

Mr. Bryan's Chicago Speech on "Why Democracy?"

Synopsis of an address given by Mr. Bryan in Chicago on March 19, at a meeting held at the Seventh Regiment Armory under the auspices of the Bryan League, Carter H. Harrison, chairman:

Assuming that reforms are necessary what party can best be entrusted with the work of securing them? I beg to present the claims of the democratic party. What are the evils to be corrected?

The greatest of all evils, and it is the fruitful source of nearly all other evils, is the domination of politics by the favor-seeking corporations. By dominating politics they dominate the government, national and state. There is no question upon which the people are thinking which does not to a greater or less extent involve this question. Shall the government be administered in the interest of the whole people, by unpurchasable, incorruptible representatives of the people, or shall the favor-seeking corporations control the elections, raise their representatives to power and through them exploit the country? If the present situation is satisfactory; if the people are contented with the distribution of wealth, and with the predominating influence of these combinations, then there is no good reason why the republican party should not be continued in power, for it has created the conditions which now exist and must have credit or blame, according to whether these conditions are desirable or undesirable. I think I can safely assert that conditions are not satisfactory and in support of this assertion I can point to the fact that remedial legislation is demanded by practically all of the democratic party, and by a very large proportion of the republican party.

Whatever popularity the president has is due to the efforts that he has made in the direction of reform, although these efforts have been spasmodic rather than continuous, and have not been supported by his own party. The democratic party can claim the right to carry out these reforms, first, because that party is almost unanimously in favor of reform while in the republican party there is a very large minority, if not an actual majority, against any and all important reforms. While the republican party is occupied with a fight between reformers and stand-patters, the democratic party is ready for action, and can move forward at a moment's notice.

Then, too, a democratic administration will, if elected, enter office pledged to specific reforms named in the platform, while the republican party will ask the public to trust it to carry out such reforms as may be outlined after the election. In the one case the people know what to expect; in the other case they are left in uncertainty. But this is not the worst of it. A republican president will have no straightforward platform declaration, with which to draw republican legislators up to specific reforms, while a democratic president will have a platform which will commit those elected with him to certain clearly defined measures. President Roosevelt's trouble has been that his platform promised nothing and, with all his great energy, he has not been able to secure any substantial reforms. How can a less positive or aggressive republican accomplish more, if hampered by the same ambiguity and uncertainty in the platform?

The democrats have the advantage, also, in that they make a distinction between the natural man and the fictitious person called a corporation. They recognize that man was placed on earth to carry out a divine decree, while the corporation was created to make money; and this difference in the purposes of creation necessitates a difference in the treatment of the two. The republicans, on the other hand, have confused the natural man and the corporation, and have given to the corporations all the rights of the natural man, besides the special rights given the corporation by law.

Democrats believe in the natural and inalienable rights of the individual; they believe that the individual should be left free to exert himself as he will, except insofar as he must be restrained from denying to others rights equal to his own. Democrats believe that each community ought to be free to act upon the things in which it is interested, and that the state should be undisturbed in its control of affairs of purely state importance. Beginning with the right of the individual, the democrat proceeds to defend the right of each group of persons up to the federal government, and insists upon the right of the federal government to the full use of all powers delegated to it. Guarding, as it does, the rights and interests

of the individual, the democratic party is more solicitous than the republican party about the individual, and therefore is more careful to protect him against the trespasses that have been made upon his rights by the corporations.

The difference between the democratic position and the republican position can be illustrated by reference to the position taken by three prominent republicans. Take the president's position on national incorporations. He favors the incorporation of railways and interstate commerce corporations by the federal government, and in so doing he ignores the right of the state to regulate corporations doing business within the state. The president has made this mistake, largely because he leans to the Hamiltonian rather than to the Jeffersonian theory of government. He is perfectly honest in his belief that national incorporation would be good for the country, and when he stated his position for the first time, he gave three reasons for taking the position, and one was that it would relieve the corporations from the annoyance of state regulation. Now the democrat believes that it is better for the corporation to suffer such annoyance as may be occasioned by state legislation, than that the individual shall be denied the protection that comes from state legislation. The president would remove the control from the state government, which is near the people, to the federal government, which is farther from the people, and he would do this notwithstanding the fact that the senate has shown itself subservient to the predatory interests. The democrats insist that the federal government has now power sufficient for all necessary federal regulation, and that federal regulation should be added to state regulation, and not substituted for it. In other words, the democrat would give to the individual all the protection that can come from federal legislation, and still reserve to him all the protection that can come from state legislation.

Let me take another party man—Governor Hughes. If you will read his speeches, you will find that they are very general when they come to the discussion of remedial legislation, and very earnest when they refer to possible injustice to the corporations. He is just now finding fault with fines; whether he has in mind the \$29,000,000 fine, or other fines I don't know. He speaks of the injustice to the stockholders; and yet, what has he said about the injustice that the stockholders have permitted the corporations to work against the general public for a generation? Where are his speeches denouncing the Standard Oil trust, and the steel trust and the other trusts? The stockholders are not the only innocent parties. If they do not want to run the risk of paying fines, they can sell their stock in the law breaking corporations; but the consumer, who is the victim of the trusts, what about him? The fact that Governor Hughes is much more anxious to prevent injustice to a few stockholders than to a much larger number of consumers, indicates the point of view from which he looks at public questions. His veto of the two cent fare bill is another illustration. He gave the benefit of the doubt to the railroads instead of giving it to the people, although he knew that the railroads could protect themselves from injustice in the courts, even after he signed the bill, whereas the people had no recourse to courts when he vetoed the bill.

Let me give you a third illustration: Take the attitude of Secretary Taft on the subject of corporations. What has he done, or is he doing to protect the public from the misuse of corporate power? What specific legislation does he demand for the extermination of the trusts? None. On the contrary, he found fault with my statement that the private monopoly should be eliminated. He insisted that it should not be eliminated but simply controlled; and yet he must know that there are several trusts, any one of which could afford to contribute ten times as large a campaign fund as could be collected from all individual contributors to a campaign fund.

When he comes to the discussion of the tariff question, he is much more concerned about a republican victory than he is about tariff reform, because he is not willing to jeopardize a republican victory by immediate tariff reform. Notwithstanding the gross injustice which he must know to exist, he is not willing that a single schedule shall be disturbed at present, and he knows that the re-

publicans have promised before each election to make whatever reform was necessary, only to say after election that no reform was necessary.

But I desire to present what I regard as conclusive evidence of Secretary Taft's unfitness to deal with the question of corporations. You will find this evidence in a government report. In 1905 there was issued from the government printing office at Washington a document known as "Committee Reports, Hearings and Acts of Congress Corresponding Thereto." It included the hearings before the committee of the house of representatives on insular affairs in the Fifty-eighth congress. Secretary Taft was a witness before the committee and on page 103 will be found the language which I am going to quote. There was in the charter of the Manila railway a provision that at the end of one hundred years the railway should revert to the Spanish government. The company had claims against the United States for occupation of the railroad for nine months. Secretary Taft explains that he attempted to settle this claim by giving to the railroad a perpetual franchise. He says:

"When I was out there as governor, I talked with the manager of the company and suggested a compromise by which we should give them a perpetual franchise like the franchise already granted for the construction of railways without guarantees, and that we should agree to allow them on the franchise already granted the duties on the materials put into the new franchises on the one hand, and that they should release all claims against the United States on the other hand."

In another part of his testimony he stated that the railroad paid three or four hundred thousand dollars a year net. This would make the rental of the railroad for nine months worth from \$225,000 to \$300,000. Now, in order to secure a release of the claim against the government, Mr. Taft was willing to convert a hundred year charter into a perpetual franchise. There was a provision in the original charter in regard to guarantees, and Secretary Taft says that the Philippine Islands have always repudiated this obligation, so that it can not be considered as a compensation. The point that I desire to make is this, that Secretary Taft was willing to fasten upon the Filipino people a perpetual franchise, and give to a railroad company the power to hold this franchise forever.

On page eighty-three of the same report, you will find that Secretary Taft, in discussing the bill under consideration by the committee, favored a provision that would give the Philippine commission the power to give a perpetual guarantee of income to a railroad. Mr. Jones asked him:

"That leaves it to the commission to say whether it (the railroad) shall pay anything (of the guarantee) back or not?" And Secretary Taft replied: "Yes, sir, it does, and it leaves it to the commission to make a perpetual guarantee if it would. In many of the guarantees of England this was the form taken."

From these two quotations it will be seen that Secretary Taft was willing, when he was governor of the Philippines, to grant a perpetual franchise to a railroad, and was willing, after he became secretary of war, to authorize the commission to make a perpetual guarantee of income to a railroad.

Remember that the Filipinos are often described as our wards, and that we are benevolently described as their guardian. Remember, too, that our occupation of the islands is only temporary, for our government has never announced its purpose to hold the islands or to administer the government for any particular time, and we are assured by prominent republicans that we can not yet tell what ought to be done with the islands. Now a guardian is under restrictions which are not applied to one who acts for himself. If Secretary Taft is willing to give a perpetual franchise when he is a guardian of the Filipinos, how long a franchise would he be willing to give if he were acting for the American people? If he would be willing to bind the Filipinos forever to a fixed profit on a railway enterprise, how would he be willing to bind the American people in corporate matters?

How long is eternity? Does Secretary Taft realize what it means to grant a perpetual franchise? If, for instance, Columbus had been given a perpetual franchise in the United States by Ferdinand and Isabella, when he discovered America, that franchise would be legally running yet. And yet neither Columbus nor the