no other ever found itself fronted by such grave problems of statecraft, and no other ever wrestled with greater problems that affected vitally the interests of the people who should live under the constitution thus framed. Coming into statehood at a time when it had all the experiences of other states to guide it; with the shoals and reefs that had so often threatened other ships of state plainly marked, and with the channel of safety marked by the buoys of mariners who had passed before, the constitution makers of Oklahoma have wrought well. They have given the people of that great state a constitution that will serve as a model for the states that come after, and be a living witness to what the people of other states missed by not being alive to their own best interests.

The constitution of Oklahoma was framed by democrats more concerned in the welfare of the people than they were in the welfare of any political organization or partisan movement. Of the 112 delegates in the convention which framed this splendid document 98 were democrats, 12 were republicans, and 2 were independents. It must not be understood that this preponderance of democratic delegates means that the new state is equally democratic on a vote. Upon two propositions the republicans were divided—prohibition and the initiative and referendum. One faction of the republican party insisted on writing prohibition into the constitution, and another faction insisted upon submitting it to a popular vote. The democrats were a unit in demanding that the question be submitted to popular vote. Upon the initiative and referendum the republicans were also divided—a small portion favoring it and a majority of them looking upon it as a "fad" not worthy of serious attention. The democrats were solid in favor of the plan. As a result the farmers' union strength was thrown largely to the democratic ticket, for the farmers are strongly in favor of the initiative and referendum. But Oklahoma is a democratic state. The knowledge of this fact has kept Oklahoma out of the union for ten years. It was knowledge of this fact that forced joint statehood, for the political powers that rule at Washington, feeling that they could no longer keep Oklahoma out without danger to themselves, insisted upon joint statehood with the Indian territory in the vain hope that the federal officeholders and the political managers could control enough votes in the Indian territory to give them control of the new state. And it was a vain hope, for in the election of convention delegates the Indian vote was almost unanimous for the democratic ticket. The Indians of the Territory are far and away ahead of their brethren elsewhere in point of wealth, education and fitness for citizenship. They have had all the experience they want with men of the class who have been sent to the Territory to look after them—carpetbaggers whose interests were not the interests of their wards.

Sentiment is somewhat divided upon the question of the desirability of joint statehood, but it is evident that a majority are well satisfied with it. While the Indian territory section is not nearly so well fitted for statehood as the Oklahoma section, the Indian section abounds in natural resources that will be of immense value to the new state as a whole—mineral lands and oil lands that become the property of the new state, and which, safeguarded as they will be under the new constitution, will become the mainstay of education and the basis of a system that will make the burden of taxation comparatively light. There will be no stealing of the state's resources, no gambling away of the people's rights, no giving into the hands of a favored few the resources which are and of right ought to be the property of all the people.

There are few objections made to the new constitution, and even these few are not well founded. The chief opposition comes from members of the party that had but little to do with its making and is founded on partisan bitterness. A few who may be classed among the fanatics oppose it because in fixing the qualifications for suffrage, "ex-confederate soldiers" are named before "ex-federal soldiers." The rest of the opposition comes from the carpetbag regime that realizes the near ap-

Features of Oklahoma's Constitution

Initiative and referendum.
Nomination of all state, county, district and township officers by primaries.
Prohibition of succession in state offices.
Submission of the prohibition question to the people of the whole state.
Elective state corporation commission.
Two-cent passenger fares.
Forbidding railway companies from owning any productive agency of a natural commodity.
Fellow servant law.
Prohibiting corporations from owning more land than is absolutely necessary in the operation of their business.
Prohibition of issuance of watered stock; books of corporations made subject to inspection at all times.
Appointment of commission to negotiate purchase of the segregated mineral lands in Indian territory, valued at many millions of dollars.
Fixing legal rate of interest at six per cent and contract rate at ten per cent.
Compulsory and separate school system.
Labor and arbitration commission.
Commission of charities and corrections.
Agricultural commission.
Oil, gas and mines commission.
Requiring majority vote to amend the constitution.

proach of its dissolution, and whose only hope is the defeat of the document. The combined opposition harp loud and long on the length of the constitution and the length of time and the expense of the convention. The constitution is long, but there is ample reason for it. In the first place it had more problems to solve and more things of importance to deal with than any other constitutional convention in the history of the republic. The bill of rights is the best ever promulgated. Its provisions for the regulation of railroad and other corporations are the most explicit and the best from the people's standpoint ever drawn. The safeguards thrown around the people are the most rigid, the most explicit and the fairest ever promulgated by a constitutional convention. There are upwards of 45,000 words in this new constitution—which is about 30,000 more than the average. But the excess is easily explained. The provision submitting the question of prohibition is a long one. The portion fixing the new county boundaries is almost one-third of the document, and the provisions, full and explicit, providing for the initiative and referendum—the first ever fully written into a state constitution—take up a large share of the space. This will explain the length of the instrument.

Just and righteous things which the people of older states have fought in vain for years to secure through the operation of legislation, are given the people of this great new state by the constitution which they have themselves written. It is a people's constitution in fact as well as in name. It took Massachusetts, New York, Illinois and other states a third of a century to secure adequate legislation against child labor, but Oklahoma's constitution prohibits it ever entering the state. Workingmen in older states fought and plead for years for laws safeguarding them and abrogating the old English rule of fellow servants. They will not have to make that fight in Oklahoma, for the constitution fixes it forever unless changed by a majority vote, and employer's liability is the fundamental law of the new state.

In a score of states free labor is still compelled to compete with contract prison labor, and in the two or three states where free labor has rid itself of this injustice it has been after a long and costly fight. This injustice will never be worked against Oklahoma's workingmen until they express by their vote a desire to compete with the labor of convicts.

The eight-hour day in state, county and municipal work is provided for, and the legislature is empowered to provide a state printing plant which will relieve the people from the exactions of the school text-book trust and a printing combine that has long looted the territorial treasury. The employment of children under 15 years of age in factories or underground mines is prohibited. Under the head of "Labor and Arbitration" the constitution contains the following provisions:

A department of labor is hereby created in

charge of a labor commissioner to be elected by the people, whose term of office shall be four years, and whose duties shall be prescribed by law.

The legislature shall create a board of arbitration and conciliation in the labor department, and the labor commissioner shall be ex-officio chairman.

The legislature shall pass laws to protect the health and safety of employes in factories, in mines, and on railroads.

The interests of the people have been looked after in every way. By "the people" is meant those whose toil and sweat and sacrifices have wrested the new state from desert control and set it firmly on the highway to prosperity—not the corporations who seek to so influence lawmakers and legislation as to enable them to fatten upon the necessities of the people. Oklahomans have not been deceived by the cry of "driving out capital," "wronging widows and orphans who have their little all invested in railway stocks," or "taxing enterprise." These cries were raised, but they fell upon deaf ears, for the first concern of Oklahoma was for her own people and the safeguarding of their interests.

The interests that have so long kept Oklahoma out of the sisterhood of states builded unwisely, for the longer Oklahomans were unjustly deprived of statehood the stronger grew their determination to start right when given the boon of statehood and the making of their own constitution. Undisturbed by the partisan rivalry indulged in by the states during national elections, Oklahoma profited by the mistakes made, and when the time came to draw their constitution the people avoided the bad features of all, drew upon the good features of all, and initiated features that other states long to have but are prevented from securing by the shrewdness of the selfish interests that secured the whip hand when the constitutions were in the making. As a result, Oklahoma joins the sisterhood of states with the best constitution ever drafted by the people of any state. And no other territory was ever better fitted for statehood. The citizenship of Oklahoma combines within itself the best blood and brain and brawn of all the states—a typical Americanism that is better than Anglo-Saxon, Norman, Celt or Dane—men who have nerved themselves to dare and do, and in the doing have established a commonwealth like the like of which the world never before saw at a similar age.

Is Oklahoma ready for statehood? Yes, and was ready a decade ago. The total population is in excess of 800,000, a greater population than that of fifteen other states, some of which have been in the sisterhood for a century. Fourteen other states have fewer dwelling houses. Not less than twelve other states have a greater mortgage indebtedness per capita. Few states have a better school system than this new territory that stands on the threshold of statehood. The "little white school house" is to be seen everywhere. The cities are prosperous, substantially built and enterprising to a degree that will astonish the new beholder. Manufacturing is growing at a wonderful pace, and the resources of the new state offer abundant proof that not alone in agriculture will Oklahoma stand pre-eminent.

More than eleven years have elapsed since Utah, the last state admitted, rejoiced to see her star upon the blue of the nation's banner. When Oklahoma's star appears it will mark the admission of a state that, at the time of admission, was the richest, the most populous, the most enterprising and the most enlightened of all the galaxy of states. This is no exaggeration. The figures and the indisputable facts prove it beyond the shadow of doubt or dispute.

WILL M. MAUPIN.

MARCH ON, MY SOUL

March on, my soul, nor like a laggard stay,
March swiftly on, yet err not from the way
Where all the nobly wise of old have trod—
The path of faith made by the sons of God.

Follow the marks that they have set beside
The narrow, cloud-swept track to be thy guide;
Follow and honor what the past has gained,
And forward still, that more may be attained.

Something to learn and something to forget;
Hold fast the good and seek the better yet;
Press on, and prove the pilgrim-hope of youth,
That creeds are milestones on the road to Truth.

—Henry Van Dyke, D. D.