

THE OREGON WEEKLY

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MONDAY, MARCH 13, 1905

WHO WANTS THE REFERENDUM?

Within the last few days a movement has been started by some men in the state—disappointed politicians and creatures of remarkable shortsightedness—to invoke the referendum on the appropriation bill covering the allowances made for the state institutions. The effect of this measure if brought to bear upon the appropriation bill, will be to tie up the money set aside for the several institutions for two years, during which time they will all be hampered and held back, being limited to the regular standing appropriations, and having no chance at all to make a single advance or to care for already crying needs. In other words most of the institutions, particularly the educational ones, will have to take a noticeable backward step, with no chance to go forward or even hold their own during the two years' inquisition which would follow the invoking of the referendum measure. The action of these "representative taxpayers," "public-spirited citizens," who so strongly oppose the bestowing of what are small sums, when compared with the appropriations made for educational institutions in other states, is one of the most foolish and groundless agitations that has ever been started in this state. The great cause of the wild outcry seems to be the appropriations made for the state normal schools, meager enough as they are. Oregon has prided herself on the way in which she has come to the front in the last few years, and is looking forward to a very bright future. A little glance at figures will show clearly where she stands today in compar-

ison with two of her sister states, in the matter of normal school appropriations alone. This year Washington will make the per capita appropriation for normal school purposes 28 cents, Idaho, 21 cents and Oregon 11 cents. The comparison is hardly flattering for Oregon. Still the "sages of Yamhill" have considered it their duty to try and have the 11 cent allowance either greatly reduced or totally done away with, and in so doing involve all the other public institutions of the state in the throes of a two years' existence on credit. The absurdity of the agitation has called forth a general comment in the state press against those pushing the movement, and papers have not been reserved in branding the agitators as the "mossiest of mossbacks."

The effect of applying referendum measures to the public appropriation bill cannot be other than most absolutely deleterious to our state. The first and foremost effect will be the tying of the hands of all the public institutions of the state, and the next baneful effect, partly resultant from the first, will be the heralding of the fact that Oregon is not minded to have best educational system possible. People today are coming to the point where in large numbers, they want the best or none at all, especially in school facilities. A great per cent of the people who are immigrating to our state make a thorough investigation of the educational facilities before they decide to come. At present neighboring states are making a greater advance in general education than Oregon is, and it is not hard to see how much our prospects will be damaged if we now are put a step back of our present condition. Oregon cannot afford, in the year of its greatest celebration, the Lewis and Clark Centennial, when the state will be filled with people looking for a location in the West, to think of lowering the standard of her school system in any way. The county which has always been so proud of its resources and outputs—Yamhill, and which seems to be the birthplace of the referendum spectre, has had for a motto, "Yamhill against the world." It has been remarked that outsiders will add two words to the former slogan, making it "Yamhill against the world for mossbackism." It is good to note, however, that generally the good people of the state frown upon tampering with the legislature's work.

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