

### If the People Rule Why Don't They Get What They Want?

#### TRY YOUR HAND AT THIS

In his great speech delivered in the United States senate Senator Owen of Oklahoma asked, "If the people really rule why don't the people get what they want?"

The Commoner will be glad to print brief answers to this question.

Make your answer brief and to the point.

This question is in reality the most important question that may be considered by the American people. Plainly something is wrong with the American government; plainly the people do not get what they want although they are presumed to rule. What is the matter? The Commoner readers have the opportunity of contributing to the solution of this problem.—(From The Commoner of June 17.)

Charles E. Topping, Union Printers' Home, Colorado Springs, Colo.—As an old Abe Lincoln republican, but now an independent voter, I will answer the question in this way: The people do not rule. The supreme court and the United States senate are the ruling power in the United States today, neither of which is elected by the people. They rule the country for the benefit of the big monied interests and not for the people. A government of the people, by the people, for the people has become a fiction. It is now a government by the big monied interests for the big monied interests, and there is no relief for this condition in either the republican or democratic parties as they are formed today. The eastern ring of the democratic party is just as strong in favor of the monied interests as the republican party. As the old colored man expressed it when his pastor said "There are two roads; one leads to hell and the other to damnation." "In that case I takes fru de woods." There is need of a new party if we would remedy present conditions in this country, or a rejuvenation of one of the old parties.

Ernest L. Morrow, Kirksville, Mo.—My opinion is: The people of the United States really rule, but do not get what they want because they keep a party in power who proves false to their pledges and force laws on the people which they do not want.

Jay A. Ferguson, Chicago, Ill.—First, Because the election of and the influence upon United States senators are too far removed from the people. Second, Because lobbying in any style is permitted; there should be some legal and business method of presenting the views of all interests concerned. Third, Because legislators are, by law, equally guilty when bribed as the one who gives the bribe. Legislators should be free to talk, to bubble over or blow off, when they feel like it, without restraint or fear of the law. For the protection of the people and the punishment of the bribe giver, there should be no law to punish one for the taking of money. This double punishment of both is only a mighty breast-work for the protection of the bribe giver. Allow the giver to account to the law, and the taker to account to his constituency, and the grand jury with only the fear of perjury in him. Fourth, Remove the statute of limitation on the crime.

A. J. Shively, St. Louis, Mo.—The reason the people don't get what they want is because they cater to the music of the selfish, dishonest politicians that have no other object but to get their fingers into the people's pockets. No principle whatever.

D. D. Shirley, Allerton, Iowa.—I answer thus: The people of the United States have just such political conditions as they want. Were this not the case they would change the conditions. A vicious monarch might—and often has—vilely ruled a good people. A benign king has ruled a bad set of subjects to their everlasting good. In the American republic, in which we live, every voting citizen is a sovereign. If we do not have conditions as we desire them, we ourselves are to blame. If the American people are big enough fools to put saddles on their own backs, put spurs on the big bugs, and like a set of donkeys, invite them to get on and ride, we'll "be ridden to a fall," and don't you forget it. No people or person ever looked around for someone to ride them but what found the rider. We can have all of this kind of thing we want,

and can stop it when we think we have had enough. I say to the Aldriches and the Cannons, "Lay on, McDuff and \* \* \* be he who cries, hold, enough," etc. No, Mr. Owen, the Yankee is dead easy, he's the easiest thing going. He is certainly a patient ass.

E. O. Gardner, Villisca, Ia.—Here is the answer to Senator Owen's question: The people do not get what they want because the people do not rule. 'Tis true, 'tis pity, 'tis pity 'tis true.

John M. O'Brien, Muscatine, Ia.—The people can not expect what they want. They frequently permit a clique to control their primaries, shape the policy and nominate the candidates. This clique is frequently led by the editor of a new paper, which is titled a democratic paper. The reason the people do not get what they want, is they lack vigilance. They permit the minority to control elections; a large majority of the voters never vote—men do not vote except they deliberate in the primaries or caucus. The democrats should organize democratic clubs in each county where there are no democratic papers.

William Dunham, Mitchell, Neb.—The people who are so faithfully represented in our nation's councils do get what, and all they want, but, unfortunately the majority voice and vote are solely utterance and acts of "the special interests." The people's wants are answered in that great body by fraud and deceit ever. I, as a lover of honesty of purpose and act, blushing but very respectfully submit this and deplore the fact that "it is true."

J. B. Brinley, Fort Smith, Ark.—My answer is that money rules; if the power of money can not be broken, the people never will rule. The first step to this would be for the government to loan the money direct to the people and stop paying interest.

William E. Rutledge, East St. Louis, Ill.—The people don't rule. Money rules, not the masses. Money is king. No inducement on earth for a member of congress to vote against the will of the people unless the saloon and money power furnish the inducement. Almost universal graft is the answer to Senator Owen's question, "If the people rule why don't they get what they want?" Protection is the father of graft. A kind Heavenly Father may help us out by revealing to us the art of flying through the air. Air and our boys and girls are about the only things left that has not been protected by a wall so high that the profits to the few are measured only by the amount the masses have to pay. If our girls and boys were pig iron we could have them protected.

J. E. Forbes, Ottawa, Kan.—Because if he bears their party label, the aforesaid people 'ave no more sense than to vote for a slippery, unscrupulous scoundrel, utterly without principles of any kind, political or moral, with no regard for platforms or pledges, in preference to voting for a man of the highest character on an opposing ticket, but who believes a tariff should be a little higher or lower than exactly meets their views. The number of yellow dog partisans is steadily decreasing, but we can not secure good government until this unwholesome partisanship is still farther abated. When the boss politicians see that bad nominations mean certain defeat, they will give us a better class of candidates. When the representative of Postmaster General Hitchcock was trying to get the republican members of the Oregon legislature to disregard their solemn written pledges to the people to vote for the candidate for senator having the most votes in the primary, there were two deterrents to acceding to his wishes. First, their own consciences; second, the knowledge that if they thus betrayed their constituents those constituents would promptly throw over their heads the lariat of the recall, and jerk them out of their seats in notorious disgrace. The influence of the recall is so wholesome that no state or city should be without it.

R. E. French, Bridge Contractor, Emporia, Kan.—"Bridge system" has its organization to corrupt legislatures (note the recent investigation at Albany) and to elect the right kind of city, county and township officials, from their view point, so that they can have one or more officials that are their secret agents on each board that awards contracts. If the people would interview prospective candidates for public office who have the awarding of contracts and would work only for such men as declare

themselves as opposed to the "system" and in favor of a square deal, in two or three years the counties, cities and states of this our beloved land would be freed from the blighting influence of "bridge system." The above is submitted in answer to The Commoner's article in issue of June 17, 1910, "Try Your Hand at This," and while it is not very well written, in my opinion, the remedy applied to not only candidates for county, township and city offices, but to members of the legislature would loosen the grip of "bridge system" and bring about a condition where the independent could live. As it is today there is only a very delicate fringe of light to the cloud that hangs over the head of every actual independent in the bridge business in every state in this nation. The writer was recently talking with a local agent of the Standard Bridge company in a Missouri locality that is Standard territory, and he said: "Why, Standard and Western Bridge & Construction Co. own Nebraska," and he told the truth. Of course there are other firms there, but if you will take the trouble to find out you will find that those two companies, both members of the American Bridge Builders' Association, or "bridge system," as I call it, do the bridge work in probably three-fourths of the counties in your state and decide who shall have the work in nearly all the other counties. Riding on a train a short time ago with a grizzled veteran of "bridge system" for a seat mate he said: "French, you will never be able to get a contract in this territory at a public letting at a profit; they won't let you." "They" (bridge system) own legislatures. "They" (bridge system) missionaries, township trustees and county engineers and "they" have an organization that controls every state and county in the United States. This same man said a few minutes later: "French, you can't succeed along the lines you are working. Officials want things as they are at present." If I had the pen and brains of an Ida Tarbell I could write volumes on my actual experiences with "bridge system" that would rival her history of Standard Oil.

E. W. Owens, Wagner, S. D.—First the daily press of the nation is the main factor in creating public opinion on the political issues of the day and therefore that party which has the greatest number of newspapers with the most subscribers will generally win out, because a large majority of the voters are either unphilosophical or not so deeply interested in politics as to give such questions thorough consideration and take for granted that what they read honestly sets forth the truth. Second, the voters have no direct ballot system of instructions for making their wants known, either at the primaries or at the elections; it is therefore self evident that before the people can rule in reality and have their principles engrafted into the laws they must have legislative questions printed on their ballots to be voted yes or no the same as we now vote on constitutional amendments. This system when generally adopted by the political parties of the country would give the voters the necessary machinery for making their wants known and we have every reason to believe that it would ultimately result in the establishment of a truly representative government, but before we can get reform we must establish, maintain and patronize a reform press and place it in the homes of the common people to be read at their firesides and which will serve as an inspiration at all times and under all circumstances. Perhaps your readers will ask how this is to be accomplished. My answer is by thorough organization. Let us have a great daily paper in New York, Chicago, Minneapolis and all the other leading cities of the nation, where we have none already to preach the true "gospel of reform," and then appoint committees in every county and voting precinct in the country to solicit subscribers for them, not for gain or profit as the object, but to save the country in the interest of the tolling millions, then we will be on the sure road to reform and whether it comes sooner or later, when it does come it will be thorough and complete and come to stay.

M. M. Downey, La Crosse, Wis.—It is not much wonder that the people do not get what they want while the "shut up" policy of the Taft administration is kept in force by the heads of our government and which has been part of their education ever since I became an adopted citizen by wielding the bloody shirt, the full dinner pail and the system of intimidation forced on the people at the time of the first battle (1896) and the two succeeding presidential elections.