

Proponent Testimony on SJ79 January 26, 2013

Three Republicans and two Democrats are honored with statues here in the Capitol Building because they confronted corporate control over Montana's elections.

The first is U.S. Sen. Wilbur F. Sanders. He dedicated this building in 1906 with a memorable warning: *"If sordid greed shall dare here to attempt its conquests, if coward fear shall dictate silence or speech, if arrogant, confident ignorance shall here direct public policies, if selfish ambition shall endeavor to mount to power by perfidy or chicane, if bribery shall profane this holy place, the voices of those who planted this civilization, from beyond the confines of the tomb, will be heard in accordant execration."*

Three men face each other across the Capitol rotunda: Burton K. Wheeler of Butte, Joseph M. Dixon of Missoula, and Thomas J. Walsh of Helena. They each had their political campaigns crushed by the mining trusts, but they continued to fight the corporate tyrants with every means available to them.

Walsh helped found the People's Power League that put the **Corrupt Practices Act** before the voters as an initiative. It passed with 72% of the vote. The following year, Walsh began 21 years serving in the U.S. Senate. Fighting corruption in Montana prepared him to take on corporate corruption at Tea Pot Dome. In 1906, he issued a warning to the Democratic Convention that still rings true today: *"The one great, all-embracing political problem before the American people is the preservation of our institutions from falling wholly into the hands of corporate and associated wealth, our cherished system of government must be saved from the ignominy of degenerating into a sordid plutocracy."*

Dixon was fit to be tied when Amalgamated Copper hirelings took over the Montana Republican Convention in 1912. *"The issue in Montana is clearly defined. Shall the special interests which know no party allegiance, acting in our own state through the Amalgamated Copper company and its allies, control the republican, as well as the democratic party, or shall the republican party be controlled by the people themselves? There can be no compromise in the situation which confronts us. It is a struggle between two diametrically opposed and conflicting ideals and interests. There is and can be no middle ground. The action of the majority of the state committee at Helena has forced the issue, Let him that hath no stomach for the fight depart."*

Wheeler ran for governor in 1920 and made this promise: *"If elected, I will not put Anaconda out of business, but I will put it out of politics."*

Jannette Rankin is also honored with a statue. She ran for a second term in the US Congress in 1917 and evaluated her chances in a Washington Times interview. *The Company will "try to do to me just what they have done to everyone who ever tried to opposed them... They own the State. They own the Government. They own the press... First I'll be roasted from one end of the State to the other. Every newspaper will print my shortcomings, real or fancied, in the largest type. They probably won't assassinate me. They use more subtle methods now."*

I ask this committee to join these famous Montanans in defending our elections and government from corporate domination. I urge do pass

The Corporate Conquest of Montana, Illustrated.

