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EDITORIAL

THAT "GATEWAY."

By DANIEL DE LEON

SO important do Bryan and his party hold the issue of the popular election of Federal Senators, that the Democratic party describes the change as "the gateway to other national reforms", and Bryan pledges himself, if elected, to convene Congress in extraordinary session immediately after his inauguration, and asks that steps be taken to alter the Constitution accordingly.

That "gateway" is a blind-alley.

In the first place the method of electing Senators has in no wise "removed" them from the people. Experience shows that the Senate has ever been the most yielding straw to the popular breath. It was the Senate, for instance, not the House, that enacted the Sherman Silver Purchase Law in response to the insane free silver cry.

In the second place, granting that popular election of the Senators would bring them "closer to the people", what of it? Does Bryan ever tire of harping upon the string of the corruption of the House? "Popular election" is no mystic disinfectant.

The fact is that the Senate should be abolished. The Senate is nothing but a cross between the old, but now extinct, notion of State autonomy, and the old, but unfortunately yet extinct {extant?}, superstition regarding the occult virtues of the British two-chamber system.

So long as the notion existed of State autonomy, it seemed legitimate for each State to have its minister plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary at the national capital. Thus sprang the Senate into being. In that case it was natural that the ambassador should be appointed, instead of elected, just as the nation's Senate, jointly with the executive, appoints its ambassadors abroad. The notion of State autonomy is, however, dead and buried beyond resurrection. The Senate to-day is a purposeless body. It is to the body politic what the appendix is to the body

physical—an atrophied limb, useful in a stage of lower development, but now good only to produce appendicitis and doctors' fees.

The Senate should be abolished. That would be something worth striving for on the part of the reformer. The single chamber system, not the antiquated double chamber system, is the system that modern and, for that matter, future society demands.

Why, then attach such tremendous importance to so trivial, and even useless a reform as that of making the election of Senators a popular affair? Above all, why attach such importance to a matter of form, when matters of essence, such as work and bread to the people, are banging at our doors?

He who, when weighty matter presses, turns his thoughts to trifles and magnifies their importance is a socio-political Three-card Monte sharp.

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