

# SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF 1908

Charles M. Zirkle, Berryton, Kan.—Our township made democratic gains, but a few deserted us towards the close of the campaign; cause—for fear of hard times if Bryan should be elected. For the present stick to the Denver platform. We can hardly win with all the corporate capital against us. In the last issue of *The Commoner* you publish "Religion in Politics," by Roosevelt. Did not Roosevelt oppose the election of Smoot as senator for the reason that Smoot is a Mormon?

G. T. Werline, Nadeau, Mich.—In my opinion, an unreasoning indefinable unjustifiable apprehension of great calamity, an imbecile intellectual panic did it.

Hal M. Moran, Winfield, Kan.—In regard to the "mystery of 1908" kindly allow me to say, that while the democratic party made gains, yet we lost this county and I attribute it to the fact that about all the large newspapers seem to be controlled by our opponents, and the people were continually told we would have hard times if Mr. Bryan was elected. An overwhelming majority of all the newspapers which go daily into our homes are republican. It is almost impossible to get a good democratic daily here on time. Kindly allow me to suggest that *The Commoner* solicit contributions to a fund for the purpose of establishing a number of large democratic dailies with Mr. Bryan at the head of them that the people get the truth. I would be glad to contribute according to my ability, and three million democrats and liberty lovers would in all probability be anxious to send in their dollar.

Edward McClain, Manzanola, Colo.—Would say our precinct, county and state made substantial gains; reasons for our success, well organized workers in party, and a "still hunt." I have an abiding faith that the democratic party will yet triumph and gain control of the federal government. Cause of our 1908 national defeat was the Catholic vote in every large city all over the United States, more especially in New York City, something that none of our workers thought about looking after.

William A. Thompson, Huron, S. D.—Reformers of the future must depend upon direct legislation. No great reforms are possible under the conditions that obtain by the ascendancy of any political party. The recent defeat of the democratic party in spite of the Herculean efforts of W. J. Bryan demonstrates the facts that "vested rights" will ever avail themselves of the opportunity to coerce, or purchase, the willing slave, whose numbers preclude the possibility of a reform under party management.

W. R. Pattangall, Waterville, Me.—What course shall reformers adopt in the future? Work. Go slow. Take one definite, practical, concrete reform and stick to it until it is accomplished. Do not try to do too much at once. The country is large and educates slowly. Too many ideas confuse people. Too many innovations frighten them. One thing at a time is a good rule in politics. "Can the democratic party hope ever to gain control of the federal government?" "Ever" is a long time and democracy always hopes. In this instance the hope may reasonably be expected to be fulfilled in 1912, provided that in the meantime the democratic party shows itself capable of governing well the states which were given into its control at the last election. Democracy will win when the people are convinced that it ought to win and not until then and they must be convinced by works not words.

A. J. Kinnaird, Carrollton, Mo.—As a farmer I wish to give my opinion in answer to the questions on the first page of *The Commoner* of November 13. First, yes. Second, many democrats believed that Candidate Cowherd got his nomination by fraud. The 50,000 negroes were driven into the republican ranks in this state by the foolish threats of disfranchisement and "Jim Crow" cars by the fools in charge of the democratic campaign. Not many of them could be induced by love or money to vote with the democrats. When they know we have to conciliate the negro vote, how foolish to stir up race antipathy. Third, How can we, with republican partnership with corporations and their reciprocity arrangement. The corporations to buy the elections and give the offices to the republican politicians and the politicians in turn give them the power to fleece those dear lambs, the American people. Isn't it easy?

J. Kellogg, Little Rock, Ark.—I felt very

## THE SCOPE OF THE INQUIRY

In its issue of November 13, *The Commoner* invited contributions to a symposium, having for its purpose an inquiry into the causes of the results of the 1908 election. *The Commoner* asked the co-operation of its readers in every section of the country, submitting these questions:

Did the democratic party make losses in your county and precinct?

If so, to what influence were such losses due?

What course shall reformers adopt for the future?

Can the democratic party hope ever to gain control of the federal government?

The first installment of this symposium is printed in this issue. It should be understood that the publication of any particular opinion does not mean that *The Commoner* endorses that opinion. In order that the inquiry shall be thorough it will be necessary that wide scope be given the contributors to this symposium, and these opinions are to be printed with the names of the writers.

For the preparation of this symposium *The Commoner* must lay down certain unalterable rules:

First, replies must be brief and to the point.

Second, the writing must be plain.

Third, the tone must be respectful, the language non-libelous and free from epithet—although the widest possible latitude will be given for the description of the conditions that contributed to the result and the expression of opinion as to the future course of reformers.

The name of the contributor will be used.

*The Commoner* will continue this symposium from week to week, covering sufficient time and space in which to clear up "The Mystery of 1908."

hopeful, in fact almost certain of our success until about the last day. I found quite a number of democrats who seemed to fear a panic if our candidates were elected. Then I found bankers, as a rule, regardless of politics were opposed to our guaranty idea. I did not sympathize with such cowardly sentiments, but I am sure they had much to do with our defeat. In this state many democrats remained away from the polls and did not vote, because they thought our ticket safe, both local and national. Consequently our majorities were greatly reduced. I have always voted the democratic ticket, but I must confess it looks as if our party may never succeed. We can not have a better platform or stronger candidates than we have had this time.

Thomas A. Flannery, Indianapolis, Ind.—First, Mr. Bryan carried my precinct by 100 majority, a gain of 129 votes, because there were honest democrats on the election board in said precinct. Second, Mr. Bryan lost Marion county by 237 votes, because there were dishonest democrats on some of the election boards in said county. Third, Adopt the Denver platform in full in the year 1912 and drive all political rascals from the democratic party. Put honest democrats on the election boards in every precinct in the United States. This is the course the reformers in the democratic party should adopt in the future. The democratic party can gain control of the federal government in this way and no other. If the democratic party adopts above said policies I will vote for the next nominee in 1912, providing he is an honest and sincere man. If not I shall never cast another vote.

Western Starr, Chicago, Ill.—First, Waiving purely local issues and candidates, the democratic party made losses in Cook county, Ill., and in the precinct in which I live. Second, losses were due to various influences operating with more or less effect in different sections of the whole country. In Cook county local influences

strove to make the local campaign independent of the general campaign. An analysis of the vote tends to show that the reactionary element of the party, co-operating throughout the country, made use of religious prejudice in support of the republican national ticket. The action conclusively shown on the part of Tammany was general and not local. A sub-conscious feeling that the democratic party was afraid to grapple effectively with the one conspicuous abuse of power growing out of republican policies in the tariff and the trusts. A feeling that the democratic party was in search of issues that might win popular support, instead of making the fight upon the vital issue. Third, The party of reform should adopt a course directing its attack upon the vital issue of the tariff and its allied and dependent abuses as being unjust and immoral, and appealing to the moral sense of the public. No just appeal to the sound moral judgment of the people has ever been defeated in the ultimate, and there is every ground for a belief that this judgment is as quick among the American people today as it has ever been in any age or in any nation. Fourth, Under whatever name it may bear, a party of the people will as inevitably gain control of the federal government, as it inspires public confidence that it is worthy.

Theodore D. Jersey, Charleston, S. C.—If *The Commoner* can supply a full statement of the returns of elections for the recent election, federal and state, together with the returns for the previous elections, a careful study of these may reveal the system, by which the four elections have been carried for the republican presidential candidates. My own opinion is, that we will find evidence of a system, gradually perfected to something most extraordinary for this year, where its operations have been so remarkable and astonishing, as to be almost marvelous. Crudely worked at great expense in 1896, its facility to produce the desired result at a smaller expenditure, has been gradually obtained, through practice at each recurring election. I do not see how we can hope to find out either the amount of, or source from which, the bulk of the money came, by which the democratic candidates were defeated in this last presidential contest. I look for a statement, sworn to, demonstrating, apparently, an amount contributed to the republican national presidential committee, but little, if at all, in excess of that declared by the democratic treasurer. I doubt very much whether the very instrumentalities, by which this astonishing result were effected, have any idea how they contributed to it; but they can possibly be helped to arrive at an understanding, with care and patience; but it will require time and labor. The next four years will be years of great possibilities. The backbone of the democratic party was never weaker than it is today. From his temperament and, on account of existing conditions, Taft's chance of breaking the solid south is far stronger than that of Roosevelt or McKinley and, unless something occurs which I do not clearly foresee at this time to prevent it, President Taft may bring to bear upon the south influences calculated to precipitate a debacle. This I would profoundly regret. The injury to the country at large will be great; but we must realize while not yet as completely commercialized as the north and west, the process of commercialization is in progress throughout the nation, and the south is feeling it more and more each day. Men ten and twenty years your and my junior may have as high ideals, but their belief in the power of money is greater and this wide spreading opinion is benumbing. They line up for the fight believing that they have no chance, that a sufficient number of votes can be brought north and west to offset the vote of the solid south and such as may through almost superhuman exertions be thrown with it for government by the people. There never has been and never will be found any political organization or aggregation which will not weaken under repeated defeat.

H. Van Giffin, Des Moines, Ia.—Complying with your request to the people as to their opinion of the cause of the defeat of the democratic principles, represented by you, I would say that nothing else has done it but the scare of the employed brought on by the threats of the employer, combined with the favor of Mr. Taft by the Catholics and Jews on account of his dealing in the Philippine Islands and his unbelief in the Divinity of Christ.