

Readers Discuss Issues and Candidates for 1920

In response to a request made in our October issue for democrats to suggest upon what issues the next national campaign should be fought and to also make suggestions as to available democratic presidential candidates, we reproduce below as many of the letters received as space in this issue will permit.

Charles Allen Taber, Massachusetts.—In answer to your "Attention Democrats" in the last Commoner, permit me to write that perhaps the spirit of the people and the condition of public affairs next year will decide what shall be the issue in the presidential campaign. It is to be hoped that prohibition will be so far settled that it will not be the prominent issue. Probably the treaty of peace will be adopted, but some issue will naturally arise relating to the policy which we shall adopt in dealing with foreign nations. Probably we shall ask for some amendments to the treaty and we may raise some issue as to how far we ought to go in our efforts to control other nations. From present indications we may expect that our industrial situation will be very prominent in the public mind. There are many difficult problems and probably one year will not have solved them satisfactorily. The rights of labor will probably be discussed very seriously and we may expect serious troubles to arise. We are undoubtedly facing a strong demand for a governmental control, if not operation, of most of the great public utilities. While a large number of people are advocating this policy, it seems to me that the best element among them are not ready to go far at present in this line, except in relation to the railroads and perhaps some of the more important utilities.

It is hard to answer now the question as to who shall lead the democratic party with the greatest assurance of success. You probably know that I would prefer to have you to become the next president. You have advocated most of the political policies and principles of government which I have advocated, and very few which I have not accepted. But the dominant issue for next year may be new to the people and outside of their old prejudices. If the dominant issue shall arise out of the so-called rights of labor, your past might not injure you. Probably we cannot expect that the democratic party can carry a New England state, although New Hampshire is a possibility. Possibly New York may have some citizen who can get the nomination and carry that state; but I do not hear or read about any such person at present. Probably the next president will come from one of the northern states in the middlewest. It may not be necessary that he should carry his own state; but it will probably be necessary that he should carry either New York or Ohio. Is it probable that any democrat can carry either of the Pacific states? Missouri is probably a doubtful state. Who can carry Missouri? How would Joseph W. Folk meet the requirements of next year? The democrats of Massachusetts are not of much use in the election of next year, but perhaps they might be induced to help the nomination of a good candidate for president. I shall watch the next Commoner to see what other men are advocating in this matter.

W. C. Dizer, Delaware.—In your October issue you requested suggestions about issues and candidates for the democratic national convention of 1920 to consider.

I have talked with fully two hundred democrats who take a deep interest in national politics. They were nearly all dry men but many have until recently been counted as wet voters. Fully two-thirds of those spoken to are anxious to see Mr. Bryan carry the next democratic nomination for president. The second choice with all of them seems to be about equally divided between Folk of Missouri and Palmer of Pennsylvania.

All over Delaware and eastern Maryland there is an increasing sentiment for William Jennings Bryan. They all believe he would be the strongest candidate of any democrat because of his known and well defined position on prohibition, woman suffrage, the labor question and the Irish question. They think he most nearly fits the mold formed by the issues arising from the late war.

He is regarded as the soundest democrat in America on all economic questions and his patriotism is never questioned. Patriotism with

Bryan is a principle in peace as well as in war. With many it is merely a war time emotion.

The eastern newspapers are not friendly to Mr. Bryan, but they are almost without exception owned or controlled by large railroad and predatory interests.

There is evident all through Delaware a growing sentiment in favor of government ownership of railroads about equally divided between Mr. Bryan's Dual plan and the Plumb plan. Recently many pictures of Mr. Bryan taken away back in 1900 and 1908 have been brought out and hung in prominent places. I have recently been asked for lithograph portraits of Mr. Bryan. I had four left over after one of his lectures and now they are framed and hanging in the offices of three local business houses and one doctor's office.

Occasionally we hear the mention of McAdoo, frequently Folk and Whitlock and Palmer, but even those who mention Folk would prefer Mr. Bryan.

Mr. Bryan's fifteen propositions of last spring seem to fill the bill for platform declarations with all the progressive democrats in this section.

Mr. Bryan's position on the Peace treaty and League of Nations has won him many republican friends in Delaware.

Personally I am ardently in favor of a fourth nomination for Mr. Bryan, but I am almost astounded to find so many who insist he should be the candidate again in 1920.

E. W. Maxey, Nebraska.—In the last issue of The Commoner you ask for opinions as to the most likely candidate for the presidency and on what issues the coming battle should be fought. It may be difficult to decide who is the strongest man, but it is not difficult to decide which is the most able or deserving. You yourself should have this honor. There has not been another man in the United States for the last twenty-five years that has worked so hard or accomplished so much for the public good as you have. Now as to issues, the democratic platform should declare for your Dual plan for the ownership and operation of railroads. It should also declare for free speech and a free press and the immediate release of all political prisoners. A government that cannot withstand the shock of criticism is in great need of criticism.

A. I. Holloway, Mississippi.—I noticed your article on the front page of this month's Commoner, "Attention Democrats," and I hasten to write what I think should be some of the most important planks in the next democratic platform, as follows: 1. America for Americans, as taught by Thomas Jefferson, the greatest democrat that ever lived. 2. Back to the Constitution of the United States. 3. Bring home every soldier boy in any foreign country. 4. That there shall be no more American boys conscripted and sent across the seas to fight in a foreign country. 5. No meddling or "entangling alliance" with any foreign nation. 6. Let the people of every nation, both great and small, govern themselves. 7. That the United States standing army shall not exceed 100,000 men. 8. That universal military training should not be tolerated in a democracy.

I regret very much that I can not think of a standard-bearer for the democratic hosts for 1920. I have always supported you and your measures from 1896 to 1917. I endorsed and supported the democratic platforms of 1896 and 1900. I endorsed your course in the national convention in 1904 when Judge Parker of New York was nominated. I fully endorsed the platform of 1908. I more than ever endorsed your course in the Baltimore convention, and you should have been nominated instead of Mr. Wilson. I endorsed your resignation from the cabinet and all of your utterances until war was declared. You and President Wilson spoke all over the United States and the slogan was "Elect Mr. Wilson and He Will Keep Us Out of War." You know, and Mr. Wilson knows, that that slogan or promise to the good women of the woman suffrage states is what elected Mr. Wilson. It would not have been so bad to have deceived the men, but he deceived the good women and after deceiving the people; after conscripting our boys and sending them across the seas; after deserting his post of duty and going to a foreign country and accepting a league of nations, which, if adopted by the senate, would destroy the independence that our

fathers won in 1776. I am surprised in you, who heretofore has championed every righteous cause of the people, to desert them in this hour of need. The common people have looked to you almost twenty-five years to fight their cause, and now feel that they have been deserted and will have to look to some one else to lead them.

President Wilson, I think, has wrecked the democratic party. Mr. McAdoo's management of the railroads has set back government ownership for at least fifty years. Mr. Burleson's acts have driven thousands from the party, to say nothing of Mr. Wilson's autocracy.

L. D. Bass, Virginia.—I believe that you have worked out the best solution of the railroad problem. Your views, as expressed in "The Dual Plan for the Ownership and Operation of Railroads" in the October Commoner, I heartily endorse.

More than a year ago I wrote you along the same line as your old friend, "An Ex-Missouri Democrat," did in the last issue of The Commoner. I heard your great speech in Chicago when you first received the nomination on the democratic ticket, and since that have endorsed all the reforms you have advocated. At that time the democratic party was wrecked by Mr. Cleveland, and you pulled most of the fragments together and came near being elected president. In fact, you have always polled more white votes than any of your opponents. But what I want to say is this: It seems to me that we are just where you will have to step in the breach and pull us together and to victory. It seems to me the democratic party is already defeated unless you again take the lead. All of the great reforms that we have had for twenty-five years you have advocated, and without your aid could never have been pushed through congress. It seems that our times are calling for "Billy Bryan" more loudly than ever. I was in Europe in 1912 and found that you and your doctrines were permeating many of their governments. The kaiser has been overthrown and now you must be enthroned as president of this great republic, in order that Europe may see that the greatest democrat since the republic has been founded "guides the ship of state." You have never flinched when called to duty. Not only American democrats, but the world is calling for you. We need you, we need you NOW, more than ever.

M. J. Edgeworth, Illinois.—Your headliner in October issue, "Attention Democrats, Uncle Sam Needs You," amuses the average man. What the country needs is for the republican party to nominate any good republican next year for president with an "America First" slogan. This is all that will be necessary to put an end to the international nonsense of the Wilsonian democracy.

Thomas McCarty, Iowa.—Who can lead with greatest assurance of success? My answer to the question is William Jennings Bryan.

Can any reader of The Commoner suggest the name of a man who would give the party more assurance of carrying a democratic senate and house with him than Mr. Bryan?

Can any reader of The Commoner suggest the name of a man that would carry a larger vote of the moral people of the nation, regardless of party lines, than Mr. Bryan?

Can any reader of The Commoner suggest the name of a man who would be more humiliating to the foes of the people than Mr. Bryan? Mr. Bryan is the greatest advocate of the rights of labor, the rights of women, and the rights of the people to rule in the universe.

There hasn't been a measure advocated to give relief to the people in the past twenty-five years, but what Mr. Bryan has been the leader and organizer of it.

Mr. Bryan is the father of the state bank guarantee of deposits now in six states.

Mr. Bryan wrote the initiative, referendum and recall in his state platform in 1896.

Mr. Bryan is a persistent advocate of those two measures.

Mr. Bryan is the originator and securer of the thirty peace treaties. There isn't one good feature in the league of nations but what is the work of Mr. Bryan.

As an organizer, his equal is not to be found in the universe. He took off his coat at Baltimore and licked the whole combined Wall street force. He paid his own expenses in the last