

The Commoner.

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The Elections of 1901.

While it is impossible at this time to measure and weigh the local influences which may have affected the general result, enough is known to justify the conclusion that the two leading political parties show practically the same strength that they did a year ago. If the republican policies which have been developing during the last twelve months have aroused any protest among the people, that protest has been off-set by the influence exerted by the assassination of the president. The republicans everywhere confessed their reliance upon this influence when they devoted so much time to appeals to the personal regard felt for McKinley, the man. It is not unnatural that the republicans should have been spurred to greater activity by the president's death, neither is it strange that it caused some apathy on the other side.

There was another general cause which the republican position, namely, the ability of the republicans to get out their vote. The off-year elections always show a falling off in the voting population as compared with presidential and congressional elections, and the party that is best organized and most successful in getting its voters to the polls has an advantage. Take, for instance, the election in Nebraska this year. The total vote will probably fall fifty thousand below the vote of last year. If there is a loss in the republican vote of twenty thousand, and a loss in the fusion vote of thirty thousand, the republican candidate can have ten thousand majority more than his ticket had last year, and yet have twenty thousand votes less than his party polled last year.

Aside from having federal officials everywhere through whom to reach the voters, and besides having money everywhere with which to organize, the republicans in some of the states are able to secure from the railroad companies transportation for all persons who desire to return home to vote. In every community there are voters who, for business reasons, have frequent occasion to be absent from home. The party that is able to bring every voter home on election day has an immense advantage over the party that cannot furnish transportation. During the recent campaign the republican authorities were prepared to secure passes and send every Nebraska student home to vote, a practice not only helpful to the party, but demoralizing to the citizen.

The returns do not give any considerable advantage to either element of the democratic party. The reorganizers have not gained any prestige where they have secured control, neither have the regular democrats won any signal victories where they have been in charge of the campaign.

We gain a senator in Kentucky and the state shows an increase in the strength of the democratic party, but as we elected a democratic senator there two years ago, and carried the state last year, the result this year, though gratifying, was confidently expected. The democrats have carried Maryland, and Mr. Gorman will in all probability be re-elected to the senate, but as the campaign was fought purely on local issues, (the negro question being the main issue), the victory is not a vindication of any national policy. In Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, where the conventions failed or refused to reaffirm the Kansas City platform, the republicans won. In Massachusetts, Iowa and Nebraska where the conventions did reaffirm the Kansas City platform, the republicans also

won. Insofar as the result has any influence upon the democratic party, it will tend to strengthen those who believe in fighting for principle rather than those who are all the time offering to lead the party to a glorious victory, provided it will abandon its principles. Those who fight for principle may mourn over a defeat, but their purpose is not shaken because they are doing what they believe they ought to and find their reward in the consciousness of duty done. Those, however, who are willing to suspend their principles in the hope of securing political success have little to console them when a reverse comes. If a man barter his convictions for a promise of success and then loses, he has nothing left; if a man keeps his convictions with him he has a foundation upon which to build in future contests.

It would seem that republican policies ought to arouse overwhelming opposition among the wealth-producers of the country, for surely no man who earns his living can point to any advantage which the republican party brings or can bring to the masses of the people. In the bank control of our currency, in the monopolistic control of our industries and in an imperial policy for the country there are danger and disaster for a large majority of the people. But they evidently fail to appreciate the viciousness of the principles which are at work. The only lesson that can be drawn from the election returns is that still more work is necessary. The "let-well-enough-alone" argument cannot always prevail, for bad principles will ultimately bring about bad times, and experience, costly experience, will teach those who refuse to foresee evil and provide against it.

Organize Debating Societies.

The election is over, and while the returns are not sufficiently complete for analysis it is evident that the democratic party has not made any considerable gains since 1900. In another column the returns, so far as they are in, have been discussed and some of the difficulties encountered have been enumerated. It is plain that there must be a large amount of educational work done if the country is to be saved from the evil results that must necessarily follow the continue support of republican policies. How can this work be done? The large dailies cannot be relied upon, because they are too intimately connected with the men and the corporations enriched by republican policies. It cannot be done entirely through the democratic and populist weeklies, for they do not, as a rule, reach the people who most need enlightenment. A debating society should be organized in each country precinct and in each village. Let it be non-partisan in its membership and educational in its purpose. Meetings should be held once a month, or, if possible, once in two weeks, for the discussion of public questions.

Let the motto of the society be: "Country first, party afterwards."

To avoid any wrangle about the officers it would be well to select the president from the party having the largest vote in the precinct, and the vice president from the leading minority party. If three other officers, recording secretary, corresponding secretary and treasurer, are selected, all parties can be given a fair representation in the management of the society and the arrangement of programs. The officers of the society, if they constitute a committee on program, should

arrange, besides other features, for a discussion of some live question at each meeting—the leaders to open the debate and the other members of the society to have an opportunity to speak briefly when the leaders are through.

No one should be afraid of having his party injured by a full and fair presentation of all public questions. The person who objects to the discussion of public questions confesses the weakness of his own cause or brings an indictment against the intelligence and patriotism of the people. The hope of the nation lies, first, in the study of public questions, and, next, in a ballot cast according to the dictates of conscience and judgment.

Severe on Bolters.

Sometimes the gold democrats who bolted the ticket in 1896 complain because the regular democrats insist that those who deserted the party five years ago should, on coming back, give some assurance of their purpose to support the ticket hereafter. While the conditions imposed have never been unreasonable or severe, they have aroused violent criticism in some quarters. It may not be out of place, therefore, to quote what the St. Paul Globe says about local bolters. In a recent issue it condemns some St. Paul aldermen who deserted their party in the election of a county commissioner. The following is an extract from the Globe's editorial:

It is as the Globe predicted it would be: A democratic county commissioner has been elected by the votes of the democratic aldermen assisted by one republican, and democratic traitors are ignored and spat upon, as they long since should have been. Treason to the party has not been found profitable in practice among St. Paul democrats. It will be found no more in the future. Hunt and Bantz have a severe reckoning before them; and we apprehend that the mass of St. Paul democrats will find as little use for them in the future as the democratic aldermen found for them in the election of County Commissioner Kelly.

The way of the transgressor is hard, and transgressors these men have been of all the rules and observances in political life which all true party men and good citizens will hold themselves bound by. The Globe will gladly aid their return to the obscurity from which they should never have emerged.

The Globe is much more severe in denouncing democratic aldermen who refuse to support their party in a local fight than the silver democrats are in condemning papers, which, like the Globe, deserted the presidential ticket in a national contest.

Not an Immoral Document.

James Jackson of Cambridge, Mass., was suspended from membership in the Reformed Presbyterian church because he became a citizen of the United States and took oath that he would support the constitution of this country. One of the clergymen of this church, in explaining Mr. Jackson's suspension, said:

"We look upon the constitution of the United States as an immoral document and as an insult to the Almighty, in that it makes no mention whatever of God, and claims for the people that sovereign power which belongs to God alone. We refuse to accept the constitution thus defective, and cannot swear allegiance to it."

The point raised by this clergyman is one that long ago became famous in controversial history.