
EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

WRECKING THE STEAM ROLLER IN OREGON.*

Portland, Ore., Aug. 6.

The performance of the Roosevelt-Hitchcock-Taft steam roller at the Republican national convention in 1908 gave an idea to Senator Jonathan Bourne, of Oregon; and the People's Power League of that State has put the idea into a bill and submitted it by Initiative petition to the voters at the ballot box in November.

This bill extends the provisions of the Oregon direct primary law, which was enacted by the voters, to Presidential nominations, to nominations of Presidential electors and to delegates to national conventions. It is a cruel blow at "the administration," because it is a method by which the Presidential hand would be shut out of the selection of Presidential candidates and delegates to national conventions; a most foul blow at such political saints as Hitchcock, because it would virtually retire them from their business of interfering with the people's business; and a wicked attack upon the divine right of corporations to assist White House politicians and party saints in nominating Presidential candidates, regardless of the wishes of the people.

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If the people of Oregon approve this bill, there will be a new deal in Oregon, because every voter of every political party will have opportunity to "vote his preference, on his party nominating ballot, for one person to be the candidate of his political party for President, and one person to be the candidate of his political party for Vice-President of the United States."

It will not be necessary for any candidate for the nomination to sign any petition or other paper, but his political supporters will place his name on the ballot. In that way, each party in Oregon will determine, by majority vote at the primaries, its choice for its candidate for President.

That will make the steam roller skid into a stone wall.

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Next, the members of the political parties will, at the same primary election, nominate their candidates for Presidential electors; and it is just possible that when this choice is left to the voters they will nominate some real men as Presidential electors.

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Third—and this provision will make the steam roller turn over and quit rolling,—under the proposed bill every voter will have the right at that same primary election to vote for one person, and no more, as a delegate to the national convention of his party; and "a number of such candidates equal to the number of delegates to be elected by each party . . . receiving, respectively, each for himself, the highest number of votes for such office, shall be thereby elected."

*See The Public of August 5, page 729.

In the same way, each voter may vote for one candidate, and no more, for Presidential elector.

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A fourth provision interferes with the vested right of corporations to provide funds for the traveling expenses of delegates to national conventions and with the iron law that prevents a poor man from going to a national convention unless he will accept money and "pass under the yoke."

The bill provides that every delegate shall receive from the State treasury the amount of his traveling expenses necessarily spent in actual attendance upon the convention, as his account may be audited and allowed by the Secretary of State, but in no case to exceed \$200 for each delegate; "provided, that such expenses shall never be paid to any greater number of delegates of any political party than would be allowed such party under the plan by which the number of delegates to the Republican national convention was fixed for the Republican party of Oregon in the year 1908."

Every such delegate will be required to subscribe to an oath that he will uphold the Constitution and laws of the United States and of the State of Oregon, and that he will, as such officer and delegate, to the best of his judgment and ability, faithfully carry out the wishes of his political party as expressed by its voters at the time of his election.

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The committee or organization that files a petition to place the name of any person on the nominating ballot of their political party for President or Vice-President, will have the right to use, upon payment therefor, four pages in the party campaign book—which is provided for under the Corrupt Practices Act, a law enacted by the people; and any voter may use as much as four pages, at \$100 a page, to advocate or oppose a candidate for President or Vice-President in that book.

And in the State Campaign Book, also provided for under the Corrupt Practices Act, a person nominated for President or Vice-President, or his supporters with his permission, may use four pages, without charge, to set forth the reasons why he should be elected.

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What would happen to the steam roller if half a dozen of the more populous States had such a law in operation?

And what chance would a Hitchcock have to draw a Cabinet position as his "honorarium" for operating the machine?

Think about it.

W. G. EGGLESTON.

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AN OBJECT LESSON FOR LABOR.

On Chesapeake Bay.

Labor conditions in the tidal basin of the Chesapeake illustrate beautifully the relation of free natural opportunities to wages, and throw an interesting light on the race question, which, of course is also a labor question.

The tidal area of Maryland, Delaware and Virginia bordering the Chesapeake and its half-score of big and two or three score little tributaries, is a

region where no industrious and able-bodied man or woman need lack food, clothing or shelter, and where average thrift and intelligence are rewarded with many physical comforts and some luxuries. Poverty as we know it in urban communities is really rare in this region, and hunger is uncommon except as most healthy persons know it, say two or three times a day.

Land in the narrow sense of the actual soil, is monopolized as private property here as elsewhere, but the land of the Chesapeake's tidal basin, although easily cultivated and highly productive, is poor compared with the teeming waters of the Bay and its tributaries. And the natural opportunities of the waters are free.

Anyone may catch fish in these waters, any one may dig clams, any one may catch soft shell crabs, and any one upon paying a moderate license fee may take oysters; and there is practically always for these and other products of the Chesapeake waters, a sure and profitable market.

No one who knows even the rudimentary principles of political economy, needs to be told that the effect of these conditions is to make the earnings of a self-employed person occupied in the waters, the great arbiter of wages.

The men who own farms, the men who cultivate oysters in private beds, the men who put up vegetables and the creatures that come out of the water, can not long squeeze wages below the point that will send the surplus workers to the water as fishermen.

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There is a danger to the future of the colored people in these free natural opportunities.

Fishing even in the Chesapeake has a large element of luck, and is a business that a man may neglect if he will; for the riches of the waters seem inexhaustible, and as yet no man is permitted to make private property of the depths, or to fence off his fellows from the natural oyster deposits.

The colored man, with the social defects that may be partly racial, and are certainly intensified by recent slavery, is prone to choose the alluring freedom of self-employment upon the waters rather than the steady job of wage-earning ashore.

Here and there one finds landowners who refuse to employ the pleasure-loving Negro, and industrial administrators who likewise distinguish against him. At the same time there is a recurrent agitation for the extension of private ownership to lands under water. There is also a constant disposition to distinguish against the Negro in the matter of the suffrage. The Negro himself is apt to be indifferent to the exercise of his political rights, and he tends more and more to leave politics, land ownership, and even employment on the soil to the white.

The naked proposal to sell the fishing rights of the Chesapeake and its tributaries to the highest bidder would ruin any man who should advocate it today; but if the time shall come when the Negroes are almost the exclusive users of those free natural opportunities, it is not difficult to imagine that private ownership may be extended by law to all that is best worth having in the waters.

Already the question of private ownership of land under water has made rather startling advances in Maryland; and the argument that the wastefulness of those who avail themselves of free natural opportunities must end in the destruction of such natural opportunities, is not only specious, but has a substantial foundation in fact.

Men lose not their liberties always by sudden acts of autocratic tyranny; they may deliberately vote them away, or listlessly acquiesce in their gradual seizure by the few. When the waters of the Chesapeake as well as the adjoining dry land are owned by private persons, the laborer, be he black or white, will find wages tending toward the point of bare subsistence.

And then the real poverty will appear in this fortunate region.

EDWARD N. VALLANDIGHAM.

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CHARTER-MAKING IN LOUISIANA.

New Iberia, La., July 30.

A committee of citizens appointed for the purpose recently drafted a charter for New Iberia according to the commission plan of municipal government. It follows the Grand Junction charter, though weaker in some respects, owing to provisions of our State Constitution and because public opinion here is conservative; but we have avoided some of the weak points of the Grand Junction charter. This draft was accepted by the town Council and was passed by the legislature, subject, however, to ratification by the voters before it becomes effective.

As it goes to the people, the charter provides for the Initiative, Referendum and Recall; does away with party nominations and designations; provides strictly for the Australian ballot, and calls for the election of officers by preferential vote, with authority to adopt a preferential ballot as to all officers if desired. It gives the commissioners (or trustees, as they are termed) greater authority and responsibility than the Grand Junction charter allows, and precludes interference with them by the Council. The minimum wage rate is cut out.

EDWARD T. WEEKS.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

A RESOLUTION WITH TEETH.

Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 6.

An interesting incident of the recent State Democratic convention, to me at least, was the reception given by the Committee on Resolutions to the following, namely: "We heartily endorse the movement for the conservation of our State and national resources; we hold that in the taxing power we possess the necessary force to reclaim those resources that have been alienated, and to preserve the remnant to the people,"—which I, as a member of the committee on resolutions, offered as a substitute for the "ready to wear" resolution on conservation prepared by the State central committee.

It had hardly been read before its nature was fully appreciated by a railroad contractor, a railroad