

not to die of starvation while there was bread reaped by him? It is among the *Mights of Man!*"

Pray let no one be such a silly fate-defying fool as to take for violent threats what are but friendly warnings. Of disaster these warnings are, indeed—and of disaster inevitable, of the world-old kind, if the world-old crime of the classes against the masses be persisted in. You can avoid the catastrophe if you help establish justice. But if you keep on pampering your own insanely selfish desires for luxury, or your pride of power, until you have exploited out of the toiling millions everything but those primal faculties of the savage to which Carlyle gives name—Ferocity and Appetite, strength grounded in hunger—the disaster will overwhelm you, overwhelm us all, as inevitably as effect follows cause.

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Are you blind to the menacing signs that even now appear? The necessity for an armored baby carriage, and doubtless it is a necessity, is one of them. Is there no fateful meaning to you in the growing violence attending labor strikes? nor in such more advanced signs as mutinies of long trained policemen when ordered on strike duty? Haven't you read of something like this in stories of the French Revolution? Are you, like the French seigneurs, so insane as to imagine that repressive laws can control their ferocity and appetite, their strength grounded in hunger, once you have stripped your toilers of all but these? You may imprison them, you may kill them. Aye, but not so can you kill that which perennially raises them up in savage revolt. This is your crime against them, and you can kill that only by giving it up and sinning against them no more.

Is it not more wise, more human, more honest, to do as Joseph Fels is doing—acknowledge that the overwealthy, whether they intend to be thieves or not, owe their wealth to economic institutions that defy the mandate "Thou shalt not steal," and set about abolishing those institutions by educational methods? Instead of making war upon the impoverished and growingly impatient toiling class, would it not be better, even for yourselves—you of the Pullman-car-pup class, and you of the hundred-million-dollar baby class—wouldn't it be better for you, infinitely better for your babies, and no worse for your pampered pups, to soften your aristocratic or plutocratic wrath and anticipate an otherwise inevitable disaster by helping to do away with its cause? The cause is institutional. You may be no more to blame for it than are those whose earnings are your plunder. But you are in

better position than they to rid our civilization of it.

You have only to be a little less selfish, a little more thoughtful, a little more patriotic, a little less pious and more religious, a little more courageous with the courage called moral.

"Thou shalt not steal"—neither against law nor by authority of law.

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## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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### TAMING THE LEGISLATURE.

Portland, Ore., Aug. 13.

"Business government," as the term is used by the People's Power League of Oregon (p. 753), does not mean government of the people by Big Business, but government conducted on business principles so as to give the people a dollar's worth of government for every one hundred cents spent for government.

That seems like a dream until you think of it.

But, after all, government is organized, as far as the people are concerned, to get bread-and-butter results; and if government is on the red-ink side of the ledger the results are not encouraging.

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In Oregon as well as in every other State it is necessary, in order to get bread-and-butter results from government, to tame the legislature, to make some changes in the judicial system, to change the whole system of county and city government, and change the executive system. So this year the People's Power League proposes to amend the legislative article of the Constitution so as to tame the legislature, and to amend the judiciary article.

The more important legislative changes proposed are:

1. A six-year term for all members of the legislature abolishing the hold-over system for Senators.
2. Election of Senators and Representatives by a system of proportional representation, so as to have a square deal and less misrepresentation.
3. Power vested in the voters to recall any member, or the whole Senate, or the whole House of Representatives, or the whole legislature.
4. The presiding officers of the two chambers of the legislature shall not be members of the legislature, shall appoint no committees and shall have no voice or vote.
5. Making the life of a bill six years, if necessary, so that it may be acted upon at any time without dying a natural death because of adjournment.
6. Giving the majority of the members of each chamber the power to call a special session of the legislature.
7. Limiting the power of the legislature to use the "emergency clause" in passing a bill so as to prevent the filing of a referendum petition.
8. Amending the legislator's oath so as to prevent or minimize log rolling.

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The corporation papers say the amendment is "hasty and ill-considered legislation."

Hasty! It has been "in the shop," from forge to anvil and back and forth, about two years. The proposed changes have been rewritten from five to fifteen times, and some of the best lawyers in Oregon have gone over the changes with great care.

But of course the amendment is "ill considered," for the new sections have not been endorsed by corporation lawyers.

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What is the reason for the proposed changes?

Briefly, the amendment is proposed to get better legislators and better service for the people; to get at least 85 cents' worth of legislation and legislature for \$1, if 100 cents worth can't be got. The six-year term will enable even a comparatively useless legislator to learn something and become useful if he has the stuff in him; if he hasn't, his constituents can recall him and try another man. Besides the six-year term is a step toward the short ballot; and it is more than likely that an efficient man will be re-elected.

Under the proportional representation provision of the amendment, any one-sixtieth of the voters of the State will be able to elect a member of the House, and any one-thirtieth a member of the Senate—for there are to be, as now, thirty Senators and sixty Representatives.

Candidates for the legislature are to be nominated in districts, as at present, but will be elected by the voters of the State at large. That will put an end to the system by which, in 1906, 50,000 Republican voters in Oregon elected 59 members of the House of Representatives, while the 40,000 other voters elected only one member.

The reason for giving the people power to recall any member, or either chamber, or the whole legislature is obvious. Congress would be less troublesome and far more useful if the people had the recall power. The last three Oregon legislatures would have spent more time representing the people if that recall provision had been in force. If the 1909 legislature had served the people, there would be not more than 15 measures on the ballot this year, instead of 32. It is well for the people to have power to emphasize the fact that they are not the servants of the legislature.

The only other provision that needs explanation is the limitation on the use of the emergency clause. The initiative and referendum provision of the Constitution gives the legislature the right to enact urgency or emergency laws by declaring that an emergency exists, and prohibits the filing of a referendum petition against a law enacted with the emergency clause attached. That has given machine legislators opportunity to commit legislative outrages by tacking the emergency clause to all sorts of laws so as to shut off the referendum. Under the proposed amendment, three-fourths of all the members elected to each chamber must vote, on roll call, for an emergency section, apart from the vote on the bill. A bill thus passed does not go to the Governor, but is filed with the Secretary of State. A referendum petition may be filed against it, but the law remains in force until the people approve or reject it.

The amendment provides, further, that no statute, ordinance or resolution approved by vote of the people shall be amended or repealed by the legislature or a

city council except by a three-fourths vote of all the members elected, taken by yeas and nays, which is a good provision, seeing that the people's "representatives" in two cases repealed laws enacted by the people. Whether that was done ignorantly or maliciously is not of much consequence so far as the result is concerned.

The purpose of this amendment, then, is to make the people's power fence "horse high, pig tight and bull strong" in case a legislature may try to get through it or over it or to push it down.

The amendment is not an egg from which to hatch a millennium. It will be, if adopted, another step on the road towards representative government and away from the present system of delegated government.

The Federal Constitution guarantees to every State a "republican form government;" but what the people of the States get is delegated government, which is neither republican nor representative in substance, whatever it may be in form. If the people of Oregon approve this amendment, they will snuff out a good deal of what one of the justices of the Oregon Supreme Court piously calls "damned insolence in office."

W. G. EGGLESTON.

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## THE DES MOINES PLAN IN OPERATION.

Des Moines, Ia.

The Des Moines Plan\* was conceived in its first form by a local Big Business man who greatly admired that of Galveston, and who, we have reason to believe, thought five commissioners more manageable than nine.

When he presented his idea to the Commercial Club, a body supposedly guiltless of reform tendencies, it was, after much discussion, accepted—but with the addition of the referendum and recall, the head and the hands, as it were, to Mr. Berryhill's torso.

The Plan was then drafted into shape by attorneys and submitted to Governor Cummins, who approved, but added the double election clause by which any man with signatures of twenty-five qualified voters can become a candidate listed alphabetically with the others on the tickets for the primary; the two having the highest number of votes for Mayor, and the eight having the highest number of votes for Commissioner, being the candidates for the final election two weeks later. Thus were the feet put on to the thing.

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Before the bill was up before the Legislature, it seemed to have so little support that nobody thought it would pass—which partly accounts for its passing. The opposition had not fully taken alarm; although certain alleged deputations did claim that their town was frightfully opposed to it—opposed to having the option of a wider extension of its powers! So we were told that the slaves just "honed" to remain in bondage.

The editor of the Register and Leader was accused of hovering this bill, over at the State house, and

\*See this volume of The Public, pages 298, 387.