

A Harvest Eve

The summer gods are passing as they've passed a million times,
Their going chills the earth and thrills the skies.
All passion leaves the prairie, a tale of love that's told,
The land is just a dream of fading dyes.

The East is sloe-stained velvet with pencilled leaden lines—
A sample that the shades have just unrolled.
The arch of God's a span of light that's shone through amber wine,
The Western sky a story book of gold.

The distance-mist is rose-love kissed, caressed of golden rod;
A lonely cloud's an undeciphered rune.
Each hollow's made of liquid shade and fitted with spent desire,
And like a golden globule is the moon.

Crushed mint and dying grasses fling their incense to the sky,
The rose-fruit shines—a ruby in the grass.
Each poplar bluff's a vision of tarnished green and bronze;
The fireweeds waste their purple mist—and pass.

The summer gods are passing as they've passed a million times,
Their work is done—and gone their little day.
When the stars and suns have seeded as the prairie flowers have done,
Will space be clothed in splendor as the systems fade away?

GERALD J. LIVELY.

What is Direct Legislation?

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withstanding the fact that the voters rejected two measures in which I was much interested. After having reported ten sessions of legislatures in different States, I believe the people exercise more care and discrimination than do members of American legislative bodies when they vote upon measures.

Of the 37 measures submitted to popular vote this year, 26 were rejected. Equal suffrage was approved, this being the seventh time it has been voted on since 1887. The legislature submitted six amendments to the constitution, and five of them were rejected. One of the rejected measures was designed to cripple Direct Legislation. There were, in fact, two amendments designed to cripple Direct Legislation, one being submitted by the legislature and one by initiative petition. They were called "majority rule" measures, and provided that an actual majority of all voters voting at an election must vote in favor of a measure in order that the measure be approved. In other words, it was proposed to count as voting "No" all those who fail to vote on the measure. That is, if a total of 140,000 votes are cast at an election, then a measure fails of adoption unless 70,001 votes are cast for it, even though not more than 500 votes are cast directly against it. Both those so-called "majority rule" amendments were rejected. While I was much interested in two of the measures that were rejected, I must admit that the voters used great care and discrimination in marking their ballots. The more I see of legislative action by the people the more do I admire the intelligence with which they act, as compared with the legislative inefficiency of legislatures.

State Supplies Information

It is said that the people cannot possibly act intelligently upon thirty or forty measures at one election. Before taking that position, one should remember two things: First, some two months before the election every registered voter in Oregon receives from the Secretary of State a pamphlet containing the full text of every measure to be voted on, with arguments for and against the measures, prepared by the proponents and opponents of the measures. Secondly, during each forty-day session the Oregon legislature acts upon 700 to 800 bills and resolutions. Nominally, the legislature is in session forty days; actually it is in session not more than thirty days. The average voter, then, has some sixty days for the study of, say, 40 measures, while the legislator has forty days for the study of 700 measures. Can it be said that a legislator has a better opportunity to inform himself and vote intelligently than has the average voter?

In almost exact proportion as questions before the people are simple or complex, the percentage of votes cast upon measures ranges from about 90 down to about 63—the average being about 71 per cent. of the votes on candidates. Not only are Oregon voters giving more attention to public questions since the adoption of Direct Legislation, but the teachers and pupils in the public schools are giving far more attention to the science of government.

Moreover, with the abolition of the old system of control of legislation and government by party machines and private interests, each campaign shows less partisan feeling than the preceding campaign.

By no means the least merit of Direct Legislation is the fact that it tends to shield the legislator from temptation. The evil forces that act upon legislators and tempt them to do wrong are less likely to offer the temptations if the people have power to nullify the acts of legislators and to act for themselves when their chosen representatives fail to act. Therefore, so far from opposing Direct Legislation, the man of honor who seeks or holds a position in a legislative body should welcome and strongly advocate Direct Legislation.

Can Trust the People

Can the people be trusted, and can business interests trust the people? The Hon. William M. Ladd, Oregon's greatest banker and a former member of the Oregon legislature, says he would "rather trust the people to legislate than trust any legislature."

It is not because representative government has failed that the people are turning for relief to Direct Legislation. Representative government has not failed; it has not been tried. When it is tried it will not fail, for it is democratic. The demand for Direct Legislation is a phase of the world-wide growth towards democracy. Whether or not a pure democracy is possible or desirable is not the question. No people are compelled to choose between unrepresentative government and a pure democracy. What the "fathers" wanted us to have, or what they supposed they were giving us, is of less importance than what we want. Nations, states and communities of living men and women have a natural, moral right not to be governed by dead men. They have an equal right not to be misgoverned by living men.

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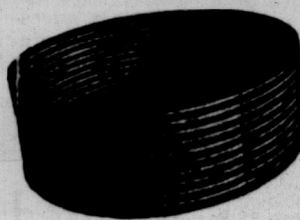
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