

But it must not be supposed, since proportional representation would compel recourse to compromises, that it would stand in the way of reform. Indeed, it would bring forward the time of genuine reform. And this, not by erratic jumps, but like the steady processes of nature. Reform movements would get a hearing while yet in their beginnings. Legislation would then anticipate and prepare the way for them. The minds of men would get ready for them. They would not come with that suddenness which districts counsel and demoralizes business and all other interests. Under the present system there is a false ignorance of these movements. They are choked and blanketed. They have no spokesman in places of authority until they have become the majority party in various districts. By this time their pent-up fire is raging. A sense of injustice is urging them on. They accumulate wrath, and all the conservative interests of the country are trembling. With a change of party on the tariff question business is almost at a standstill for a year or more. There is a dread of extreme change. Legislation ought to proceed so quietly and advance so naturally that the community would scarcely notice it. It would do so were these new and progressive interests early represented.

Reforms would shew themselves inside the party lines. At present parties tend to build about themselves a crust of tradition. New parties spring suddenly forth and take the place of the old. This is because our party machinery is not elastic. It does not respond to the growing body within. There is a false feeling of security on the part of the managers. In France this is the cause of armed revolution. The party in power sees its large majority in the Chamber of Deputies and goes its way. But the people are ready to burst the shell. There follow catastrophe, disaster, partisanship, reaction.

Proportional representation was defended twenty years ago in the interests of the minority. It was thought to be a promising corrective of popular suffrage. It would protect the rich against confiscation by the mob. This was the idea of John Stuart Mill in his classical work on Representation. But to-day it is plain that proportional representation is in the interests of the masses. John Stuart Mill knew nothing of the lobby. One man of wealth has the influence of ten thousand day laborers. But the lobby is a dangerous machine for legislation. It protects the rich for a while, but stirs those vindictive passions that demand finally indiscriminate spoliation. Much better for one and all would be fair and open compromise, looking far into the future and working in harmony with social forces. If legislatures were deliberative assemblies they would bring together year by year all these forces and promote continually the greatest good of all.

Among the many projects for legislative reform which have been brought out by the recognised failure of representative assemblies perhaps none is more extreme than the demand for so-called direct legislation. This is nothing more nor less than an attempt to return to the primitive town meeting on a large scale and to reduce the legislatures to a perfunctory board. The above discussion of the nature of a deliberative assembly will enable us to pass a fair judgment upon the possibilities of direct legislation. To quote the words of an American advocate of this plan of legislation:

"The great trouble with our legislative bodies is that they have ceased to be the representatives of the body of the people and their acts are not exponents of the will of the majority of the people. The remedy, if there is any practical remedy, is in taking from our legislative assemblies the absolute power of making laws. The people should be the only makers of the laws that are to control them, and they should only delegate to their representatives the duty of consideration and advice. No important principle in government should become active in specific law until it has been referred to the people, and has been approved by a majority vote. This is the position taken by the advocates of the reform called the "Initiative and Referendum." In a political sense "Initiative" has a special meaning and a double function. It signifies the proposal of law by those who have the legal right to do so to the body which may accept or reject the law. In the first exercise of this function the individual or collective citizen may propose a law, and this proposal will start it on the regular course of enactment. This method would have many and obvious advantages. The sovereign rights and duties of the people would be in exercise. The people would originate the laws, would know them and expressly sanction them. Ignorance of the law could no longer be pleaded as an excuse. Inability to secure relief and redress would not be a justification for bloody revolution. The right of

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