

# Reforms Urged by Two Outstanding Political Figures

*Senator Norris, of Nebraska, Advocates a One-House Legislature for More Efficient Legislation; Upton Sinclair Would Remedy the Depression Through a New Cooperative System*

By GEORGE W. NORRIS

United States Senator From Nebraska

By UPTON SINCLAIR

Democratic Candidate for Governor of California

The Legislature of Nebraska now consists of two houses, the House of Representatives, composed of one hundred members, and the Senate, composed of thirty-three members. The members of both houses are elected for the same term, draw the same salary, have the same jurisdiction, and have the same qualifications.

A bill must be agreed to by both houses before it can become a law. This necessitates, in case of a disagreement between the two houses, a conference committee which is, in reality, a third house. The conference committee meets in secret, without a record of its proceedings, and it is only in case an agreement is reached that a report is submitted to both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The conference report must be voted upon as a whole and can not be amended. In this way, the real drafting of the legislation is done by the conference committee, and the



Senator Norris

two houses must take it as it is presented to them, or reject it altogether. This often results in jokers being put into the law, and also results in the rejection of provisions which are desired by the people of the State.

### "Passing the Buck"

In this way, the members are enabled to defeat legislation which is desired by the people by "passing the buck" to the other house. The members of one house can, and do, defend their records by proving by the records of that house that they voted for the legislation desired by their constituents. The members of the other house, who have voted on the same bill, in a slightly different form, can likewise prove by the record that they also voted for the legislation which their constituents were demanding.

In the State of Nebraska, there has been an attempt for several years to pass legislation which would enable a municipal plant to extend its lines outside of the municipality the same as a privately-owned plant is allowed to do. The municipal organizations have advocated it for several years, but they were always defeated by representatives of the power interests manipulating one or both branches of the legislature, and they always failed. In a recent session, this municipal organization had the written promise of a majority of both branches of the legislature to support this kind of a bill. Yet the private power interests were able to, and did, defeat the legislation, and it was impossible to show that any member of the legislature had violated his promise.

In most instances, it is true that the members desired to redeem their promise, but in the mix-up between the two houses, and in the different parliamentary situations which were thus brought about, the private power interests were always able to defeat the legislation. To show that the people of the State really wanted  
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Green Apples

—Munhall in the Seattle Daily Times

The meaning of our movement to End Poverty In California, and its polling the largest vote ever cast in a California primary, is that our people have reached the saturation point as regards suffering. We are just about to begin the sixth year of the depression. We have one-and-a-quarter million persons dependent upon public charity, and probably as many more who are able to get only one or two days' work a week or who are dependent upon relatives and friends. That is too heavy a burden of suffering for any civilized community to carry.



Acme

Upton Sinclair

A man's attitude toward this situation depends upon one factor. If he believes that private industry is "coming back," he is willing to wait and endure and patch things up. But finally it must occur to him to wonder whether the thing called "prosperity" will ever come back again. If he makes up his mind that it is not coming back, then his whole attitude changes and he is ready to consider some new procedure, thoroughgoing and drastic.

I have been telling the people of California for the past year that this is the permanent crisis, the one which does not pass away. I claim to speak with authority, because I have devoted my whole thinking life to the study of depressions, their cause and their cure; I proved my knowledge by predicting thirty-one years ago, and continuously ever since, this particular crisis, the "permanent" one. I assert that it is caused by the overproduction not merely of consumption goods such as food and clothing which are quickly used up, but of production goods, the great machines and factories, which do not get used up but stay right where they are.

### "The Permanent Crisis"

I am telling the people of America that we have ten million unemployed who will never work again while the present system endures. For the past year I have been telling the people of California that the burden of supporting their permanently unemployed million-and-a-quarter is driving cities, counties, and State directly into bankruptcy. I have told them that in some hundred and fifty mass meetings, attended by from one thousand to fifteen thousand persons. I have told them in some three hundred thousand pamphlets and some five million copies of weekly newspapers. And in August some four hundred and fifty thousand of them went to the polls and said that they agreed with me.

Just what is to be done? No more important question confronts the American people today. If we do not find an orderly solution, we are going straight into the course of horrors which we have witnessed in Germany. I have believed all my life in democracy, the right and ability of the people to govern themselves. I am now offering the people of my home State a plan and a technique of procedure which will remedy  
(Continued on page 38)



Public Ledger, Inc.

The Poor Fish

—Sykes in the Phila. Public Ledger

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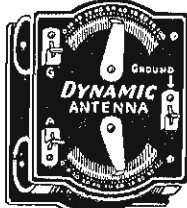
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# Reforms Urged by Norris and Sinclair

## For the One-House Legislature

(Continued from page 8)

this legislation, after the last defeat, the organization began an initiative proceeding under the Constitution, and submitted the matter to the people. It was adopted by an overwhelming majority.

The two-branch legislature, in this way, and in many others, enables any member of either house to thus shift the responsibility, or, as is said in common language, to "pass the buck" and one body can "pass the buck" to the other body. In a one-house legislature this would be absolutely impossible. Every member would be required to vote, and the constituents would be able to tell, without any difficulty, and without being experts in parliamentary procedure, just how they stood.

## Fixing Responsibility

The claim that special interests are able to buy a small legislature easier than a large one is thus absolutely met and denied. A one-house legislature makes it impossible for anyone to shirk responsibility. In a two-house legislature, this is an easy thing to do. The members of a one-house legislature can be paid a larger salary, and thus a higher class of men secured, and, at the same time, the legislative expense of the State can be practically cut in two.

In this short article I am not covering, or trying to cover, the whole ground. I can not point out all the advantages of a one-house legislature, but it can be truthfully said that a one-house legislature will save the taxpayers an immense amount of money, it will give to the State a more efficient legislation, and it will shorten the ballot very materially.

The pending one-house legislature is opposed by every monopoly and every special interest which expects to get a favor from the legislators. It is common knowledge, among students of this subject, that it is much easier for lobbyists to control a large body of men, than a comparatively small one. That is especially true because of the fact that, in a small body of men, there is no opportunity to shift responsibility.

It is true that it sometimes happens that there is a dishonest legislator who sells his vote. This might happen in any kind of a legislature. If it happens in a one-house legislature, the dishonest man is exposed to all the people of his State, but if it happens in a two-house legislature, his record is covered up by conference reports, or by other means of a parliamentary nature which make it impossible for anyone but an expert to find out just what the record is.

## Meaning of the "EPIC" Plan

(Continued from page 8)

the depression by gradual stages in a peaceable and human fashion, without violence and the overthrow of our political, industrial, or social system.

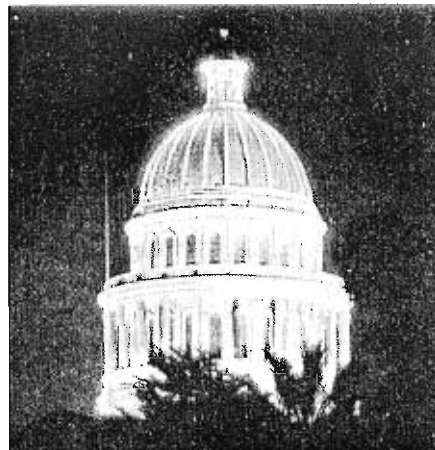
The "EPIC" (End Poverty In California) movement proposes that our unemployed shall be put at productive labor, producing everything which they themselves consume and exchanging these goods among themselves by a method of barter, using warehouse receipts or labor certificates or whatever name you may choose to give to the paper employed. It asserts that the State must advance sufficient capital to give the unemployed access to good land and machinery, so that they may work and support themselves and thus take themselves off the backs of the taxpayers. The "EPIC" movement asserts that this will not hurt private industry, because the unemployed are no longer of any use to industry.

We plan a new cooperative system for the unemployed. Whether it will be permanent depends upon whether I am right in my belief about the permanent nature of the depression. If prosperity comes back the workers will drift back into private industry. No harm will have been done, because certainly the unemployed will produce something in the meantime, and the State will be that much to the good.

## New Cooperative System

To meet the immediate emergency in our State and get the money to start our new cooperative system, we propose what we call an "EPIC" tax. That is an *ad valorem* tax on property assessed above \$100,000, which means about \$250,000 of actual value. This tax will fall almost entirely upon our great corporations and utilities, and to make it easier for them we shall make it payable at the option of the State, in goods and services. That will give us most of the raw materials and all of the utility services which the unemployed will need to get production started.

We have a great irrigation and power project known as the Central Valley Project. We propose to send fifty thousand unemployed into this work and ask the farmers of the Central Valleys to bring their surplus food crops, taking credits which will be good for water and power when the project is completed. The "EPIC" tax will give us the needed lumber, cement, rock and gravel, steel, etc., and light, heat, power, and transportation. The project will be carried out by our Public Works Department, and it will bring industry back to life in California.



Key stone