

Polk County Observer

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THE WILL OF THE PEOPLE?

Three additional referendum petitions were filed with Secretary of State Olcott Saturday. They are aimed at the county attorney bill, the workmen's compensation act and the sterilization bill. All of which simply goes to show that it is possible to secure signatures for anything in Oregon. All that is necessary is time and money. Practically every fellow you meet will sign any petition you ask him to, but the work goes much more rapidly in the tenderloin districts in cities, for the reason that the population is more condensed and drinks are easy. The referendum was designed as a means to give the people an opportunity to pass upon legislation. The plain people were to be asked to say whether or not they wanted a certain law or measure, and the idea was hailed as the nearest approach to popular government that had been devised. It looked well and sounded better, yet we now have the assurance of men who are in a position to know, that the reference of the compensation bill has been done by the money of the foreign casualty companies, aided and abetted by the ambulance chasing lawyers. There can be no question about the attitude of the people of Oregon regarding this law. The great majority of them want it. The workingmen want it. It was carefully drawn after a commission composed of leading manufacturers and representatives of the laboring interest had spent months in a thorough investigation of the matter, and the inspection of the compensation of other states with such laws. The law which passed the recent legislature was admitted to be as nearly perfect as it was possible to make any measure where the interests affected were so widespread. It encountered no opposition worthy the name and it was hailed as a means whereby the men who earn their living by the sweat of their face, were to be made independent and not susceptible to the wiles and the chicanery of the unprincipled corporation or the pettifogger.

But the workmen's compensation act on the statute books and in force would practically put the casualty companies out of business. It would force the ambulance chasers to get out and make an honest living and it would raise havoc generally with the present system of bleeding the corporations and blinding the workmen and the injured. It would place the state on an equality with sister states which have adopted the same plan years ago and who are pleased with its practical workings.

But, under the peculiar construction of the state constitution, it is possible for the casualty corporations to oppose their power to the will of the people, and hold up this legislation at least until the special election called by statute for the coming fall. It is questionable, further, whether this election will be held. It will not be, if the interests which are behind the reference of the compensation act and the university appropriations can prevent it. Already Parkison has started the machinery of law seeking to have the measure declared unconstitutional, for, only in that way, can he hold up the Oregon State University for two years more.

Thus it may be seen that the casualty companies and Parkison are greater than the people of the state and that the simple matter of securing a few signatures to a petition, the nature of which probably not 50 per cent of those who signed them were familiar, or cared a continental, is sufficient to hold up legislation indefinitely. Is it probable that the people of Oregon will consent to be led by the nose by this man Parkison and by the representatives of the casualty companies who have grown rich off the earnings of the workingmen in our factories, mills and logging camps? The Observer does not believe it. We do not believe that even the insurance people or Parkison himself expect to defeat either the compensation act or the university appropriation, but they know they will be able to hold them up until fall and, in the event that the proposed special referendum election shall be declared unconstitutional, for two years.

Shame on a system that permits

such trading on the rights and the wishes of the great majority of the people of Oregon!
 It needs fixing.

OFF WRONG AGAIN.

In his misguided zeal to embarrass State Printer Duniway, Oregon's spectacular governor has made one of the most pronounced bobbles in all his erratic career as misfit in the chief executive chair of the state. While contemplating what new move he might make in opposition to Mr. Duniway, West thought of a plan to have the convicts at the state penitentiary do all the printing possible for the state. Of course the possibility of having sufficient convicts who are printers at the pen, never entered into the consideration and he immediately rushed into print with his plan. And when he did so, he at once invited the criticism of the typographical union whose good offices and plaudits he has always been after. Union printers didn't view with glee the attempt to turn over the state printing to convict labor and West at once found himself the center of a foaming cauldron which seriously threatened to unseat him as the guardian angel of union labor at Salem. Now, he sees his mistake and comes forward with the weak plea that, inasmuch as convicts are doing the painting and carpentry work, and serve in other capacities at the penitentiary, there is no reason why the printers should not also be employed at their profession.

So long as the convicts were employed solely in doing the printing for the penitentiary, even the unions made no objection but, when it is proposed to bring other printing there, then organized labor interposes an objection. And they are right. This idea of requiring convicts to do work that can be done by honest people, and good citizens, has never been popular, and will not be so long as men are ready to do it in order to support their families and better their own condition. West is carrying his fight to such an extent that even those who steadfastly endeavored to overlook his childishness and attempted to explain his idiosyncrasy, have wearied of the labor and have at last become convinced that, as a chief executive the present governor of Oregon leaves much to be desired.

A HUGH FARCE.

Nobody expected that the Michigan editor would prove that his statements regarding former President Roosevelt were true. Roosevelt has been long enough in the public eye to be pretty well-known and understood, even to his habits and mode of life. That he is no inveterate drinker, and that he does not use liquor to excess is proven by his manner of life. No one but a practical abstainer could boast the constitution that he possesses, and no man whose system is steeped in alcohol could go on year after year in the strenuousness which characterizes the sage of Oyster Bay without a breakdown. That part of it is well understood. But it was the means that Roosevelt employed in bringing his libel suit, that grew distasteful to many. While it was distinctively Rooseveltian, it was nevertheless uncalled for. Nobody believed the statements of the Michigan editor, nor gave them a second thought except the distinguished subject of the abuse. He should have been above it. He should have remembered his position and, like the man in the story, when the donkey kicked him, he should have "considered the source." The spectacle of one who admits himself to be "the foremost citizen of the United States" prosecuting a libel suit based on a charge of drunkenness, is not inspiring, and the public parading of how to mix a mint julep or a gin rickey, according to the recipe of a former president of the United States isn't exactly calculated to excite our pride nor add fame to the illustrious brow of our strenuous American citizen.

But Roosevelt couldn't resist the opportunity to figure again on the front pages of the metropolitan newspapers. Life was going slow and commonplace with him and something must be done to stir it up. So he rushes into the libel suit and, with an army of attorneys, newspaper correspondents and witnesses, he invades the little Michigan community and poses as the central figure in a common, ordinary libel suit, because an obscure newspaper intimated that he occasionally became intoxicated. The colonel made no friends by his latest stunt.

The life of the average United States senator and his official conduct hereafter is bound to be somewhat different than under the old ways of doing things. Thirty-two senators will be elected by popular vote next year and individual records will be scanned more closely than heretofore. Succeeding ones self as a United States senator when the only requirement was to secure a majority of the state legislature, will be somewhat different than going out in the byways and garnering the votes. The calm and dignified United States senator has, it seems, degenerated into an ordinary congressman.

President Wilson, it is said, cautioned a certain Mississippi congressman, who was about to make a speech on our Japanese relations, to be guarded in his remarks. Why limit the caution to the Southern fire-eaters? There are several jingoists from the northern states who might do well to remember that caution is a worthy virtue.

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 R. E. REED, Consul Com.
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A. F. & A. M.—Jennings Lodge, No. 9, meets second and fourth Fridays of each month, in Masonic hall on Main street. Visiting brethren welcome.
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