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More Power to Rule Sought by the People

None too early have the people of this country determined to overthrow corruption in national, state and municipal politics. Throughout the land the erstwhile feeble pipings of those who predict the republic's downfall have grown into a loud and bold refrain. These prophets of evil declare that popular government has been weighed in the balance and found wanting and that the people would be more prosperous and contented under a constitutional monarchy. We hear it said that "the most intelligent people" hold this view. If this be true, the most intelligent people have been engaged in a sadly shallow process of reasoning.

It is too early to despair of the republic. It is too early to say that the people would be more contented and prosperous with an imperial figurehead, rather than a president, as their chief executive.

The defects in our present form of government are due to the fact that we have not sufficiently discarded the usages of constitutional monarchies. We are still hampered by governmental theories which popular judgment rejected even in the days of George III. One of the most notable survivals of monarchic rule is the election of our senators by an indirect vote. The framers of the constitution, agreeing on a compromise, accepted the theory that it would be wise to check the power of the lower house of congress by means of a senate indirectly chosen. This fallacious theory has led to much harm in our day. The senate has become a house of lords in which the advocates of special privileges oppose popular laws. The latest evidence of senatorial dereliction was the flagrant course adopted by the committee on interstate commerce. In order to hoodwink the people the committee invited only railway officials and large ship-

pers to testify as to rates and discriminations. This action of the senate committee was taken so that the people may not be too much enraged when, at the next session of congress, the senate antagonizes the president's plan for railway regulation.

If there is to be a remedy for such misuse of power the people will find it in the election of senators by direct vote.

Wherever corruption lifts its head the advocates of reform are urging the people to take the reins of government more firmly into their own hands. Four states and a number of cities have adopted the principle of the initiative and referendum. Seeing themselves confronted by serious perils of a political kind, the people of these cities and states did not seek to obtain relief by a return to exploded forms of government. On the contrary, they placed their hope in direct legislation.

The people have decided to regulate the railways. They have decided that they must purchase their public utilities. They have decided that if they are to obtain good government they must have home rule. In many localities the people have decided that they must have the right to veto measures passed by legislatures and councils and to initiate legislation that their lawmaking bodies have ignored or neglected.

"The most intelligent people" are welcome to their views, but the great mass of the people understand clearly that there must be no retreat, no refuge sought in the outworn tyrannies which our forefathers fought to destroy at Bunker Hill, Trenton, Brandywine, Monmouth, Saratoga and Yorktown. They will have none of kings or of kingly forms. The cry is now "back to the people," and this cry will soon beat down into feeble pipings once more the refrain that of late has grown so loud and bold.

Railway Bureau is at Work Manufacturing Puzzles

The railways of Nebraska now have a literary bureau. It is sending out much useful information—useful to the railways. The Independent is in a position to impart this piece of intelligence because it has received two interesting railroad arguments, neatly typewritten, from the Columbia News Bureau, 915 New York Life Building, Omaha, Neb. One relates to railroad earnings in Nebraska and the other is headed, "Australia as a Horrible Example."

After repeating the statement, which has appeared in several recent issues of The Independent, that Iowa roads with 9,719 miles of railway earned a net profit of only \$15,076,163.63 in 1903, an average of \$1,522.13 per mile, whereas the Nebraska roads with 5,967 miles of railway earned \$16,416,416.77, an average of \$2,883.17 per mile, the writer employs the following argument:

The only method by which the true earnings of the railroads can be determined is based on the actual tonnage of freight hauled. A rate does not become a factor in traffic until it is applied to a commodity shipped, and a given number of miles has no relation to the freight service of a state until the commodity is moved that distance.

As a matter of fact, it would seem that the mileage-earnings argument advanced by champions of governmental rate regulation really is a convincing argument against the crusade. Although Iowa has more than four thousand miles more of rails than Nebraska, her earnings were more than \$1,000,000 less in 1903 than the earnings of the Nebraska roads. The explanation of this anomaly is seen in the state-made freight rates of Iowa. On the straight distance tariff that prevails in that state, traffic has become

congested and localized. Commodity rates, and especially rates to meet urgent commercial necessities, are known no more.

Here in Nebraska intelligent rate making permits of more flexibility, less friction between communities, and a general toning up of the commerce of the state. Is it the intention of the advancers of this mileage-earnings argument to expose the unfortunate situation in Iowa, or do they honestly desire the same conditions to rule in this state?

Perhaps the most attractive feature about this argument is its splendid obscurity. But there is also something truly delightful in the truism that "a rate does not become a factor in traffic until it is applied to a commodity shipped." Whatever hope of convincing the public that Nebraska rates are fair exists in the minds of the literary bureaucrats, it is perhaps true that obscurity and commonplaces will serve their purpose better than clearness and "sweet reasonableness."

The writer must not forget that the figures to which The Independent referred are net profits. If the railways of Nebraska make a net profit of \$16,000,000 a year they will not suffer any hardship if the maximum freight rate law is enforced and freight rates thereby reduced twenty per cent. If the railways make a net profit of only \$2,300 per average mile instead of \$2,800 they will not be compelled to go out of business in Nebraska.

Nebraska will strive to get along without the "general toning up of the commerce of the state" if it can secure lower rates.