

INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM IN ARKANSAS

Below will be found a letter written by the governor of Arkansas to Dr. C. F. Taylor, editor of "Equity Series," Philadelphia, together with an article entitled "The Movement in Arkansas," written by Dr. Taylor:

Executive Chamber,
State of Arkansas, Little Rock.
George W. Donaghey, Governor.

June 22, 1910.

To the Editor of Equity: I took up the fight for the initiative and referendum when I first entered public life, and I shall never cease until they are a part of the constitution of Arkansas. I believe in direct democracy, not only because it is in accord with the American theory of government, but because it will lead to more efficient government and a better administration of the laws. I believe in a business like administration of the affairs of the state; not that sort of a business administration which means the granting of special favors to a few corporations, contractors, and politicians to make them rich at the expense of the citizens, but that conduct of affairs which means economy, efficiency, and promptness in doing the business of the people—for all alike, with no favors or graft for anybody.

There may be those who think a few men know the business of the whole people better than the people do themselves; but I am not one of that kind. I am elected to do the people's bidding. I am their servant; or, as the farmers say, "hired man," not their master; and I take it that members of the legislature are no more and no less. Hence I believe in the right of the people to direct the course of their own business; and I can not conceive of a public servant who would not be more than glad to have a better way provided—such as the initiative and referendum afford—for an authoritative expression of public opinion.

The people demand a more business-like government, a broader justice, more progressive legislation; that is, more real service from their public officials. Likewise they propose to direct the job, and I am with them in these sensible demands.

GEORGE W. DONAGHEY,
Governor.

THE MOVEMENT IN ARKANSAS

By Dr. C. F. Taylor

As noted in April Equity, an initiative and referendum amendment to the state constitution of Arkansas will be voted on at the state election there on September 12. This amendment was submitted to the people by the last legislature, almost unanimously. This vote for submission of an initiative and referendum amendment in Arkansas came as a surprise to the D. L. workers of the country, as they were not in general aware that there was a D. L. movement of any considerable strength in Arkansas. The history of the submission is briefly as follows: Hon. E. R. Arnold, of Arkadelphia, Ark., first introduced the amendment when he was a member of the house of representatives six years ago. It then passed the house, but it was overwhelmingly defeated in the senate. Mr. Arnold was then elected to the senate, and made another effort to get the resolution through the legislature four years ago, but without success. Governor Donaghey, in his biennial message to the last legislature, strongly advocated the adoption of the initiative and referendum, and Senator Arnold again renewed his efforts to get the amendment through the legislature; this time with brilliant success, with only one vote against it in the senate and four votes against it in the house.

So it seems that the submission is due chiefly to two men: Governor Donaghey and Senator E. R. Arnold, of Arkadelphia, especially the latter. They worked so quietly, however, so far as people outside Arkansas were concerned, that there was no news of the movement until the friends of D. L. here and there began to hear a rumor that a D. L. amendment had passed the Arkansas legislature; which cheerful news was confirmed by the brief history above given.

However, at least two other influences should be mentioned. It is claimed that if it had not been for the Farmers' Union, with 85,000 voters and over thirty of them active in the legislature, the amendment would not have been submitted. Also a speech by Hon. William J. Bryan before the legislature several years ago made clear the advisability and the democracy of the initiative and referendum. Mr. Bryan and Governor Donaghey made the issue "regular" in the democratic party of the state. Too much praise can

not be given to Governor Donaghey for taking a prominent place among the D. L. governors of this country, and particularly for persistently insisting on this issue being at the front. The successful adoption of this amendment will be a special glory to him.

We wish we could record a similar history, so simple, direct, and fruitful, of all the other states in the union which have not yet achieved this form of pure democracy. But it seems that privilege and favored interests are so deeply entrenched in most of the other states that the people can not gain this inherent right of having a direct hand in the making of their laws without a serious and prolonged contest.

The history of the movement in Arkansas since our last issue is briefly as follows: D. L. literature has been sent to every newspaper in Arkansas. Included in the literature was a copy of Senator Jonathan Bourne's remarkable speech in the United States senate, delivered May 5, describing the experience of the people of Oregon with direct legislation.

The most fortunate thing in the movement in Arkansas is the securing of the services of Mr. George J. King, of Toledo, Ohio, the able and efficient secretary of the Ohio Direct Legislation League, who is being sustained in the movement in Arkansas, and who will give his entire time and attention to the movement there until the election on September 12. Mr. King's work there began about June 1, and it produced results immediately. He found Governor Donaghey to be earnestly in favor of the passage of the amendment. He also found that he was a candidate for nomination by the democratic convention to succeed himself. About June 7 the state democratic convention was held in Little Rock, and Governor Donaghey was nominated on the democratic ticket to succeed himself as governor. Governor Donaghey says that he will make the initiative and referendum amendment (locally known as Amendment No. 10), a prominent feature of his campaign. The democratic state convention also passed a resolution endorsing the initiative and referendum amendment. But this is perhaps presenting the case too smoothly; for there was some opposition in the democratic convention, some of the democrats of the old school regarding the measure as either republican or populist and undemocratic. They do not seem to understand what pure democracy is. Also, some of the politicians (the kind who sense an opportunity for graft slipping from them), stood ready and anxious to oppose the amendment, but, knowing that they could not prevail, judiciously kept silent.

I must also chronicle the following misfortune: At the meeting of the State Bar Association, at Pine Bluff, early in June, President Norton devoted his presidential address to a consideration of the initiative and referendum, taking a position against it. President Norton is evidently a "gentleman of the old school." His elegant language and his type of thought remind one of the educated gentleman of more than a century ago. While one is reading his speech a vision of the ancient, wigged barrister of elegant mien comes before the reader's mind. But President Norton loses sight of the fact that the public schools and the popular press of the present time (not known in the time of the wigged barrister), have fitted the people for the intelligent discussion and disposition of public measures. He also loses sight entirely of the history of the initiative and referendum in Switzerland, and of the town meetings in early New England, and particularly of the history that direct legislation has made in this country, notably in Oregon, in very recent years. A copy of Senator Bourne's speech will be mailed to every lawyer in Arkansas, by which it is hoped the bar of Arkansas can be led to put themselves right on this issue.

The republican state convention of Arkansas, which convened some days after the democratic convention, also indorsed the initiative and referendum amendment. So it would seem that the way is clear for the successful adoption of the amendment on the 12th of September next.

But the way is not as clear as it seems. The present constitution of Arkansas requires that an amendment shall receive a majority of the votes cast in the election at which the amendment is submitted; so that a voter who votes for any officer or officers in that election but does not vote at all on the constitutional amendment or amendments submitted, virtually votes, according to the constitution, against such amendment or amendments. This danger, therefore, is feared: that many voters will vote the state ticket for officers, but will neglect to vote upon the amendments (two amendments will be submitted, the other one providing for

the exemption from taxation of capital invested in the manufacture of cotton materials, for a certain term of years). So the task is to instruct the people and convince them of the importance of voting for the initiative and referendum amendment. If, as in all other state constitutions, a majority vote on the amendment would carry, then the task would be easy; but when we consider that a voter for officers will in effect cast a vote against the amendment should he fail to put any mark opposite the amendment, the problem becomes much more serious.

Organized labor in Arkansas, as everywhere, is earnestly in favor of direct legislation and is working hard for its success. The farmers' organizations have "resolved" in favor of direct legislation; but it seems to be much less to the average farmer than to the average organized workman. So it will be a great and important task to reach the individual farmer with the importance of not failing to vote for the amendment. Mr. King is co-operating with Professor George A. Cole, of the University of Arkansas and president of the Farmers' Union, in instructing the farmers.

It is an interesting though rather discouraging fact that people in the back districts are inclined to vote against the initiative and referendum merely because they do not understand the meaning of these words. This fact was developed particularly in the experience of Dr. William P. Hill, of St. Louis, the man who put the direct legislation amendment in the Missouri constitution. At its first submission it was defeated; and the majorities against it came from the back counties; the majorities in its favor came from what Dr. Hill terms "the centers of enlightenment," the cities. So when he succeeded in getting the amendment submitted again, he undertook the herculean task of reaching and educating the people of the back counties; and when that was done, the adoption of the amendment was easy. It is a well-known fact that ignorant voters are suspicious; and as a rule they vote against a thing that they do not understand because they imagine it to be some "job;" particularly if the thing to be voted on consists of long and strange words—which initiative and referendum are to most ignorant people. For that reason Mr. King is endeavoring to avoid the use of these words in the Arkansas campaign, substituting the expression "Amendment No. 10." After explaining that Amendment No. 10 is in the interest of the masses of the people, it becomes easy for the ignorant voter to remember that he should vote for the adoption of Amendment No. 10. It is important to take these psychological phases of the problem into consideration in practical direct legislation work.

We have no knowledge of any extended hold that privilege and monopoly have upon the state of Arkansas; hence we have no knowledge of any extended corruption in its official records. But the state of Arkansas has many promising, though as yet comparatively undeveloped resources, such as the cotton interests, the rice possibilities, the fruit prospects, and the mineral resources; so that when Arkansas becomes the wealthy state that it is destined to become, and when its cities grow in population into the hundreds of thousands, then the boodlers will come, as they always have come when wealth has become developed; and then will be the danger of political corruption, as has occurred in all our large cities and wealthy states; and then is the time that the people will need the restraining and controlling power of direct legislation—but now is the time for them to get it. We sincerely hope that in the next issue of Equity we can chronicle the fact that Arkansas has become the ninth state to put the initiative and referendum in its state constitution, and that the workers of direct legislation everywhere can point with pride to this last victory, and carry the banner of Arkansas to all the states that are struggling to get this primary and inherent right of American citizenship.

The Primaries in Nebraska

August 16

*Every Voter in Every Party
Should Go to the Polls on
that Day and Vote his Choice*