

The Commoner.

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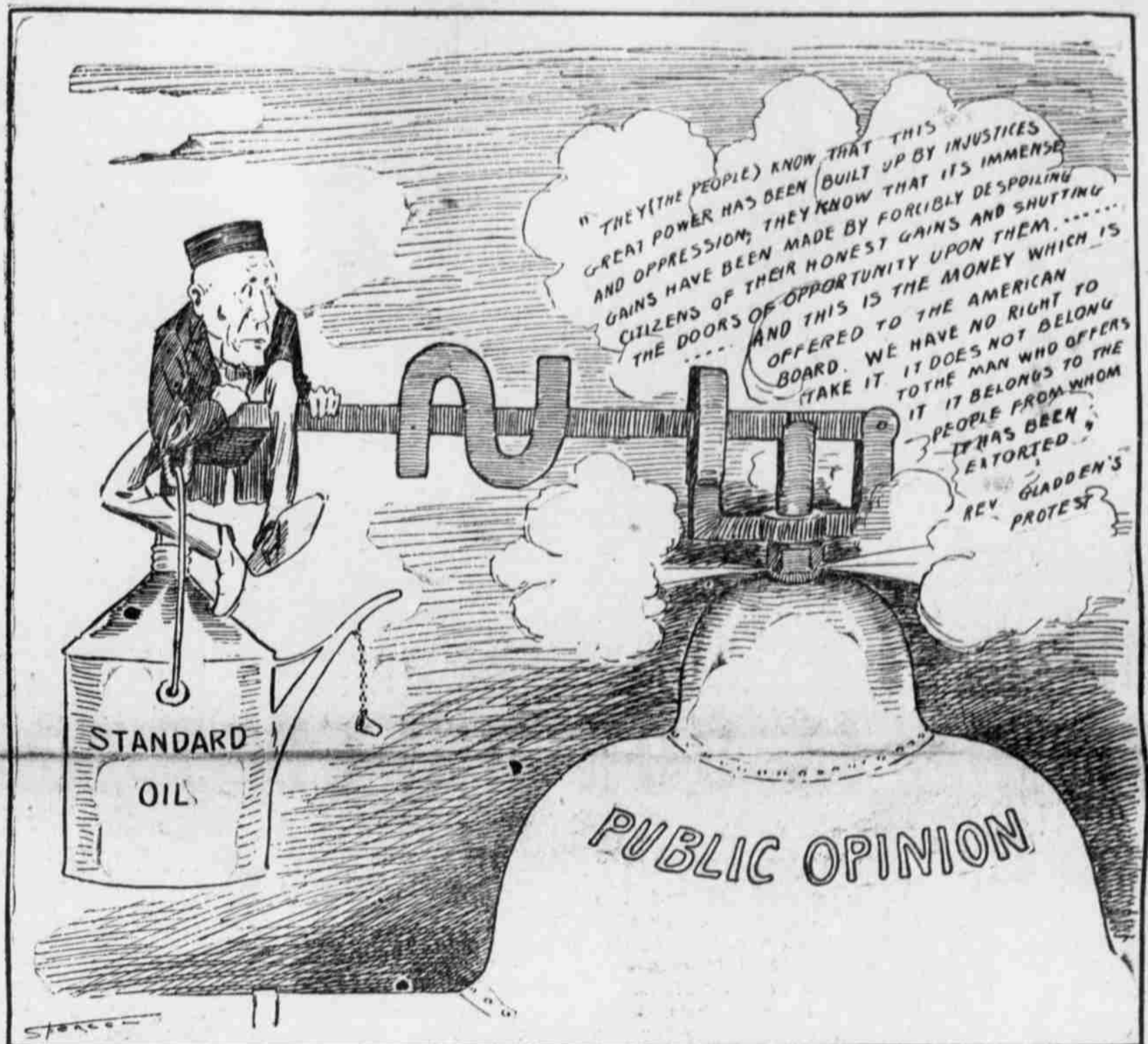
THE PRIMARY PLEDGE

NEWS OF THE WEEK

A FALSE MOTTO

A "civic association," with headquarters in New York, is sending out literature on the corporation side of public questions. At the top of its letter head it has a motto which explains its business in politics. It says: "Public ownership waste exceeds corporate profit." This is a false statement as experience shows, but it will serve as well as any other motto for those who are attempting to deceive the public by giving their associations high-sounding titles. A reader of *The Commoner* sends in two pieces of literature sent out by this civic association. One is a special dispatch to the *New York Evening Post*, which purports to explain the oil problem in Kansas by saying that there is a "vast over-production of crude petroleum." The other piece of literature is a reprint from the *Nation* in which an attempt is made to answer Ida M. Tarbell's history of the Standard Oil company. The fact that the literature was sent to a denominational college is evidence that the trusts, and such agents of theirs as the civic association, are trying to overcome the influence of the magazine articles and court investigations.

HOLDING DOWN THE SAFETY VALVE



Symptoms of a Great Explosion

The Nearer We Can Get to the Free and Uncorrupted Voice of the

People the Better

Several years ago a citizen of Iowa boasted that he never cast a vote, although he was past fifty years of age. He explained his refusal to take part in politics on the ground that "it is not clean."

Commenting at the time upon this remarkable statement, *The Commoner* said: "Surely there can not be very many who have so little intelligence as not to know that the citizen has no right to enjoy the blessings of free government, unless he is willing to endure the constant sacrifice for which it calls. If the Iowa citizen is more honest than his neighbors he is in duty bound to give his country the benefit of his superior integrity and intelligence. A man might possibly justify himself in refusing to vote because he is not good enough, but no one can refuse to vote on the ground that he is 'too good.' Sometimes men fail to vote because their party is in the majority and they think their vote is not needed; sometimes they fail to vote because they are in the minority and they think their vote will do no good; but no excuse is valid. Public sentiment is gauged by the elections and every vote has its influence. The stay-at-home vote is too easily misconstrued. One Nebraska democrat, for instance, refused to vote because he wanted to encourage the republicans to carry their policies to the extremes, believing that a reaction would be thus produced, and yet the republican leaders will construe the silence of this voter as an evidence that he is satisfied with ex-

isting conditions and with the tendencies of the policies now being enforced. Between those who absolutely refuse to vote and those who feel it their duty to vote are those who are so indifferent that they will vote if carried to the polls, but will not vote otherwise. * * * The nearer we can get to the free and uncorrupted voice of the people the better, and compulsory voting would be a step in that direction."

Important as it is that men participate in the general elections, it is all the more important that they take part in the primary elections of their party.

On the theory that the large majority of men in all political organizations are good men, no serious danger would confront this country, so far as any party's principles are concerned, if all parties were controlled by the rank and file, for we know that too often the policies of parties are shaped by a handful of men. This has been true because of the neglect of men, having no axes to grind, to take part in the primary elections of the political organization with which they affiliate.

Let it be remembered that "the nearer we can get to the free and uncorrupted voice of the people, the better." We can never reach that point while we are governed by parties and so long as

the rank and file permit a minority, whose chief concern is against the public welfare, to control.

"The free and uncorrupted voice of the people" must make itself heard through the primary elections. It is *The Commoner's* purpose to impress this truth particularly upon democrats. It urges every one, however humble his station in life may be, to actively interest himself in the proceedings incidental to the formation of his party's policies. It calls upon every democrat to attend democratic primaries and see to it that none but faithful democrats are sent to represent—in county, state or national convention—those who must remain at home and to express in true democratic fashion the "free and uncorrupted voice of the people."

To this end *The Commoner* has presented to its readers the primary pledge plan of organization. The responses made to this plan by democrats in all sections of the country are, indeed, gratifying. But the work must not be permitted to lag for a moment. A great contest is on between those whose concern is for the public welfare and the handful of men who are interested solely in their selfish schemes and the special favors they obtain under the law and which they are permitted, in many cases, to exercise even without the law.

In this great contest the democratic party will either be conspicuous by its devotion to the public