

Self-Made Laws

THE AMERICAN legislator who gave to every proposal for an enactment the most thoroughgoing analysis and applied every conceivable argument against all doubtful terms in a proposed bill, is not so far back in our history that we have lost track of him, but if our observations are made from the high peak of modern legislative rush, the venerable progenitor becomes almost mythical, at least we are safe in calling him or his methods so antedeluvian that American legislative antecedents, figuratively speaking, might reasonably begin where Noah began when he stepped ashore on the mountain of Ararat.

The receiving station for bills of the modern state legislature is now commonly referred to as a "hopper" and conjured into a a gluttenous beast with a most insatiable craving for bills. No matter how crude the bills are, the hopper hops and turns out the finished product—laws and more laws—while the average legislative member registers approval without knowledge of what the bills actually contain.

Oregon with its three-quarter of a million people is said to be one of the most law-harnessed states in the Union, and its people are becoming weary under the burden of all our laws.

Government in Oregon has consequently in many respects, become unwieldy and uncertain. The executive authorities are invariably called upon to determine how far each law shall apply within their respective jurisdictions. And the indisputable facts are that **they do**. The courts also disagree when these uncertain laws are brought to them for interpretation. Legislation is a serious business. It is a dangerous pastime to indulge in. When executive officers are forced to disregard the mandate of the law, in the interest of the common good, the barometer of common respect for law has dropped below zero.

That lawlessness begins where careless legislation ends is something that ought to produce a sobering thought in the minds of those who are feeding the legislative hoppers in America in '27.



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