

# THE SENATORIAL QUESTION

## TWO More Contributions on This Important Subject.

They Were Not Prize Winners, but They Are Good Articles and Contain Golden Nuggets of Thought for Reformers.

Proposition: "It would be a great mistake to change the United States Constitution to require election of United States Senators by popular vote."

This proposition is as old as the nation, and, in various quarters, an ever recurring one. Owing to a recently expressed sentiment in favor of change, it looms into unwonted prominence, provoking general debate. Entering the contest the patriotic admission is eminently fit, that the fundamental laws of our nation are the wisest enunciation of their kind in all time. Reversed as such, seriously defective in but one particular, now happily corrected, not providently wanting in general or in particular after more than a century's test, they obligate the American people to weigh well all proposed changes and order only such as are surely needful.

### PRO.

For the Constitution as it is in respect to Senatorial choice, may be urged:

1. That it secures best possible men for the most judicial, conservative, responsible legislative body in the land.

2. That some indirect mode of choice is necessary to fortify the Government against the popular cyclone which so often has overthrow in a day what years of prudent toil with difficulty could erect.

3. That it tends to secure minority representation.

1. Theoretically, a better manner of Senatorial selection could not have been devised to secure the most capable of men, and yet preserve in the process the forms of republicanism. Legislatures of the States are supposedly composed of superior men. In many respects they are such. They possess the means of knowing the proper persons from whom to choose. In the early days of the nation, if at this distance we can estimate justly, the National Senate was composed of extraordinary men. Lately, however, this body has not shown superiority over its associates—the House. This fact has now been noticeable for about forty years, nor ought one to be surprised thereat. The attention and the hope of the framers of the Constitution that the people under its direction would be able, calmly and certainly, to express its will on all measures, have been aborted through partyism, which now so wields threats, storms, lies; that few of the masses can reach a wise judgment or express the same if possessed. Conditions of choice are thus all changed. Great perils at first elicited great virtues. An invaded people needing defense, liberty assaulted, asking rescue, scattered colonies likely to become hostile, called together its most courageous and prudent counselors. Continued concern for the weal of the new State continued to choose the ablest to public affairs. But when these had settled into a moving train on their prepared track, officials soon sank to the level of break-down, freeman, engineer and conductor, each performing an invariable round of easy service. Altered requirements as to officers led to departure from method. The regime of parties soon came in. They gave us the electoral college in lieu of the popular choice of President. They predetermined the Legislatures, and consequently the Senators whom these assemblies are to elect. This unexpected evolution of powerful, persistent political parties makes legislative wisdom needless and its existence precarious.

The ease of controlling parties brings wealth into command. Opulence, with selfishness and ambition, now largely dominate the American Senate. This present system of choice, therefore, is a failure.

2. When our Government was in contemplation, its form—monarchic, aristocratic or democratic—was the problem. The masses, foes of all historic republics, never having succeeded in maintaining any safe and abiding state, were distressed. Various devices were adopted to check the revolution-breeding mob. The triangle was chosen as the model of the state which was divided into three co-equal, co-ordinate "independent" branches—legislative, executive, judicial. To forestall hasty legislation, two houses were established in the first department, and over both suspended the Presidential veto.

Colonial rivalries and jealousies secured for the Senate its choice by States, each regardless of size, claiming to be equal to every other. That body, consequently, is aristocratic rather than democratic, reliant rather on dignity and prestige than on good work and industry. Too often it is plainly in antagonism against the people. The fathers also supposed the executive department might encroach on its associates and destroy the coveted balance of power. In that case it was expected the Senate, as the peculiar representa-

live of the States, would individually oppose and stem the usurpation.

All these precautions, then perhaps wisely taken, have proved needless. In them the Anglo-Saxon race was misjudged—a race which in mass historically submits to just and necessary laws. The tuition of colonial evolution and the Revolution was unseen. Undervalued were the patriotism of a valiant people, proud of its success in arms, and conscious of possession of vast opportunity and of boundless hope. Slow rather than the more progressive House has more than once been thwarted by the impending Senate, again and again proving the obstructive methods of the same springing directly as may be believed from its mode of creation.

3. But does not this process secure minority representation and thus compensate for some minor evils? The longer Senatorial term, the people changing their attitude meanwhile, would seem to so result; but this result is negated by the constant dropping out and entry of Senators in numbers enough generally to catch, if possible, the last redout of the friends of the aristocratic Senate.

### CONTRA.

Are there then any sound reasons for the Constitution as it is in this respect? None. Contrarily some dangers therefrom are in sight. The balance of power in the nation is arbitrarily distributed and fluctuating. At present through rapid creation of new States of sparse populations, the West has attained undue weight in the Senate. Prospectively, when that section shall have acquired two-thirds of the people, the East will dominate the national destiny with but a third of the vote. Disturbances, therefore, may come and a war of sections again waste the country. If chattel slavery could precipitate strife, why not the currency or some other question, when one portion of the country comes to believe itself not justly represented?

Without further attempt at argumentation the principal objections to our Senatorial choice may be briefly stated as follows:

1. It distrusts the people and is undemocratic.

2. It constantly robs the masses of their rights and will.

3. It makes one-half the legislative power the creature of wealth, and its subservient efficient instrument. That popular wishes clearly expressed, can be ignored as they are, seems incredible, but such is history. But once in thirty-three years has the Senate been changed accordingly with a change of public will. The correction of so grave a fault resides alone in greater lodgment of power in the people. They should demand the privilege, as theirs is the natural right to choose not only the members of the National Senate, but also the President and Vice-President and the postmasters. Let us believe that such is manifest destiny.

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I will address myself directly to a criticism of the sample paragraph or article which has been published for three consecutive weeks in THE NATIONAL ECONOMIST. Said article begins by saying: "It would be a great mistake to change the Constitution of the United States so that it would require United States Senators to be elected by a direct vote of the people in the different States."

To this quotation I join issue, and give as my solemn and honest conviction that it would not be a mistake, but, to the contrary, would be wise and prudent on the part of the people in the different States to thus select them. And it will be my aim in this article to give my reasons why they should be so chosen, and in doing this I desire not to imitate the article in question, by a mere assertion, which follows next in these words: "It would be a mistake because it would be productive of more evil practices and consequences than now afflict the present system;" and, without giving any reasons for such assertion, immediately guides to more congenial thoughts; hence I say this last quotation is a mere assertion without any proof whatever. What are the evil practices that now prevail under our present system of selecting United States Senators? Yes, echo says, what are they? And what are the consequences that afflict us as a nation by selecting them by the different State Legislatures. And also what are the afflictions suffered by the States and people, respectively? Bribery and corruption holds high carnival in some of the States. This has been demonstrated time and time again in investigations that have been made in our history as a nation, and I will say that in all of our States, questionable methods are adopted by the aspirants for the position to win and be successful in attaining the end. What are the results to the nation? Answer: Millionaires and corrupt men are chosen and take their seats in our upper legislative hall to make laws for the nation. What kind of laws will Senators chosen by bribery and corruption make? If they will give a bribe, does it not logically follow that they will take a bribe, and if they will use corrupt methods to get elected, will they not steep themselves in corruption to attain the ends of their class? For instance, will it be expected that a rich banker will favor healthy finances for the whole

people? This certainly can not be expected of a rich banker. Will it be expected that an iron king, coal-oil king, or a railroad king, will do anything toward limiting the powers they now have to oppress the people of this country, and make them serfs and slaves to serve the money power of this country and their hoarded cousins across salt waters? If any one thinks Senators of this ilk will legislate for the good of the masses, it is more than I do. We would as well expect to keep ice in shoel, as to expect it of them. Again, the most of our Senators are lawyers and are the attorneys of trusts, combines and monopolies before they are elected (such attorneyships, however, are kept in the background and will not do anything detrimental to their masters' interests. I am aware, however, that the last thought is a little digression from the subject, and I will, therefore, return to the direct matter. It will be asked if their direct selection by a popular vote of the people of the States will remove those evil practices and consequences. I answer it will, to a considerable extent, for the reason that a near popular vote of a State will not be so purchasable as a Legislature of a State is, and fewer corrupt men would attempt it. Again, it will be said that the dominant party will determine the matter in convention; true, perhaps, but I would rather risk it with that method than the present system. At least I think it would be a long step in the direction of political virtue.

The reason I say this, is that we Alliance folks are going to purify the politics of this country, and make conventions obey the best of the people. So mote it be, Selah. For the reasons here advanced, the people desire that our United States Senate be elected by a direct vote of the people of the States. It seems to me, that it would be more democratic, and that it would bring our Senators in a more sympathetic touch with the people, and thus give us a Government of the people, by the people, and for the people. And now I ask what would be the result in our State Legislatures if this function was assumed by the people and the members of our Legislatures released from the burden. Why, there would be no deadlock, no bickering, no heart-burnings, so often engendered in our State Legislatures by giving them to select. They could then have their whole attention to important State matters, which, to a great extent, are under the present system neglected. It would be a saving to the States of thousands of dollars now paid out where deadlocks occur, and save a world of scandal in many instances.

Again, in selecting our members of the Legislature, the question would not be asked, Who are you for? United States Senator, and, it is possible that we would inquire more as to their fitness and qualifications to make good members if they were released from the duty of electing United States Senators; and again, it would relieve the governor from the appointing of them in cases where deadlocks prevent the State assemblies from electing them. So, by all means, give us a direct vote in the selecting of our United States Senators. Let the Constitution be changed so as to admit it. I admit the Constitution to be a good instrument, and that it should not be changed for trivial causes, but the reasons for this change are imperative and weighty. We have had fifteen amendments since its adoption, ten of them shortly after it went into operation, and we can have more. It is a creature, we are the creators. We can take no step backward, but let us go forward, relinquishing neither jot nor tittle of the rich inheritance bequeathed to us by our noble ancestors. The rights we have in our individual and collective capacity antedate the Constitution. But another word as regards State legislatures, and that is: most States have in their State constitutions limited the time of their general assemblies so as to save expenses. Now, if the election of United States Senators in these United States assemblies absorb a great deal of time, State business will be neglected. Moreover, if they are of the do-nothing style, like our present Kentucky Legislature, they would still do less. We have had a new constitution, and our present State body, notwithstanding they have been together for sixteen months or more, does not yet understand it, yet it is plain in its provisions. However, our legislatures hereafter are to be limited to sixty days, so we will have no more sixteen or eighteen months' sessions. I will now proceed to a further examination of the subject for criticism. It says: "The idea of the founders of this Government was to have the House of Representatives, the Senate and the Executive chosen by a different method by the same electors, to the end that the minority under one of the systems of election might be represented in one of the other systems of election," etc. This I deny, and will here undertake to say that from what was said upon the subject of choosing Senators in the constitution, nothing was said about a variety of methods in choosing the different departments of the Government to the end that minorities might be represented. On the contrary, their idea was that the majority should rule and the rights and interest of minorities should be safely guarded by the bill of rights and other safeguards incorporated in the Constitution by way of limitations and restric-

tions. They intended to and did insert in the instrument they constructed in 1787, and as an evidence that they did intend to secure the interest of minorities, witness the Constitution, the product of their hands and minds, and hand when we fail to get the Congress by dexterity we may get the executive. Allow me right here to say, if you please, that the members of the convention contemplated nothing of the kind and gerrymandering was an unknown factor to them, notwithstanding they had different opinions as to the character of government they were to construct. They were tolerant in spirit, honest in mind, and all of them true patriots and lovers of their country. They supposed that officers chosen to fill positions in any sent majorities and minorities, and that minorities would yield gracefully when a majority of their sovereign people had spoken. So away with the hotchpotch, interminable jargon set forth in the latter part of the subject. I view it as altogether misleading and untenable, and will not bear a feather's weight against the mode proposing to elect United States Senators by a direct vote of the people of the States. In fact, Mr. Editor, I am getting to be so democratic that I would have postmasters elected by the patrons of the office. And now, in conclusion, I wish to say that what I have here written is in strict accordance with my views, and I am conscientious in giving them. I am no writer and I have no ambition to fill any office whatever. I am a simple, unpretending tiller of the soil. I want good government for the present generation, and future generations to come. I wish, furthermore, to say that what I have here written is in charity to all men and malice toward none. I am not prejudiced against rich men or lawyers, provided such rich men or lawyers show themselves to be in favor of equity and justice and show their faith by their works. "By their fruits ye shall know them," said the Redeemer of Adam's lost and ruined race. I am, however, a proscriptionist to every man, be he high or low, rich or poor, who is not a friend to equal and exact justice to all men.

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### Beware of Ointments for Catarrh

Lowes, Ky.