

candidly with the few who enjoy more than they produce and against the many who produce more than they enjoy? That party would suffer ignominious defeat and deserve to suffer it. Does any political party want a copyright monopoly of the proposition? That party would be a base pretender. That the Democratic party of Ohio has unreservedly made this declaration, and committed itself to specific measures in furtherance of it, is an honor to the party in Ohio and a sign of promise for its future throughout the Republic.

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The Tax Question in Oregon.

Early in June the Oregon referendum on taxation (p. 122) occurs. This question is heralded as a single tax question. It is a single tax question, but not *the* single tax question. That is, it is in the direction of the single tax, for it would abolish the taxation of homes and industry in a good many respects, and cast tax burdens to that extent upon the monopolizers of valuable land in proportion to its value. It differs from the single tax, therefore, only in the fact that the single tax would cast not merely some tax burdens but every tax burden, upon monopolizers of valuable land in proportion to its value, exempting industry and thrift altogether.

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Maybe it would have been better to present the question absolutely in its fullness, so as to draw a square vote for or against the single tax, even in the expectation of overwhelming defeat. Maybe it would have been better to present the principle on a single concrete issue, such as the exemption of the personal property and improvements of small homes and small farms, and go in to win. But these points are not for the present debatable. The question has been formulated, the official argument for it has gone out, it will be on the official ballot, and in hardly more than two weeks it will be voted upon by the people of Oregon. Its promoters believe that if they had a fund of \$10,000 with which to send out speakers and distribute literature, so as to overcome the effect of the misrepresentations of the great land monopolists and their newspaper allies, the measure could be carried.

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If this measure were carried, the victory for good government would be great; and the opportunities for labor in Oregon—with untaxed farms and factories, and with highly taxed lands now held out of use for higher prices—would immensely multiply. Such defects as there might be in the law could be rectified easily, and the adoption of the

complete single tax in Oregon would not be far away. Toward the necessary campaign fund to accomplish this purpose, some contributions have already been made. Daniel Kiefer, of Cincinnati, has procured a good many more or less modest ones, and Joseph Fels of Philadelphia and London has, in addition to his previous contributions, just sent on a thousand dollars. Although the time is short, a few such contributions might assure the triumph of the measure.

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The Socialist Party in America.

In making their platform more opportunistic, in harmony with the Milwaukee policy, the Socialist convention at Chicago last week has placed the party in position to get the votes, under certain possible circumstances, not only of those socialists who do not take kindly to side-party voting, and of non-socialists whose sympathies are in many respects with the socialist movement, but also of a large contingent of radical-minded voters who are neither socialist nor socialistic.

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To predict the figure the party will cut in the election returns would be less in the nature of prophecy than of logical inference from plainly observable facts. If put in the alternative with reference to important facts not yet developed, the inference might have great certainty. It would amount to this, that the vote of the Socialist party will largely increase, or largely sag, according to the action of the Democratic party at Denver. Should this be progressive, the vote of the Socialist party will probably sag; should it be reactionary, the vote of the Socialist party will probably increase.

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The reasons for that conclusion are clear enough to any student of American politics. They should be clear enough to any student of human nature, whether he has studied American politics or not. It is not in human nature, as a rule, to support repeatedly what obviously has no chance of winning, if by doing so the interests of a second choice may be jeopardized. This is true of everything, from betting on horse races to voting at Presidential elections. Some men will "vote for a principle," as they say, again and again and again. But what they are really voting for is not a principle but a pet organization; no one really votes for a principle who uses his vote repeatedly in such manner as obviously not to promote the general acceptance of his principle or of some part of it. These voters follow the usual rule of human na-

ture. They vote repeatedly and futilely for their pet organization because they have no second choice. But voters without a second choice are few. Even Socialist voters, most of them, would rather have a Dunne than a Busse as second choice; a fact that distinctly appeared at the Chicago election of 1907, when the Socialist vote fell from above 40,000 to below 14,000—from about 12 per cent of the total to less than 4 per cent. So they would rather have either a Bryan or a Taft than the other, as will appear at the election next Fall if a campaign between these two flames up in great political heat. It is this characteristic of human nature that makes impossible the steady growth of side-parties. Our electoral methods discourage continuous side-party voting. Unless a side-party jumps at once into first or second place, as the Republican party did in the '50s, it is never likely to become a real political party.

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Let us illustrate. Here is a radical-minded man, a Socialist if you please, but not party-bound although party inclined. If his vote would elect Debs, he would vote for Debs; but he knows it will not. He knows this because the vote of the last election is indicative of the vote of the next. If he has no second choice he will vote for Debs just the same, and keep on doing so election after election. But suppose he wants Bryan in preference to Taft. Then his vote for Debs would be half a vote against Bryan, and Debs wouldn't get it. He would vote against his first choice because he would know that as between the two only his second choice has any chance of winning. The trouble lies in the electoral method which allows pluralities to decide. If we required electoral decisions by majorities, as they do in parliamentary elections on the continent of Europe, our hypothetical voter would vote for Debs no matter how hopeless his chances. Why? Because Bryan could not be defeated unless Taft got a clear majority. A vote for Debs, instead of being half a vote against Bryan, would be a whole vote against Taft. It could not affect Bryan otherwise than by electing Debs. For, if none of the three got a majority at the first election, the two highest would contest at a second election. So, if Taft got a plurality at first, and Bryan came next, the Debs voter would have a chance to cast an effective vote for Bryan after first voting for Debs. He would therefore have no temptation to vote against his first but possibly hopeless choice, in order to protect his second but hopeful one. When we adopt majority instead of plurality electoral methods, side-parties may spring up and flourish. But not before.

Meanwhile, the vote for Debs next November will probably, we repeat, rise above or fall below that of 1904, according to the action of the Democrats at Denver. The nomination of a reactionary Democrat would send many a vote over to Debs for this occasion; the nomination of Bryan will have an opposite effect. In neither case would the Debs vote be distinctively socialist. In the latter case he would lose socialist votes; in the former he would gain non-socialist votes.

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Censoring Poverty Pictures.

A most ridiculous fiasco was the attempt of the Chief of Police of Chicago, he of Averbuch fame (vol. x, p. 1232), to censor the Socialists on the occasion of their national convention in Chicago last week. He confiscated lantern slides which they had proposed exhibiting, and forbade their exhibition. These slides offended this Russianized policeman because they showed some of the bitter contrasts of wealth and poverty—wealth with idleness, poverty with industry—which characterize our plutocratic civilization. Had this been an anarchist convention, the invasion of the police might have gone unrebuked, for anarchists are non-resistants. They won't even appeal to the courts. But the Chief of Police fell into the vulgar error of confusing anarchism and socialism; and the result was as if he had reached his hand into a nest of business-ended bumble bees under the mistaken impression that they were of the white-face variety. He got unexpectedly stung. The Socialists' slides had been confiscated, police fashion, but duplicates were got, and these the Socialists threw out upon their screen, one after another, accompanied with taunts at the police. Those irreverent Socialists had no conscientious scruples against challenging a resort to the courts; and of course the police chieftain silently permitted what only two days before he had bumptiously proscribed. The Russianizing process hasn't yet gone far enough to encourage policemen to interfere with the freedom of Americans who are ready to fight back vigorously with the weapons of the law.

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So far as the Chief of Police is concerned, this episode might not be worth the mention. But there is a current notion among the self-labeled "better element" that it is dangerous to show to an impoverished populace any pictures which bring examples of unearned wealth and undeserved poverty into striking contrast. They fear that such exhibitions may provoke sanguinary assaults by the poor upon the rich. This is the true ostrich spirit. Our social ostriches don't seem to realize