

Hearing from the People

Below will be found extracts from a few of the many letters received from Commoner readers commenting on current events:

Geo. E. Duis, North Dakota.—I am in favor of getting the Democratic voting machine ready for service at once. It needs very little except a change of engineers. Immediately after March 4th our leaders should get together and hold a meeting in every state, and resolve to be progressive and aggressive Democrats and not any one man party-Democrats. During the first Wilson administration we had a real Democratic party, and our president appeared to have some confidence in a few of our leaders. His second administration, surrounded by his so-called Republican friends, was our Waterloo. The Democratic party, including Bryan, made Wilson, and he forgot his party and those who made him. However, the Democratic party will survive. We will come into power again; we must stand for progressive principles. Those who want Simon Pure conservatism are going to get it in big doses in the next two years. The big interests of our country will be in supreme command—Wall Street, the subsidized press, big business and all. Any Democrat who subscribes to that kind of a creed should join the Republican party, and remain there.

I have more respect for Mr. Bryan's judgment on political questions than of any other statesman. If his advice had been followed in the past four years, we would have remained in power indefinitely. I regret the sacrifice of hundreds of fine Democrats who were compelled to go down to defeat last November, and I want the blame placed where it belongs. Mr. Bryan, it is your business to put the party on the right track again. You are the one man who can do it. I am willing to let you write our platform. The Democratic party has honored and trusted you, and you have always been faithful to that trust. Assume the position now to which you are entitled—"Supreme leader" of the Democratic hosts.

F. D. Larrabee, Minnesota.—In the December number of The Commoner, on the front page, in an article, it is said: "The Commoner desires suggestions from the progressive, thinking people of the country as to what the Democratic platform should contain." I suggest that it contain the following:

1. A plank favoring government ownership and operation of public service corporations.
2. A plank favoring a federal constitutional amendment legalizing the taxation of the "unearned increment."

E. W. Maxey, Nebraska.—It is needless to tell you that I have followed your political career with interest since your race with John M. Thurston for United States senator, and that I have given you hearty support in each campaign of yours since. I am anxious to see you again assume leadership of the Democratic party. There may be other men in the Democratic party as capable as you are but no one knows of them. As to the policy the Democratic party should pursue I cannot say how for it to map out a policy in order to win. But I can tell the leaders of the party how they can inaugurate a policy that will deserve to win. But the problem of taxation is the greatest political issue before the voters of America. Taxes may be levied so as to be shifted from seller to buyer until they reach the ultimate consumer who pays all the taxes with an added profit on the taxes in the price of the goods. There is a tax, however, that cannot be shifted. That is a tax on the value of land. The Ralston-Nolan Federal Revenue bill proposes to tax land at one per cent of its value for federal purposes. Exempting land owners that have \$10,000 or less in land values.

The Ralston-Nolan bill would lessen the burden on all legitimate business and therefore lessen prices of commodities. It would put a federal tax on idle city lots, idle farm, timber, coal and oil lands. Would encourage building and discourage the holding of land out of use and at the same time give a measure of justice to the overburdened public.

G. A. Kemp, Indiana.—This letter is in reply to your inquiry for Democrats interested in the rehabilitation of the Democratic party nationally and locally. I am heartily in favor of such action and want to be in touch with any movement

to that end in nation or this state. I may be of some service as a private in this (Tipton) county.

Wm. Matthews, Washington.—Mr. Bryan has wisely suggested that the Democratic party's present need is a set of sound principles around which it can rally, then reorganize. Until this is done it makes little difference whether the democracy reorganizes, succeeds or fails. For after all, what the real Democrats such as Mr. Bryan want, are results. They care little for mere party success, for this alone may spell defeat to them. Permit me to suggest three principal planks around which all Democrats should rally, and with which we can accomplish great service to the country.

First—And this should always be the first proposition in all industrial and economic considerations—a strong land plank. A land value tax sufficiently heavy to prevent speculation in natural resources, and kill land monopoly by making it unprofitable to the holder. A tax of 1 to 3 per cent on the market value of all unused land, with a corresponding reduction upon all homes and farm improvements, would make an admirable starter.

Second—Extend the public ownership of our highways to include all steel highways, the telegraph, the telephone, and, in short, all ways of communication, travel and freight traffic, in which the principle of monopoly now enters.

Third—Let the government assume another of its very important functions—own and operate all banks and control every detail of our national and state financial system.

These three simple, fundamentally sound planks, would constitute a platform around which the party could confidently and enthusiastically rally. The times are demanding a real effective program, and the party that does organize around such an anti-monopoly platform will soon win a real substantial victory. The Democratic party is the logical party to take this stand and by so doing will draw into its ranks all earnest, patriotic citizens, and all third party movements would quickly disintegrate.

Geo. A. Lupton, Ohio.—I notice in The Commoner that you desire to hear from Democrats and others who desire to help reorganize the Democratic party on a new platform or new principles. I am willing to do all I can to help along in this matter and am willing for you to write the platform. Am sure you are more competent to do it than any one else.

W. H. Hudson, Arkansas.—I was wonderfully pleased with your attitude in the presidential campaign of 1920, even though I have been a Democrat all of my life. The self constituted leaders of that campaign received ample reward for the hardships the people endured. The slightest modicum of commonsense would teach that a campaign predicated upon a foundation, half humbug and the other half hypocrisy, could meet with no other fate than disaster. Mr. Cox indulged in pure political buncombe and his campaign was a flagrant offense against public opinion. You were right when you said, "The president laid the foundation and Mr. Cox built the structure."

The real state of affairs in the nation are critical and we must set ourselves to hunt out helpful policies. Your suggestion "Get right and then organize" is the last word of political wisdom and indicates a sincere desire to safeguard the public.

If the Democratic party is to be rehabilitated it must be done by the friends of democracy and universal peace. Autocrats and war lords can have no rightful place in its reinstatement. We need a leader who is a strong, victorious man, with a mind full of vigorous, hopeful and uplifting thoughts. We have the abiding consciousness that Mr. Bryan's public policy is fundamentally right and he is an uncompromising foe of evil. He is the apostle of peace and universal disarmament and these are attributes that will build for strength and stability. Mr. Bryan has faith in the people and their decision would count for more than the war lords and commercial grafters who indulge in war for profit. He is capable of taking the highest view which the circumstances of the case may admit and he is one of the most prominent and potential leaders of the Democratic party.

A. C. Ruland, California.—Don't you think it is about time for the millions of Democratic vot-

ers, who have voted for you three times for the presidency, to either withdraw from the party and form an organization that will not bow to the "bosses of New York, Indiana and Illinois and other eastern states dominated and controlled by Wall street and Tammany Hall?"

The people are ready to accept your leadership as they did in 1896, when you succeeded in forming a platform of principles in the interests of the people as opposed by corporations and capitalism. We have often declared that the same "bunch" that "knifed" you in that campaign, were of the same identical gang that "yelled" for Cox and voted for Harding. We believe that you were "counted out" in 1896, just as Tilden was in 1876, and Grover Cleveland in 1888.

The so-called leaders of the Democratic party in this state are too closely identified with the "false alarm" Hi Johnson to have any influence in state or national politics. I have received circular letters from them, ever since Johnson has been governor and senator, advising me to vote the "progressive" ticket. I refused to obey their advice, but voted for Curtin, Woolwine and Heney each time they were candidates on the ticket, and I think I am capable of telling them to please send their "dope" to "suckers" of the G. O. P. Johnson has cast aside every progressive principle for which he stood in 1912 in order to return to his first and only love—the G. O. P.

Fred S. Caldwell, Colorado.—The present excess profits tax should be changed so as to effectively control profiteering and provide sufficient revenue for the economical and efficient running of the government. The following plan accomplishes this. Classify all business according to the hazard incurred by the capital invested therein and make reasonable allowances for depletion in case of mines, oil wells, etc., to the end that a fair and reasonable return on the investment may be fixed for each class. This being done, provide an excess profit tax sufficiently high to absorb practically all income over and above this fair and reasonable return. Of course, this fair and reasonable return will be subjected to the regular income tax, as are all incomes over and above the minimum which is exempt. To illustrate the operation of such an excess profit tax: Suppose we say that a fair and reasonable return, that is, net income, in the retail mercantile business is 15 per cent. Then, as to this business, I would provide a graduated excess profit tax which would absorb 50 per cent of the income above 15 per cent and under 20 per cent, 75 per cent of the income above 20 per cent and under 25 per cent and 95 per cent of all income above 25 per cent. Since the merchant could not, under such a law, keep any considerable part of his excess profits, he would naturally so conduct his business as not to make an excess profit. In other words, he would not profiteer. For that reason the measure would not produce a very large revenue. Hence, it would be necessary to impose a gross sales tax sufficient to raise the necessary revenue, say a tax of 1 per cent. This the consumer would pay. But he would pay it only once. And he would not pay enormous excess profits in addition to the tax, as he does under the present law. Interest incomes, that is, incomes derived from money loaned or invested in bonds, should also be classified according to the hazard of the loan, a reasonable rate determined for each class, and the excess taken away by taxation.

A. I. Berninger, Indiana.—I am not a Democrat. This statement to show that what I am about to write is not a political admiration. I want to compliment you on being a statesman. In fact, so far as I know, you are the only statesman we have in the United States. That is not saying much as if some persons would say it, who know more of our public men. We have politicians too numerous to mention. More's the pity. But statesmen! Who are they? Your work at the Baltimore convention was admirable. Would we had more like you who cared more for their country than their job. I have heard some of your addresses at Winona Lake, Indiana, and it has occurred to me that you might do more for your country if you gave your gift or oratory to Christ and His church than you could ever do other wise. But that is a matter for you to discover. There is no ultimate object in this, just a word of admiration and appreciation.

J. A. Rogers, Iowa.—In reorganizing the Democratic party and in framing a basic principle for a true leadership, will say that W. J. Bryan is the man of the hour. He has fought the battles single-handed against the reactionary element that has always predominated against the true principles he advocated in favor of the