

The Commoner.

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Write to Your Senators And Write at Once

A resolution has just passed the house proposing a constitutional amendment providing for the election of United States senators by popular vote. The sentiment in favor of the resolution was so overwhelming that there was no opposition and no roll-call. This is the fourth time that the house of representatives has by a more than two-thirds vote declared itself in favor of this reform, but on three occasions the amendment has been killed in the senate. It must not be killed again.

The house is elected by a direct vote; it comes fresh from the people; it represents the almost unanimous desire of the people for an opportunity to vote directly for United States senators. Will the senate dare to stand in the way of this great reform? Are the senators afraid to risk a reelection at the hands of the people themselves? Do they depend upon money or corporate influence to control state legislatures? What excuse can a senator give for opposing this effort to bring the government nearer to the people? If there are two sides to the question, why haven't the senators who have thus far blocked the progress of the amendment made speeches presenting the objections? The fact is, that the reasons which have actuated the opposition are secret reasons which fear the light.

If the resolution proposing an amendment can be brought to a vote in the senate it will pass, for even those who prefer the election of senators by legislatures are afraid to either speak or vote against what they know to be a popular demand. Now is the time for action—for concerted action. Let every reader of *The Commoner* address a postal card to EACH OF THE SENATORS FROM HIS STATE and urge immediate action upon this resolution. Ask your senators to answer with a promise of support or with a reason for their opposition.

If all the weekly papers throughout the country, and the daily papers that favor this reform, will make a like request of their readers, the senators will be so overwhelmed with cards, letters and petitions that they cannot withstand the pressure. The hour is ripe for action; the question is one of great importance; your influence will have its weight. Do not delay; let your wishes be known. Send postal cards; send letters; send petitions; hold public meetings and forward resolutions. Act, and act at once.

Roosevelt vs. Low.

Mayor Low of New York city and his confidential supporters ought to read Theodore Roosevelt's article in the November (1895) number of the *Cosmopolitan*. In this article the president discusses the taking of the New York police out of politics, and his comments on the enforcement of the law ought to be seriously considered by Mayor Low before he makes up his mind to exercise "discretion" in the enforcement of the statutes of New York and the ordinances of the city. Mr. Low will be especially interested in the

following sentence: "It is a lamentable thing when the people and the public officials alike grow to think that laws should only be enforced as far as the officers of the law think that public opinion demands their enforcement. It is such a belief that inevitably leads to lynching, white-capping and kindred forms of outrage."

The president says (or said, he may not entertain the same opinion now in regard to the anti-trust laws): "An officer to whom is confined the carrying out of the laws has no such discretion." Another extract illustrates the emphasis with which Mr. Roosevelt can state a proposition (or could):

"Some years ago a then noted politician stated that the golden rule and the decalogue had no place in practical politics, and that the purification of politics was but an iridescent dream. The base cynicism of such an utterance endears it to the knave and the fool, and under one or the other of these categories we must place every man who does not condemn it."

There seems to be no way to ensure peace among republicans except to destroy history, for so long as the people are allowed to read today what was said yesterday, republicans will be continually confronted with what republican leaders have said in the past in condemnation of what republican leaders are doing now.

Local Option in Taxation.

The Colorado legislature at its last regular session proposed an amendment to the constitution, providing that once in four years the voters of any county in the state may at a general election "exempt, or refuse to exempt, from all taxation from county, city, town, school, road, and other local purposes, any or all personal property and improvements on land; but neither the whole nor any part of the full cash value of any rights of way, franchises in public ways, or land, exclusive of the improvements thereon, shall be so exempted. Provided, however, that such question be submitted to the voters by virtue of a petition therefor, signed and sworn to by not less than 100 resident taxpayers of such county, and filed with the county clerk and recorder not less than thirty nor more than ninety days before the day of election."

The object of this amendment is to permit the trial of the single tax idea in any county where a majority of the voters so desire. An effort is being made at the called session of the legislature to withdraw the amendment from consideration. The amendment is supported, first, by the advocates of the single tax, and, second, by those who, although they may not believe in the single tax, are willing that the people of a community shall have the privilege of adjusting their system of taxation to suit their own needs and ideas. Those who have faith in the doctrine of local self-government and who believe that the people of a community are capable of determining what is

best for them, will find it difficult to oppose the amendment. In the first place the experiment cannot be tried unless a majority of the people of the county desire it, and after it has been tried the people of the county have a right to determine whether the system shall be continued or changed. What objection can the people of one county make if the people of another county favor the experiment? Every good citizen is anxious for the ultimate triumph of every correct principle, and the correctness of a principle can only be determined by experiment. A theory must be tested by experience before it can secure any extended indorsement. If the single tax theory proves to be a good one, it will spread. If it proves unsatisfactory, it will be abandoned, but whether it spreads or is abandoned, good and not harm will come from the amendment which has been submitted to the people of Colorado. To withdraw it now would indicate either a fear that the people will not act wisely in their own matters or a fear that the single tax principle may, if tried, prove successful. The democrats and populists of Colorado cannot afford to entertain either fear.

A Letter From Madden.

Two weeks ago *The Commoner* referred to a ruling of the postoffice department and published the editor's letter requesting further information. It is only fair to the readers of *The Commoner* that they should be informed of the department's reply. Below will be found a letter recently received from Hon. Edwin C. Madden, third assistant postmaster general:

Washington, D. C., Feb. 7, 1902.—Hon. Wm. Jennings Bryan, Lincoln, Neb.—Sir: In response to your favor of the 31st ultimo, permit me to suggest that while it may not be "incumbent upon the proprietor of a paper to inquire into the reason for a subscription when the subscription is received," he can hardly be ignorant of an effort, either individual or combined, to extend the circulation of his publication to non-subscribers in furtherance of the personal ends of the individual or combination, whether the purpose of such circulation be financial advantage or otherwise.

The law makes no provision for "gift" subscriptions to second-class publications, but the department has, as a matter of sufferance, permitted one person to subscribe for another or for a limited number of copies for others. Were no restriction placed upon the practice, however, it might readily bring about a circulation so largely gratuitous to the recipients, as to subject the publication to a denial of the second-class rates of postage, under the proviso of paragraph 4, section 277, P. L. & R. (Act of March 3, 1879) which prohibits admission to said class of "periodical publications designed primarily for free circulation."

Copies of second-class publications sent by publishers as "complimentary" are analagous to "gift" subscriptions. The practice of mailing such copies as to "subscribers" has obtained for many years, and the department, believing the publishers of legitimate publications could neither afford nor be willing to unduly exercise the privilege, has left it largely