

# The Commoner.

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## THE WISDOM OF DOING RIGHT

(Speech delivered by Mr. Bryan at Jacksonville, Fla., on the 16th of last month. As it is impossible for him to go into every community and make a verbal protest against the plans of the reorganizers, this speech is reproduced that the readers of The Commoner may be fully informed as to the line of argument pursued. In explanation of the first paragraph of the speech it may be added that a gentleman by the name of William J. Bryan introduced the speaker and Governor Jennings occupied a seat on the platform.)

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen: I am very glad to be here. If there is any state in which I ought to feel at home it certainly is a state in which I can be introduced to you by a man who has my first and last names, and in a state whose governor has my middle name. I am here because I am interested in national politics, and I might say, to relieve all from embarrassment, that I come at my own invitation. I come to Florida as I have gone elsewhere—to discuss subjects in which I feel an interest. I shall speak to you upon the same line that I followed when I spoke in New York a few weeks ago, where I engaged the hall and introduced myself. I am not coming to present to you any peculiarly southern doctrine, or a western doctrine, but a democratic doctrine. I am glad that there is a democracy that is as broad as the nation—a democracy that can be proclaimed in any part of this country; and a democracy that is not as broad as the nation is not a democracy that can hope to draw to itself the patriotism and intelligence of the American people. As I understand democracy, it means the rule of the people—a democracy that is founded upon the doctrine of human brotherhood—a democracy that exists for but one purpose, and that the defense of human rights. That kind of democracy can be proclaimed wherever man lives, and is willing to respect the rights of his fellow-man.

I am glad to be here because we are entering upon a campaign of vital interest to the democracy and to the American people. I am interested in that campaign; and I think I am in a good position to talk politics now—in a better position, in fact, than I have been for a good while. In several campaigns I have been a candidate. I was a candidate for congress in 1890 and, therefore, when I spoke people might have thought that I was personally interested in the election. I was a candidate again in 1892 and there again I spoke under the disadvantage of being a candidate. In 1894 I was a candidate for the senate and when I canvassed my state they might again have thought that I had a personal interest in the result. In 1896 I was a candidate for the presidency and then, too, they might have felt that my zeal was due to my personal interest in the election. In 1900 also I was a candidate, and the people who then listened to me listened to me as to one who aspired to office; but I come to you now, not as a candidate, and yet more interested in the result of the election, more interested in the triumph of democratic principles than I ever was when I was myself a nominee. I am not only a private citizen, but I can prove by every gold paper in the United States that I have excellent prospects of remaining a private citizen all the rest of my life. And now because, as a citizen, I attempt to speak the sentiments that are in my heart, they say that I am trying to dictate. They seem to be very much afraid of dictation. Those who have stood on the outside of the party and tried to dictate to it for eight years are afraid that some one on the inside of the party may attempt to make suggestions to the party now. The anxiety that they feel lest the party be dictated to reminds me of something I read a short time ago. A man was all crippled up; he was limping and had his arm in a sling and patches on his face. Some one asked, "What is the matter?" and he replied, "I was coming

downstairs and my wife told me to be careful, but I won't allow any woman to dictate to me." He would not be careful just because his wife cautioned him to be careful, and some of these people feel about as much exercised. I ask them to be honest—but they would rather suffer than follow such advice. Now, my friends, I am not trying to dictate; I am not in a position to dictate. What authority have I, or what power, to coerce anybody? If I was the head of a railroad corporation I might have the power to coerce or to withdraw employment from those who would not vote as I desired; if I was a manufacturer and employed a large number of men I might do what many manufacturers did in 1896, namely, give the employes a choice between voting a given ticket and idleness. But what power have I? I have none, and I have no desire to dictate. I have no power to grant favors to you; if anybody does what I advise, he must do it, not from hope of reward from me, but from hope of reward from his own conscience. I have no power, I repeat, to confer favors on you; I have no power to give you office. If I had that power there would be many men with me who are now talking about harmony and the reorganization of the democratic party.

What is it that they are afraid of? I will tell you. If a group of men are assembled in a room contemplating larceny and a little child comes in among them and says, "Thou shalt not steal," he will put them all to rout. They will not be afraid of the child, but they will be afraid of the doctrine that he proclaims. And so, it is not because I have power to coerce, or to command, or to dictate, but because the doctrine of honesty is a doctrine that the reorganizers have never yet dared to meet and which they will not meet in this campaign. I want to preach the doctrine of honesty and I want to preach it, first, because it is right and because people ought to do right without stopping to count the consequences; and, second, because I believe that in doing right we lay the best foundation for complete and permanent success. So, whether you reason from the standpoint of expediency or from the standpoint of principle, you will be brought to an honest course in this campaign. You have heard some say that I am disturbing the harmony of the party. I have had men within the last few days tell me that instead of criticising things that I believe to be wrong, instead of pointing out dangers that I believe to exist, I ought to "pour oil on the troubled waters"—I have examined the oil that they want me to use and find that it is Standard Oil. I am not willing to use that kind of oil; I am not willing to harmonize on that basis.

I desire to present to you what I believe to be a moral issue and to appeal to you to fight this battle upon the moral issues involved. I want to appeal to you to make the democratic party the champion of morality in politics. I want you to help to put the democratic party in a position where it will arouse the conscience of the American people—the conscience which is the most potent power in the world when it is once awakened. What we need today in this country is not so much the convincing of republicans that their policies are wrong as the convincing of republicans that if in power we would do differently. A great many republicans are convinced that commercialism has paralyzed their party and is paralyzing the country, but when you point out what the republicans are doing the answer comes back, "Would you not do the same thing if your party was in power?" And, my friends, they use the utterances of men who call themselves democrats to give the lie to every promise of reform. They use the conduct of these so-called democrats to convict us of hypocrisy and insincerity. When men tell me that the time ought to be spent in trying to persuade and coax people to come into the democratic party regardless of their convic-

tions and regardless of their conduct when they come in, I am reminded of a story told on a minister. He was talking about a revival in his church and somebody asked him how many he added to the roll. He said, "I did not add any. I struck off 150." When men tell me that we must surrender our principles; that we must make our party satisfactory to those who do not believe in democracy, or in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, I tell them that what we need is not so much to get in men who are not democrats as to drive out of the party those who pretend to be democrats, but whose conduct is a living lie. Just as the church is stronger when it expels men whose lives belie their profession—as a church is stronger when it is composed of a few, but all of them trying to live up to their profession than when composed of more, but of persons weaker in character, so a party is stronger if it has fewer members and all of them trying by their lives to exemplify the principles written in their creed. I believe it is possible for the democratic party to win, and not only that, but for the democratic party to win a victory that means something for the American people. You ask me how it can be done? Here is a plan: Whenever a democratic official betrays his trust do not apologize for him; brand him and drive him out of the party and make him join the republican party or go off alone. They cannot investigate boodling in a city now without catching democrats in the net; they cannot investigate boodling in a legislature without gathering in democrats; they cannot investigate boodling anywhere but what they find some democrats who are involved like the republicans, and these men do more to hurt the democratic party—these men do more to injure our chances of success than any plank that was ever put into a platform.

I have had an experience like this, and after you have had it a few times you will agree with me; I have been talking to an audience and pointing out what the republican party had done that was hostile to the interests of the people and I have had some well dressed fellow to answer back, "Well, you had control of the government from 1892 to 1896, did you do any better?" And I have had to answer, "No, we did just as the republicans do," and then I have told why, because the victory of 1892 was secured through the influence of the great corporations and with the campaign fund that they contributed. Our party having won its election in that way was mortgaged to the syndicates and for four years our administration betrayed the party and betrayed the people for the same reason that the republican party has betrayed the people. And when I have pointed out these things they have called me a disturber of the peace and one of the corporation papers, the Nashville Banner, that used to claim to be a democrat, but has not been working much at its profession for some time—it criticised me and said that if I did know that there was an enormous campaign fund collected and expended in 1892 I ought not to say anything about it, but that I ought to let the republicans find that out. I am more interested than a republican in finding out and criticising democratic wrong-doing, and why? Because I am interested in the democratic party. There is not a man in this country who has more reason to be interested in the democratic party than I. What man in this country has received more at the hands of the democratic party than I? What man owes more to the democratic party than I owe, and what man by his history and training ought to be more thoroughly democratic than I am? My father was a democrat and his father and his father's father; my mother and her parents on both sides were democrats. As far back as the history of the family goes it has been democratic, and my wife's family on both sides was democratic. I envy my boy because he has one