

Meaning of Aldrich Currency Scheme

It Would Be "Thumbs Down" Upon a Wall Street Push Button

If not a fateful, it was an ironical coincidence that placed the worst fleeced of the victimized Merritt brothers on the witness stand before the Stanley committee in Washington at the very time when Nelson Aldrich had gathered, at the dictates of Wall street, with the aid of the railroads, an impressive group of bankers in New Orleans, and was expounding to them the beauties and benefactions of his newest financial scheme—an advance upon his earlier ones in that it is calculated to fasten upon this country an even more scientifically efficient monopoly of money and credit, a more nearly perfect monopoly of monopolies than was possible even under such earlier Aldrich devices as that which made the impoverishment of the Merritts by John D. Rockefeller as easy as the game of the county-fair shell worker.

It is not our purpose today to present a study of sactimonious business scoundrelism, nor to indulge in reflection upon the character and methods of a queer compounder of piety and piracy, who could find a fit lieutenant only in the person of a preacher of the gospel of the Christian God.

The facts as testified point what seems to us a more important, because more practical, moral. We cite simply an illuminative portion of the reported record:

The Merritts, of Duluth, were men of the woods, who discovered the worth of the now famous Mesabe ore fields in Minnesota. After they had located the ore they built the Duluth, Missabe and Northern railroad to connect the range with the Duluth and Winnipeg railroad, sixty-four miles, at an actual cost of \$660,000, in lieu of which the builders accepted \$1,200,000 stock and \$1,200,000 in bonds.

The Merritt brothers needed \$1,000,000 more to extend into Duluth and build terminals. This money they obtained from John D. Rockefeller through the Rev. Mr. Gates, then in charge of Rockefeller's charities.

Following this came a consolidation of ore and railroad properties, and in this consolidation Merritt put up about \$3,000,000 worth of securities on a call loan of \$420,000 from John D. Rockefeller.

Leonidas Merritt swears he was urged by Mr. Rockefeller's clerical counselor to trust in John D. Rockefeller. He had a conference with Mr. Rockefeller, who opposed a receivership for the road on the ground that it would have "a little tinge of violating the law." On Merritt's refusal to throw his Minnesota friends and relatives overboard and join with Rockefeller in gobbling the great property, the \$420,000 loan was called in twenty-four hours and \$6,000,000 to \$10,000,000 worth of securities swallowed by Rockefeller, leaving Merritt to "walk the railroad ties back to Duluth."

And when Merritt was asked why he could not obtain money accommodation elsewhere on properties then valued at \$10,000,000 and now estimated as being worth \$700,000,000 to the steel trust, this was his sworn testimony:

"He spread the report in Cleveland and elsewhere that he had paid \$10 per share for stock not worth more than \$5, and I could not raise the money. Rockefeller was the money power in 1893. He said, 'Hands off! Them fellows are my meat,' and the money would not loan.

"What reason was given for the call?" asked Mr. McGillicuddy, of the committee.

"None. They wanted my property, I suppose, and that was all there was to it," replied Merritt.

Now, the significance of this one of many instances that there are male as well as female vampires, who strip the fool who trusts them "to his foolish hide," does not seem to us to lie in the already known callous hypocrisy of a Rockefeller and his hired underlings. The real lesson of the fleecing of the Merritts is the faultiness of this nation's financial system. For the story of the Mesabe men is but a repetition of the tale of tens of thousands of other men who, by the timely cutting off of their credit, have been sucked into the maw of the money masters.

The moral of it all is a stinging rebuke to the lazy folly of a people who submit to a system which restricts legitimate business men to seeking credit from more powerful competitors; a system which compels the possessor of valuable assets to develop them only by obtaining the needed money accommodation from the controllers of banks, who, at the same time, control

the rival means of transportation, manufacture and supply of raw staple products.

That system has meant nothing but bank tolerance until the enticement into dependence of the business man of the Merritt type, with coveted possessions, is complete. Then the instant annihilation of the liquid value of his assets and then—surrender or bankruptcy or both.

It is the ripening knowledge of this power and its abuse by the money masters that has created the sentiment which is forcing the arch-parasites of our civilization and their political servants to make pretense of giving to the American people a different system.

But they are meeting a national demand, that has put a little fear into their minds, in a thoroughly characteristic way. They have chosen as their champion the chief exponent of all their cherished special privileges. They have made their spokesman Aldrich, of Rhode Island, whose whole life has been devoted to the enactment of cheating legislation, designed to foster monopolies and exploit and despoil the honest producer, merchant and manufacturer.

As is always the case with the most vicious proposals of legislation, there is a seeming yielding to an intelligent, imperative public demand in the Aldrich financial scheme. Many wise and useful betterments are included in its provisions. But it is so framed that underlying all that is good is the real intent, the insurance of a control by the little group of the money masters over the credit of every legitimate business man more nearly absolute than ever yet has existed.

Should the Aldrich scheme ever become law, there would be no future parallels of this Merritt case. It would no longer be necessary for a Rockefeller to ingratiate himself with the intended victim through the agency of a saintly secretary and "brotherly" manner in personal intercourse. With the Aldrich scheme legalized, all that would be needed would be "thumbs down!" upon a push button on a Wall street desk, and the victim's credit would be automatically shut off in the smallest and the biggest bank in the smallest and the biggest city in the land.—Philadelphia North American.

SPREAD DEMOCRATIC DOCTRINE

C. G. Cunningham, Omaha, Neb.: Herewith please find five subscriptions to The Commoner, and my check to cover. I am glad to be able to help in spreading the propaganda of progressive democracy and trust the good work may go on and ultimately eventuate in an irresistible demand for the restoration of government such as the fathers of this republic had in view when they worked and struggled and sacrificed to establish it. As I view the situation the greatest obstacles to needed reforms among the people of today, is a general decline of national spirit and wide spread indifference to public affairs—the very condition that Mr. Jefferson declared, would have the effect of dividing the people into the two classes, "wolves and sheep." Nothing is needed so much, just now as a nation-wide revival of interest in these matters and I know of no greater stimulus to such an awakening than the work that is being done by The Commoner and its able and patriotic editor. If the people can be aroused before and during the coming national campaign to an alert and intense interest in their public affairs, there is no question that they are intelligent enough and honest enough to settle the vexing problems of the present and provide security for the future of their institutions. No people in the history of the world have been so well equipped for this task as are the American people of today, nor do I believe the world has ever known a people more ready to respond with loyal and devoted support to public servants who really mean and try to serve them. The tariff propaganda is and has always been the fruitful mother of the most pernicious brood ever fostered and nourished in a free government. Government sanction to a business advantage over one's neighbor is bad, but the sordid selfishness engendered by its exercise is a thousand times worse. It fosters in the individual, beyond all other influences the spirit of graft and why men can see this effect in the granting of rebates by corporations and can not see it in the protective tariff, betrays an obliquity of mental vision for which I can not

account. I am persuaded that there will be a change of parties in the national administration next year and trust to see a progressive democrat at the helm.

Theodore Mahn, Alma, Neb.: Enclosed please find \$1.00 in payment of subscription for The Commoner. I could not do without this champion of the people's cause. We know full well what the present struggle for leadership means, and in any contest between the "interests" and the progressive principles advocated by Mr. Bryan, you can count on us every day in the year. Harmon and disharmony won't do. We must have a Wilson, Clark or a Folk as our standard bearer. If the forces in this state that stand for Harmon and disharmony become sufficiently aroused from their drunken stupor so as to read and study the late primary election returns, they will find no great cause for rejoicing in them for their success next year. While there are those here who would sell their principles for a mess of pottage, or official pie, there are also those in larger numbers who would never countenance the taking of a backward step from the advanced ground the democratic party now occupies, and among this class you may count me every time.

T. J. Hickey, Minneapolis, Minn.—Please find enclosed check for \$1.00 to renew my subscription. Kindly include this special offer of the Weekly Enquirer and American Homestead. You ask me for an expression with reference to presidential candidates, replying to this will say any man who is a real progressive man will be acceptable to me. I cast my first vote for Grover Cleveland and had great hopes at that time that he was a man who would represent the people but unfortunately like every other president we have had since I have been a man, has represented the special interests and I only hope that I will have the pleasure of voting for and seeing one president elected whose sympathies are with and for the people. It seems, however, that notwithstanding the fact of this all being left with the voter that each time it comes to a test they weaken and fail to do their duty. The Commoner is doing grand work and while it does not please the metropolitan dailies of this country, the metropolitan dailies do not please the people, and it is only a question of education until the people will appreciate Mr. Bryan and his efforts and they will realize what a grand and noble work he has been doing for the past twenty years.

L. A. Ellis, Mina, Nev.—I am very much interested in your endeavor to arouse the common people in the matter of nominating the next presidential candidates. This is a matter of vital importance to the whole country. By an act recently passed by the congress, compelling publication of campaign contributions, thus taking away a part of the power of the trusts and special interests, they will and are endeavoring to nominate the candidate of each of the leading parties. With this accomplished they have beaten the law above referred to and will set back on their haunches contented in the knowledge of the fact that no matter who is elected he will "belong to them." The special interests must be beaten at the next nominating convention if at all. It is to be hoped that Senator La Follette will beat them in the republican convention and we (let every democrat call himself we in this matter) democrats must see to it that the people and not the special interests nominate our standard-bearer and he should be such a man as will not accept special or unusual aid or assistance from the special interests during his campaign. This is the point on which President Cleveland evidently fell down. The interests saw early in the campaign that he was going to be elected by the common people and their only hope was to get in and help and then make him believe "they done it." It would seem they accomplished their purpose, judging from his acts during his last administration. We need a man who has been tried in the balances and not found wanting. Such a man, in my estimation is ex-Governor Folk of Missouri or Governor Wilson of New Jersey. There are a few others who are good men, but we democrats in the west (so far as I am able to learn) think the ones named above much the strongest. May the good work of The Commoner go on and on until every democrat in the country is aroused to action in the selection of our next standard-bearer feeling that if they name the right man success is assured.