

# CURRENT TOPICS

**A** MOVEMENT IS ON foot in the Oklahoma legislature to give that state a chance to try government ownership of the railroads. Two bills have been introduced to that effect. The Oklahoma correspondent for the Kansas City Star says: "The scheme is appealing especially to farmers. Numerous petitions and letters are coming to members of the legislature favoring a state railroad amendment to the constitution which would permit authorizing state bonds by a special election. Under the constitution a bond issue may be voted for only at a general election, which would not come until 1912. The amount of bonds needed is 15 million dollars. To promote the undertaking one bill appropriates the sum of \$15,000 for 1911 and \$50,000 each for the years 1912 and 1913, for the use of the utilities road. The people of Oklahoma are to be asked to provide for the building of not only a state railroad, but for an eight-inch oil pipeline from Kansas to Texas, where connection would be made with a desirable market. A bill of this kind has been drawn by Representative S. W. L. Jeffords, of Chelsea. It is intended to protect the oil producers against the Standard Oil Company, as the state railroad is to give the people a restraint on privately owned railroads. The Jeffords bill would appropriate fifteen million dollars without a vote by the people. The work of construction would be entrusted to a superintendent, whose salary would be \$3,600 a year. One bill creates a state board of public utilities, to be composed of the governor and four other members appointed by him, to control the expenditure of all funds in building the railroad and the earnings accruing from its operation. This bill also provides for benefit districts to be composed of any number of counties, which, upon a petition of 8 per cent of the taxpayers, may call an election to find if the people wish to build a railroad. The second bill creates the first railroad benefit district of the counties of McCurtain, Choctaw, Bryan, Atoka, Coal, Pontotoc, Seminole, McClain, Pottawatomie, Cleveland, Oklahoma, Canadian, Kingfisher, Blaine, Dewey, Woodward, Harper, Beaver, Texas and Cimarron. The route would give railroad connection between the extreme northwestern and the extreme southwestern parts of the state. The state railroad would be operated by the utilities board as if its members were the directors of a private corporation and all its moneys deposited in the state treasury. Should any privately owned railroad offer to sell to the state, the governor is authorized by the bill to call a special election in the counties through which the line runs to learn if the taxpayers wish to issue bonds for the purchase. The board is authorized to lease railroads whenever it is more expedient than owning them. No tax shall be levied in any district except to meet a deficiency between the net earnings of the railroad and the amount of money required annually for payment of interest on bonds and a sinking fund to extinguish the indebtedness in twenty-five years. A county paying such tax shall be reimbursed from the net earnings of the railroad, whenever the earnings are in excess of the expenses."

**M**R. BRYAN SPOKE in Atlanta February 14th. The Atlanta Constitution said: "Before a crowd which comfortably filled the main body of the auditorium armory last night, William Jennings Bryan, possibly the best known of American lecturers, spoke for more than an hour, using 'The Price of a Soul' as his subject. The lecture was given under the auspices of the Atlanta Baraca Union and the size of the audience was a glowing tribute to not only Mr. Bryan's unbounded popularity here, but to the esteem in which the organization is held here. The lecture, which is pronounced by many as one of Mr. Bryan's best, is as far removed from the ordinary run of lectures as Mr. Bryan is removed from the ordinary run of speakers. In it the speaker dealt with many of the perplexing problems of the present-day civilization, in a manner which marked him as a man whose ability as a thinker is not second to even his own rare ability as a speaker. His lecture was the application of

an ethical principle to present-day life, to politics, business and government. Beginning with the laws that govern legitimate accumulation, he discussed these laws with reference to their relation to the legal profession, journalism, commerce and the ministry. He also discussed the application of moral principles to party life and the problems of government. The rule he applied throughout is that set forth in the Savior's question, 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' Mr. Bryan was introduced by Governor-elect Hoke Smith, who made a short, but apt talk. Mr. Bryan, he said, stands first in the hearts of the American people. No other man's eloquence has charmed and taught so many as has the Nebraskan's, said the governor-elect, who wound up his introduction by saying that Mr. Bryan's chief charm lies in the fact that he believes something and is not afraid to say it. In opening, Mr. Bryan referred to Mr. Smith's talk, telling of the strong friendship existing between the two. He called attention to the loyal manner in which the governor-elect supported him in his former campaigns, and wound up by saying that should it so happen that Mr. Smith should be chosen as the next democratic nominee for president (he said he saw no reason why he should not be) he would support him as loyally."

**A** PHILADELPHIA READER of the Public Ledger writes to that newspaper to say: "Your article this morning, 'Mr. Taft's Task,' hoping he will have backbone enough to fight it out for the passage of the Canadian reciprocity agreement, will be indorsed by all who are wishing a start in the important matter of reducing tariffs. The republican party, through the insurgency of so many of the able men in it, is trying to demonstrate that it can be made capable of protecting the interests of all the people. This demonstration is being attempted by Mr. Taft in his recent speeches, all of which are in the direction taken by the progressive element of his party. Mr. Taft and Mr. Roosevelt are getting more in harmony with each other, which, of course, will be a material aid in impressing the people to leave the correction of existing wrongs to the party that created them and has for so long a time permitted the wrongs to continue. \* \* \* Now, it must be admitted by every thoughtful reader that before long these two men will soon have used all the planks of the Denver convention of 1908 to accomplish their purpose. They and the insurgent republicans are making splendid progress in this direction. Now comes the question: Will the followers of Mr. Bryan (who for the last fourteen years has been the chief promulgator of reform policies) decide to vote for a man of the party which has so long deceived the whole country by evading its pre-election promises? Certainly not. Then, if not, the time has arrived when a man of absolute honesty and ability must be nominated by the democratic convention in 1912. The right man will not only have the votes of Bryan's followers, but will easily add to them from the progressive republicans and carry the democratic party to victory. There is no doubt that much good may be accomplished by Mr. Taft, if he be sincere, during the next eighteen months. If so, every loyal citizen will heartily thank him for what he may do. But even then it will be remembered that he has already proved himself a weakling. No matter what good President Taft may accomplish, the work can be better continued by a democrat whose record shall give assurance that he will courageously insist upon the absolute correction of all intolerable, unjust conditions."

**R**EFERRING TO THE president's relations with the stand-patters, Secretary MacVeagh on the 5th of June, 1909, said that it might at any time become his duty "to create for his party a new majority and control." Commenting upon Mr. MacVeagh's statement, the New York World says: "This seems to have been accomplished in the house of representatives, where a new majority made up of 132 demo-

crats and seventy-eight republicans adopted the Canadian reciprocity agreement, as against a minority composed of eighty-seven republicans and five democrats. So far as the house is concerned, the president has done better than create a new majority and control for his party. He has been instrumental in conferring that blessing upon the entire country. In the ability of honest and progressive democrats and republicans to work together for the public welfare, there is hope for good government that transcends all party lines."

**T**HE NEVADA LEGISLATURE has passed a joint resolution which will be of general interest. The resolution follows: "Resolved, By the republican minority in this joint session of both houses of the Twenty-fifth session of the Nevada legislature, in which a democratic majority has voted to make unanimous the election of a republican candidate to the senate of the United States, that our thanks and congratulations be extended with a hearty good-will to the democratic members for the honorable way in which they have accepted the result of the last election and bowed to the will of the people as expressed by the popular vote. Be it further resolved, that we extend our sincere congratulations and good-will to the Hon. Key Pittman of Nye county, for the unequivocal manner in which he has carried out his part of the 'gentleman's agreement' made between himself and the Hon. George S. Nixon, in the campaign of last fall, in withdrawing from the contest after the result of the election was announced and that he has earned the lasting regard of his political opponents by the fair, able and honorable campaign made by him in his fight for the senatorial toga, thereby making a record of which every true Nevadan may well be proud. Be it further resolved, that the election of a republican, who was chosen by the popular vote, as against a candidate for the same office with a democratic majority in control of the legislature on joint ballot, emphasizes an epoch in American politics of which the senate of the United States may well take heed, until the election of United States senators by a direct vote of the people, shall become the law of the land. Be it further resolved, that a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to both houses of congress in Washington."

**T**HE OKLAHOMA CITY Daily Oklahoman says: "Diogenes need look no further in his search for an honest man. He is at last discovered. While assuring his fellow congressmen that he was not running for the presidential nomination, Representative Champ Clark, of Missouri, and likely to be speaker of the next house, admitted it was pleasant to have his name mentioned in that connection. Such frankness merits the laurel wreath. Much stranger events than the election of Champ Clark to the presidency have transpired, and that this good fortune may fall to his lot is not out of the range of possibility. He is fitted for the big place in more than one respect. He is a democrat, and democrats are more popular at this time than at any other period in the last twenty years. His qualifications are incomparable, for he has been a country newspaper editor and a college president. Presidential responsibilities are a mere bagatelle to a man of such experience."

**H**ERE IS AN interesting suggestion, described in a news item, printed in the El Paso (Texas) Herald: "Declaring that the day of thanksgiving was here when a confederate veteran had been given the highest appointive office in the land by the son of an abolitionist, Zack Lamar Cobb appealed to the women of the south, through the Daughters of the Confederacy, to teach their children to honor the greatest men of American history—Abraham Lincoln and Robert E. Lee. Attorney Cobb delivered the address at the meeting of the El Paso chapter of the Daughters of the Confederacy, which was held Thursday afternoon, to celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Robert E. Lee. He referred to the appoint-