

FROM MEN GROWN GRAY IN THE SERVICE

Among the letters respecting the primary pledge plan so far published in *The Commoner* many have been written by men who have grown gray in the service of their party. Doubtless every *Commoner* reader who has studied this movement has been impressed with this fact. These gray-haired men are in a position to give wholesome counsel and none of the many interesting letters received in *The Commoner* office are more interesting or instructive than those written by fine old democrats who have pride in their party and who hope that it may prove true to itself by being true to the people. It is a good sign when the old democrat takes the opportunity to give advice to younger party colleagues. And it is also a good sign when the younger men, some of them in their teens, manifest an interest in the organization of their party. The *Commoner* published a number of letters from lads who will in 1908 cast their first presidential vote, and no letter is more welcome than that written by the young man just entering upon a period of active party service, or that written by the man who, having grown too gray and infirm for active physical effort in behalf of his political organization, gives to younger democrats that counsel and advice which is unquestionably appreciated by *The Commoner* readers. Letters from the older democrats do the younger democrats great good and give them great satisfaction, and the letters from the democratic lads give the democratic gray-beards great pleasure. For instance, J. D. Porter, an 80 year old democrat living at Monmouth, Ill., writes: "I am very much encouraged by the letters of democrats under 21 years of age, pledging themselves to attend the primaries and labor to send delegates and nominate true Jeffersonian incorruptible men as representatives of our party. Today I enter on my 80th year, and am working hard to get all the democrats of this city and county to form a democratic club or league in order to support our county paper and endorse this primary pledge. I am encouraged to think these young patriots will have many years to labor for our country when I am gone. They show more patriotism than many, either north or south, who risked their lives from 1862 to 1865, for peace is better than war, and has solemn duties."

On the other hand, Edwin Hughes, a Nebraska boy sojourning at Bedford City, Va., writes: "Enclosed find primary pledge. I am not old enough to vote, but will be by the next presidential election. I am a Nebraskan and am only in Virginia temporarily. The campaign of 1896 convinced me that the democratic party stood for principles, and hope the party will nominate a man for president in 1908 who will get out among the people and express his views on the different issues like Mr. Bryan. I am a great admirer of Mr. Bryan and the principles he advocates."

A seventy-seven year old democrat, John A. Miller of Yountville, Calif., writes: "An honest and energetic interest in primaries is the key that unlocks the door for conventions, in which the people may express their wishes, whether for government ownership of public utilities, or other needs demanding consideration, according to democratic principles. Contra:—Monopoly aided by the 'cohesive power of public plunder,' locks out the people, and selects their own kind by invisible methods to control conventions, whose nominees are selected to promote class legislation and retain public utilities under private

control. The most important considerations are subject to fears, lest the people combine to deprive the predatory rich custodians of monopolies of the ill-gotten wealth flowing into their pockets. My 80th year will be 1908. But I have sons."

R. C. Tousley of Holley, N. Y., who cast his first presidential vote in 1856 writes: "I enclose my pledge duly signed. I approve of your plan. I cast my first democratic vote for James Buchanan and have voted the straight democratic ticket ever since. In 1896 I voted for W. J. Bryan although holding a commission as fourth class postmaster at the time under Cleveland, whose last administration I could not endorse, and I sent in my resignation of office. In 1900 I voted for Bryan; in 1904 I voted for Parker just to keep regular, but it hurt my conscience to do so, as he was far from being my choice, and my heart was with the principles advocated by Bryan."

Rev. Joseph Nichols of Musselman, Ohio, cast his first presidential vote in 1852. Mr. Nichols writes: "I strongly endorse the primary pledge movement as advocated by the editor of *The Commoner*. My first vote was cast for Franklin Pierce for president in 1852. I have voted at every presidential election since, and voted for democrats, except when I voted for H. Greeley, and A. B. Parker. I am heartily tired of compromises, and would rather go down in defeat with a platform such as we had in 1896 and 1900 than to succeed with half-way democrats. I have always been a strong advocate of the primary plan and have done what I could to keep the government, township, county, state and national, as near the people as possible. I have no patience with 'cut and dried' conventions. While I have held several offices of trust, with some honor attached, and was three times insisted on to accept the nomination on the democratic ticket for representative, and was four years chairman of the congressional committee of the Eleventh Congressional district of Ohio, yet I realized that being a minister of the gospel it was not best to dabble too much in politics. But I want to emphasize one thing: I am an uncompromising Jefferson, Jackson and Bryan democrat, and would be glad to live long enough to see a pure and undefiled democrat elected and inaugurated president of the United States of America. In my humble sphere I will do what I can while I live to bring about this end. Please find enclosed signed pledge. Please send me some blank pledges and I will try to have them signed and will send them to you later. Yours for a government of the people, by the people and for the people."

R. B. Parker, of Birch Tree, Mo., writes: "Enclosed find primary pledge with fifty-one signers. I take great pleasure in sending them. I think it a step in the right direction. I have taken interest in all primaries and democratic conventions since old enough to vote. My first vote was for John C. Breckenridge. After nominations are made I support the ticket."

Extracts from other letters follow: J. B. Hill, Gilmer, Tex.—Mr. Bryan's plan is good enough for me. He is considered to be, by myself, as well as all my neighbors, a sincere and safe leader of the democracy of this nation, never ceasing to battle for the rights of the common people against unjust usurpation by the money power.

J. S. Hungate, Larned, Okla.—Peace has duties no less than war, and as I believe in the principles of the democratic party, I consider it my duty

as a citizen to labor for its success. As we should use every means to eliminate corrupt influences, I most willingly sign the pledge.

Charles R. Glenn, Recorder of Deeds, Lamar, Mo.—Enclosed find primary pledge with 35 signers. All signed cheerfully and all glad to help push the good work along. I heartily endorse your platform of principles, your plan of organization and wish you abundant success in your valiant fight against the encroachments of corporate wealth. May the good work continue.

L. C. Harsh, Ponca City, Okla.—Enclosed find primary pledge signed. I have been a constant reader of *The Commoner* since the first issue, and if I could be persuaded today that there was but one man left that would stand for the right regardless of what the consequences might be, I would without hesitating follow where he leads. Believing that right finally prevails, I predict that in the near future we will win a glorious victory for the people.

Edward K. Ellefson, Lawyer, Ivanhoe, Minn.—I herewith enclose primary pledge signed by me. I consider this a good plan. When the voters get together and vote at primaries a great step towards truly popular government has been taken. Let every democrat sign the pledge and let us know that we have a force of intelligent and honest voters in 1906 and 1908.

S. P. Trimmer, and M. H. Lind, Baders, Ill.—Enclosed please find primary pledge signed, believing this a true way to get the common people together. I have always voted the good democratic principles and always shall so long as the ideas of our great leader are upheld. I do with all my heart favor the idea of A. J. Elias of Elias & Bro. Lumber company, Buffalo, N. Y., in the issue of June 2, 1905. Let every voter attend the primaries of all parties, and vote only for the man that believes in reform and honest government for the masses that our laws may be enforced and bribers, grafters and boodlers will have to seek other fields. Throw away the yoke of partyism and work for principle and good government.

J. M. McDaniel, Lexington, Ky.—I heartily endorse *The Commoner's* plan to organize the party. Enclosed find signed pledge.

Milton Curtis, Beckley, W. Va.—Please find enclosed 20 names to the primary pledge. This is the best plan to organize and make democratic principles successful. I could get hundreds more and I can safely say that this county will instruct its delegates. I had almost lost hope, but W. J. Bryan, *The Commoner* and the primary pledge give me courage for another hard pull, so now all together and the "government back to the people" and out of the hands of plutocracy will be the result. Let this be the battle cry for it is the "paramount issue." All others are subordinate and cannot be fairly and justly settled as long as moneyed aristocracy controls each branch of our government. I wish *The Commoner*, W. J. Bryan and all other reformers long life and success.

Claude Desha, County Clerk, Cynthiana, Ky.—I will take pleasure in devoting as much time as I can spare from my other duties to the work of helping to organize the democratic party in this community, being satisfied that upon the success of its organization depends the perpetuity of our republican institutions and the maintenance of the great organic law of this republic, which guarantees and alone can secure equality of opportunity to each and every one of its citi-

zens. And again, if we wish and expect to prevent a repetition of the disgraceful occurrences at the St. Louis convention last summer—which in my opinion brought about the most disastrous defeat which the democratic party has ever met—we must be thoroughly organized. I send you herewith the following list of names with their postoffice address, to each of whom I would suggest that you send your circular letter and a copy of *The Commoner*.

J. E. Dickey, Rochester, Mont.—I promised you when last I wrote you that I would send you some names from this place for the primary pledge. I did not have blanks so send you list with the form of pledge I find in *The Commoner*, and if you desire the regular blanks form filled out in lieu of what I send you, send me the blanks and will see they are attended to. We are all in sympathy with the move of *The Commoner* and believe it will win. All the names furnished are true blue and will stay with the old ship of true democracy.

J. D. Smith, Crawford, Colo.—I herewith hand you my pledge and will heartily support your plan. Every voter should attend primaries as a matter of business, and we need to organize and do missionary work as well as pledge. This plan well followed, would have saved to the people of Colorado many thousands of dollars, and the disgraceful proceedings last winter at our state capital.

R. B. Arnold, Lovilia, Ia.—I hope the way is now open that leads us to victory in the cause of true democracy. Judging by the writhings and contortions of the G. O. P. over the Taft order it seems as if they have it under the fifth rib and the blow comes from the house of friends. It is likely to be the death knell of the party. Let the fight go on. It is another case of "Acteon devoured by his own dogs," and if Teddy should rend the party in twain he will be hailed as a second Andrew Jackson. The Taft order is all right and is in the interest of everybody except the tariff barons. Wishing *The Commoner* prosperity, I am yours for progressive democracy.

C. F. Snider, Basil, Ohio.—Enclosed find pledge signed. A democratic national convention should represent the sentiment of the rank and file of the party to the greatest possible degree and this can be accomplished by the voters attending the primaries. The government should be kept close to the people and this cannot be done unless the party's policies are the voice of the people. We should have no more republicanized conventions and no more gold telegrams, but democratic democracy should be all and in all.

John W. Tyler, Lone Wolf, Okla.—For the purpose and effect of organization I herewith enclose primary pledge. I hope the party organization may be such as to assure a full and complete expression of the true democratic voters throughout the nation at their mass meetings and conventions, and that railroad attorneys with an unlimited number of passes at their command for the purpose of sending plutocrats and their subservient tools to conventions to misrepresent the people may be made to feel and understand that their unholy work will not be tolerated longer by the democratic party.

E. Curtis, Harper, W. Va.—I do hope that something will be done that we may get out a democratic ticket in 1908. I don't want to swallow such a pill as I had to take last fall, or I shall be likely to go off with the populists or something else worse.

Gus R. Voigt, New Ulm, Tex.—