

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.

+

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.

+ + +

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.

+

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.

causing it to be hatched; but he denies being a reformer, says others did the main thing.

+

The campaign for the Des Moines Plan bisected the hitherto united Democratic fraternity of leaders and united the warring Republican factions. At least the Standpat daily shouted as lustily for the Plan as the Register and the News.

So a new evening paper was set up in opposition; it was known to be an organ of the corporations. But why did the Standpat paper, also an organ of the corporations, work for the Plan? For the purpose of discrediting it, as Wall Street ostensibly opposes what it most desires? The voter was kept guessing.

This Frankenstein of original plutocratic construction, had grown so democratic that it was a menace to its progenitors and it must be killed.

+

The town was a debating school in hall and street corner.

Local wiseacres rushed into the newspaper arena for and against. Was it safe to trust the fruit of democratic methods grafted onto a plutocratic seedling? Was this deference to "business methods" in city government indeed an abandonment of democratic principles?

Mr. Louis F. Post was appealed to; his opinion was given in double column, flanked by a biographical sketch, and may have turned the tide. How easy a thing is when you know it! The plans and purposes of a community, he said in effect (vol. x, p. 291) are politics and must be settled by vote; the execution of those purposes are business and must be conducted on business principles—must be entrusted to few enough persons to insure an undivided responsibility—but with an efficient recall in the hands of the people. He declared the Plan to be the best yet submitted to any city.

+

But between those who were afraid the Plan would not work and those who were afraid it would, the city was imperiled like the fabled man whose two wives alternately pulled out his grey hairs and his black ones. But it was, after all, the grey hairs of our bad though time-honored system that were plucked.

And now, on strictly non-partisan lines, five commissioners were to be elected at large—no more ward districts—each man to be under the loop of a recall; they were to assume the responsibility heretofore carried by nine, together with the police court, the fire department, the parks and the public library.

The abolition of party lines, the obligation to admit the public to all sessions of the council and to print monthly reports of all proceedings in pamphlet form, the publication of a sworn statement of all campaign funds was much, but the obliteration of ward lines was perhaps more. The city, not the ward, was now the unit. Each candidate had to appear in all the wards, to bear the

scrutiny and answer the questions of all the voters and some of the women.

+

But here a sprite of mischief seemed to enter our Civic, or Commercial Club men.

Through some hocus pocus, some elaborate system of sifting committees, a group of five candidates was evolved; their names were published as "the citizens' ticket" with the assurance that this five were all of just the right age, from just the right parts of town, with just the right ability; that if the whole bunch were elected they would be harmonious and give thorough satisfaction. That two good men were in the bunch was conceded, a third man was suspected of plutocratic tendencies and the other two were generally unknown; the average citizen sniffed at the aggregation and said: "Why must I have my candidates bunched up for me like that? When I am offered fruit or fish tied up in bunches seldom are more than two good in the lot. Moreover, it has a stale smell of old methods we voted to get rid of. And how comes it that harmony can be guaranteed in advance? Have they so covenanted already? We have had bales of harmony in our city government in the past, the harmony of mice about a cheese, and no good came of that." And amidst ridicule and suspicion the bunch of five passed into oblivion.

The last election saw no "slate."

+

Operation of the Plan will be smoother when, either by law or custom, all the lines between the departments, both as to duties and appointing power, can be definitely drawn. Then it would seem that the four commissioners should be chosen with reference to the particular department they are best fitted for. The head of the Department of Public Safety would need a different kind of ability from that of Accounts and Finance; and so on. But this might settle itself if each candidate would specify the department he was running for.

+

The opponents of the Plan saw one snag they said was likely to make trouble: In case of petitions for a referendum or a recall, the decision as to whether all names were those of qualified voters is left to the City Clerk. It was said that, were he so inclined, he could find the list of names inadequate and block election indefinitely.

But the snag we actually struck was not that one, but another. Before last spring's election (pp. 298, 318, 387) a petition of 2,100 names, many more than the 25 per cent called for, was sent to the City Commissioners, recommending the submission of an ordinance inimical to one of the great public utility concerns. The Clerk verified the names on the petition all right and the Council voted to permit an election on this matter, but Judge James A. Howe, of a district court of this county, the very same who handed down a decision that the whole Des Moines Plan was constitutional, enjoined the City Council from allowing this election, partly on

the ground that the thing asked for was not according to any express law, but partly that the necessary act of the City Clerk in passing upon the validity of the names on the petition was "judicial" and not legislative, and was hence illegal! Until this question is tried out by the State Supreme Court, it would seem that any effort to use the initiative or recall can be blocked in the same way.

+

Likewise the city attorneys appointed by the late administration and still in office, seem able to block any aggressive move on the part of the city. So far they have declared illegal what the corporations want declared illegal, and that settles it. The Commissioners seem unable to move after that.

If the city attorneys were really the people's advocates, and a just thing seemed to have legal obstacles, they would say we will test the matter and see if these things are legal. If they lost the suit, they would then prepare a bill to present to the legislature to legalize the right instead of the wrong. A whole city government would have much more influence with a legislature than any group of individuals. But the City Solicitors, like the Federal Supreme Court, take the color of the administration that appoints.

LONA INGHAM ROBINSON.

+ + +

PROGRESSIVE POLITICS IN CANADA.

Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Manitoba and the Canadian west are not behind in the world movement toward democracy. Many men and forces are at work in various ways, with greater and lesser intelligence, solving the problems that cause social inequality. The election in July saw the return of the Tory administration in this Province, but with a decreased majority, and more hope that four years hence it will be dislodged from its present well fortified position.

Fundamental reformers were particularly interested in the candidature of F. J. Dixon (Manitoba League for Taxation of Land Values) who was the nominee (p. 662) of the Labor party for the constituency of Centre Winnipeg. Dixon, who proved an admirable and powerful candidate, is without doubt the best speaker on any side of politics in Manitoba.

It was our first taste of practical politics. We had much to learn; were defeated, but have nothing to regret. Direct legislation, single tax, and an amendment to the injunction laws in the interest of organized labor, were the issues to which Mr. Dixon confined his fight. When the votes were counted he was 73 low in a ballot of 4,000. Had it not been for a shameless padding of the lists, combined with liquor interest alliance and other tricks, the Opposition would undoubtedly have been successful. We estimate that Mr. Dixon would have won easily with a majority of 300 on a fair list of legitimate voters. However, the campaign was a splendid advertiser and served to bring many fundamental reformers to our support, of whose political views we previously had no suspicion.

During the campaign Mr. F. E. Coulter of Port-

land, Oregon, arrived on the scene and rendered service which proved of exceptional value. He addressed several meetings in the city and then went to the country to help other candidates who stood for direct legislation. From all reports, he captured the farmers in a body.

The Liberal party in this Province espoused the cause of direct legislation, though judging from platform utterances, many of their candidates knew little of its merits and were very timid about making it the paramount issue. The labor unions have endorsed direct legislation as have also the farmers' organizations, which are very strong. In this propaganda we can count upon the support of all the Liberal and independent newspapers, and in addition, the agricultural press. In this way we hope to force the hands of the Government. We will suggest to them a plebiscite upon the question at the opportune moment, as the best way to extricate themselves from an impossible position, and we are reasonably assured of success.

After we have won direct legislation, we propose to devote our energies to the taxation of land values. At the present moment we have in this Province a system of land area taxation, the improvements being exempt in all rural municipalities. Our effort will be to change this to conform to our own views. We will then devote our energies to winning the cities of Winnipeg and Brandon to our idea. Then we shall have a whole Province under the single tax, for whatever Winnipeg and Brandon do, the lesser towns are certain to do. The example of Vancouver (p. 675) is having a wonderful effect in producing converts to the system of municipal single tax.

The Liberal party in Manitoba has of late manifested a desire to become more liberal. This has had a splendid effect. The activities of the farmers' organizations are also very much felt. They stand for public ownership, free trade, direct legislation; and a very large proportion of them, particularly among the leaders of their movement, are fundamental single taxers.

Sir Wilfred Laurier, the premier of the Dominion, in the progress of a tour he has been making throughout the West, has been met by those who voice very radical demands. Everywhere deputation after deputation waited on him asking for legislation which, on the whole, is consistent with the best principles of democracy. Among the demands which some Liberal Associations have made upon the Premier are a request for absolute free trade, taxation of land values, and equal suffrage.

ROBERT LLOYD SCOTT.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

THE SECRET OF A GREAT FORTUNE.

Boston, Mass., Aug. 13.

"White umbrellas and elephants mad with pride are the flowers of a grant of land," in the Orient, and vastly richer equivalents in the Occident.

Col. E. A. Stevens, whose ancestral home at Castle Point, N. J., is one of the most conspicuous places within sight of New York harbor, has just been dividing his vast estate among his heirs, and retaining a