

Can Democratic Party Bring About Real Reform?

(In publishing letters from readers it is hardly necessary to say that publication does not mean that The Commoner endorses the sentiments contained in the letters.)

E. L. Dohoney—Newspaper reports show a majority of over sixty for the democratic party in the lower house of the next congress, and The Commoner gives the status of the senate as fifty republicans to forty-one democrats. But as there are eight or ten of these republicans insurgents, who will act with the democrats, in favor of certain reforms, it seems that something in the interest of the people ought to be effected by the next congress. The trouble, however, is that there is in the democratic party every phase of political opinion, from plutocracy to socialism; and at no time since the Civil war, has the party been able to act as a unit in favor of any political reform. Every intelligent person knows that the reforms now advocated by Mr. Bryan and Colonel Roosevelt were advocated by the greenbackers over thirty years ago, and since by the populists. In 1880 the greenbackers had twenty-three members in congress, and were rapidly breaking up the democratic party. To save their party the democratic leaders adopted substantially the greenbackers' platform, and promised the greenbackers that if they would co-operate with the democratic party that as soon as it got control of the government all these reforms should be enacted into laws. The greenbackers went back into the democratic party; and during a part of Cleveland's administration the democrats had a working majority in both houses of congress. And yet, with the president and congress under its supposed control, the democratic party failed to keep a single pledge made to the greenbackers. No attempt at reform was made except on the tariff, and that proved a failure. When the protection democrats of the east got through with the Wilson bill, it was very little better than the republican law it repealed. It was a tariff law more for protection than revenue. Even Cleveland would not sign the bill.

When the Payne-Aldrich law was enacted, nearly all the democrats abandoned their time honored doctrine of tariff for revenue and voted with the republicans for protection in their own localities. It must be evident to every thinking person that the democratic party as now constituted, can never give the people a just tariff law.

The impotence of the party was also clearly shown when the insurgent republicans sought to break down the despotic power of Speaker Cannon, by changing the infamous rules of the house, which had for years prevented reform legislation. The Tammany democrats, aided by Bourbon democrats from the south, came to the relief of the speaker, and continued his despotic power.

The inability of the democratic party to ever elect a president has thrice been demonstrated by the defeat of Mr. Bryan. In all three races Bryan would have been elected easily, if the democratic party had supported him solidly, for he had the support of nearly all the populists and independents. But the national bank democrats betrayed him and voted with the republicans.

And that the party cannot elect a so-called conservative was clearly demonstrated by the disgraceful defeat of Judge Parker in 1904. The corporation wing of the party will not support a Bryan democrat, and the true Jeffersonian democrats will never support a national bank candidate. If Bryan cannot be elected the party will never elect a president, for fully three-fourths of the party are with Bryan in sentiment. The majority of the party being Jeffersonian democrats are opposed to the national banks issuing and controlling the currency, and by speculation and fraud producing panics, and ruining the people. Therefore they will not support a gold basis national bank candidate for president.

If Mr. Bryan's position results in breaking up the party, and Colonel Roosevelt can disrupt the republican party, we can then get all reformers and independents into a new party of the people against the plutocracy, get control of government, overthrow the present reign of monopoly and recover the rights and liberties of the people.

To prevent revolution and ruin, the only hope of the country is a new political party. All organizations finally become corrupt and oppres-

sive, and history furnishes no instance, when an old party has ever been reformed. "You cannot put new wine into old bottles," was the language of the Christ. The wine not only ferments, but hurts the bottles. All reforms have to originate with the people and outside of existing parties.

The late election was not a triumph of the democratic party, but simply the repudiation of the robber tariff and republican corruption. It was not that the people loved the democratic party more, but the republicans less. It was simply a choice of evils. I would gladly see the democratic party relieve the country from the present reign of monopoly, but have no hope of it; and if the party falls this time, as fall it will, it ought to get out of the way. It has acted "the dog in the manger" long enough. It cannot eat the hay itself and won't allow any other party to eat it.

Although independent of all parties the writer is and ever has been a Jeffersonian democrat in principle, and as such, earnestly supported Mr. Bryan in all three races, as the best that could be done. But after he was defeated by the money power in 1896, I wrote Mr. Bryan that he never could be elected in the democratic party; nor could he reform the party—that he could not "put new wine into old bottles."

C. F. Michael, Hartford, Conn.—In your issue of even date you copy from the Johnstown (Pa.) Daily Democrat, under the title "Bryan Will Fight," which in my opinion hits the nail on the head, with only this exception—he will probably never again be called upon to stand for office. Is it not Bryanism that gave us insurgent republicans? Is it not Bryanism that gave us a strenuous Teddy? Is it not Bryanism that won the last democratic victory? If Bryan's efforts are responsible for the result of the last election then Mr. Bryan is the only tangible candidate for the democratic convention to nominate for president. Any democrat who don't want Mr. Bryan to run again had better come out in the open, take off the mask and declare himself a standpat republican. Mr. Bryan can poll more votes on the democratic ticket than any other living man. Plutocracy may beat him again, but it will take more money to do it than they spent in 1896. I want Bryan nominated at the next national convention. I say this now in order to start the ball a rolling, and I think it can be made to roll so fast that by the time the convention meets the trust agents will want to stay at home and not show their faces at the convention.

W. B. Chase, Marion, Ohio.—One word to the democratic party. You have had a great leader, but the "interests" in both the republican and democratic parties, are seeking to deprive the masses of their truest friend and greatest advocate. This is being done by and through those who seek private rather than public welfare. You are in need of an immediate leader now. One who will be all things to all men that all may be saved. Not one who would be all things to all men that he may be saved. A real progressive, and not a real conservative of the "interests" under the cloak of progressives. What the masses want and will have is a real, direct, positive, progressive leader. You are wasting time. Unite now on that leader. You know him, you love him, he is true, has been thoroughly tested and tried, and if you are true to yourselves and to him he will lead you to certain victory for the public weal in 1912. No man, or set of men, can or will be true to the progressive democratic party, who does not favor that true and tried and tested leader. So sure as he is chosen now as such leader, and so long as such party stands true to him, so long will the progressive democratic party succeed, and no longer; for if they do not stand true to him and to progressive democratic principles, as their leader and guide, the democratic party will go down to ignominious defeat. Remember this in 1912, after election. Begin now, get yourselves in line, get together, for with all your apparent victory the democratic party will fall and go to the wall unless you do, and do it now. This leader is the only one that will and can lead the progressive democratic party to sure victory then. He is your real leader now, but not in the way that means success to your principles. He must be your open-named and adopted leader. Be true to him, show your confidence in him, without variance or shadow of turning,

and you will be led to the grandest, most popular victories that any political party of the people ever had. This one is entitled to be your leader; you owe it to him; he owes it to you; you owe it to the masses, because he is true to the masses, he is true to himself and "he can't be false to any man." He can be trusted to the uttermost; trust him; he is the one among all to be preferred now by you all. There is none other that the masses will fully endorse as their leader, and (pardon the prophecy, for it is true) no other in the progressive democratic party, who can so lead and who can be elected president in 1912. Call this what you may; treat it as you will; you who live to see the result of the 1912 national election will pronounce it true.

J. W. Horner, 7626 Normal Ave., Chicago.—William J. Bryan owes his several defeats to the fact that he was in advance of his age. The democratic party and the progressives in the republican party have come to his views at last. The democratic party owes to him more than to anybody else, its present triumph. He is the best timber for 1912 in the party. If his opponents will think this out fairly and squarely they must conclude that it is so.

Fred R. Hall, Battle Creek, Mich.—The Commoner of December 9 is before me and I have read its timely articles and especially the articles written commenting on the recent election outcome. One in particular by Edgar Howard, also one by Wayne C. Williams. These men are sounding an important and a timely warning. It is now up to the democratic party to demonstrate "whom they shall serve." Shall the peoples' victory be turned to defeat by making concessions to insure party victory? This appears to be the question. There is one sure thing, if Providence designs that the rights of the common people shall ultimately triumph and that this shall once more be a government of the people, by the people and for the people, in fact and not in fancy, then the democratic party must consistently and honestly carry out true and tried principles or God will raise up a political force that will and it will matter not what name it is called by whether socialism or any other ism. It is now up to the democrats to stand as did Thomas at Chickamauga and "hold this position till the regiment is mustered out of service." The question now is, are we going to win this victory or must it be delegated to able successors.

(Mr. Bryan is not a candidate and these samples of many letters received at The Commoner office are printed for the purpose of saying to all who feel as these writers do that if they will but devote that personal enthusiasm they have shown for Mr. Bryan and that zealous effort they have put forth whenever he has been a candidate in opposition to the scheme of the trust agents to secure control of the democratic convention the democratic party will in 1912 present a united front in defense of democratic principles. Let every friend of Mr. Bryan join with him in the effort to secure as the democratic nominee in 1912 a man whose record will justify the hope that the people may depend upon him. Let them join with Mr. Bryan in the effort to have the national convention adopt a real democratic platform—a platform that shall speak the sentiments of the masses rather than the sentiments of those who believe they have an inherent right to secure special privileges from government.—Editor of The Commoner.)

The following letter, written to a friend in the state of Washington, defines Mr. Bryan's position:

Mission, Texas, December 8, 1910.—You kind letter at hand. I appreciate a loyalty which leads you to favor my nomination again after three defeats, but I cannot conceive of any circumstances which would make it wise to consider being a candidate in 1912, and I hope you will not advocate it.

We have a fight on our hands to prevent the capture of the organization of the party by the reactionary element and I can assist in this fight more effectively if I am not hampered by the restraints placed upon a candidate. Our party is sound at heart—the rank and file are incorruptible, but we have to spend so much energy

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