

than the free silver delusion which was its chief and almost only conspicuous feature in the campaign of 1896 there would be little or no reason to give attention now either to it or to the activities of the irrepres- sible agitator and self-seeker who personifies it to the public thought. But it connotes much more than that. Bryanism today includes practically all the elements of discontent, reasonable and unreasonable in the country. And these are many. There is dis- satisfaction with the inequitable dis- tribution of wealth, with the enor- mous aggregations of capital, with the increasing difficulty encountered by the ordinary man in acquiring a competence, with the methods by which corporate power is exercised, with the increase of the cost of liv- ing that seems disproportionate to the increase in wages, with the service given by steam and electric railroads, lighting and telephone companies and the other corporations that do busi- ness under public franchise.

"How much of this dissatisfaction is reasonable and how much unrea- sonable, it is needless now to at- tempt to decide. The fact that there is all this discontent is what should for the present chiefly concern us. The existence of it gives an alluring opportunity to a man like Mr. Bryan. He has amply demonstrated his un- usual qualities as a leader of the dis- contented, as a magnet for the concen- tration of all the voting force of the opposition to conditions as they are. It was only by great effort and at enormous cost that he was defeated in 1896; and the much greater ease

with which defeat was last year ad- ministered to those who wrested the nominal control of the democratic party from him gave a patent nega- tive proof of his practical superiority as a political personality. He is a man who accepts no overthrow as final, but ever rises again to the con- test, even exuberantly. He is appar- ently preparing now for another bout with the established order, and the material is waiting from which he may marshal his forces.

"He has, retained with perhaps but little diminution from past campaigns, a personal following that is by no means inconsiderable; he has the winning qualities and the proselyt- ing zeal that can vastly increase that following if he again comes before the people as in any way a duly ac- credited knight in opposition with his lance couched. On a platform of anti- monopoly, anti-graft, anti-extrava- gance, anti-protection and of general government ownership of all public utilities, with all that such a plat- form could be made to seem to prom- ise in the way of lower cost of living, reduced taxes and more equitable dis- tribution of wealth, he might suc- ceed, as perhaps no other man now prominent in our country could, in solidifying all the forces of discon- tent into a formidable army. And it looks as if he were now patiently and persistently aiming at just that end. There are indications that he is quiet- ly taking possession of the democratic organization in the more important states—a task that the present gela- tinous condition of the party makes easy—and his appearance as the next democratic presidential candidate is at least a contingency to be kept in mind.

"We may say, of course, that there are too many uncertainties involved in the unknowable political develop- ments of the next three years to make prediction at this time possible; we may say that in any event Bryanism as a concentration of all the elements of discontent in an assault at the polls on the established order is rather a remote threat than an impending dan- ger. This is perfectly true. Yet we must consider that when such a dan- ger does become immediately impend- ing it may be too late to escape it and that the surest method of protec- tion is to begin betimes to avert the threat. We can not afford to let the wreckers begin their plans of attack much sooner than we begin our plans of salvation. In this as in many other contests there is not a little advan- tage in the start.

"In this view of the possibilities of the future the duty of the republican party, now in unrestricted control at all essential points throughout the country, to show an energetically progressive and reforming spirit be- comes as clear as if it were written on tablets of stone by omniscience it- self. If the republicans will under- take an honest and thorough study of the causes of discontent in the country, with a view to ending such of it as is reasonable, if they will push to the very last limit the movement for breaking up the lawless monopo- lies in industry, commerce and trans- portation, if they will adjust the al- ways necessary tariff burden more equitably, if they will reorganize the public service on a basis of greater economy, integrity and efficiency, if they will give us better railroad laws or better enforcement of them and either reciprocity treaties or other ar- rangements for letting us into our own in the foreign markets, the re- mote threat of a revived and strength- ened Bryanism may never develop into an impending menace. If they do not, they may find themselves in 1908 confronted by a vastly stronger oppo- sition than they encountered in 1904, perhaps by an even stronger oppo- site difficulty in overcoming in 1896."

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