

A Few Words With Commoner Subscribers

I am deeply indebted to the subscribers of The Commoner for the loyal support which they have given to the paper in my absence and for the interest which they have taken in the extension of its circulation. While I left the paper in good hands and am more than pleased with the manner in which it has been conducted, I am glad to be at the helm again, for there is much I desire to say concerning the issues before the country. The tremendous growth in public sentiment in favor of the policies for which the democratic party has been contending must be gratifying to you as it has been to me. Events have vindicated our position and strengthened public confidence in our party. Even on the money question the soundness of our arguments has been demonstrated by the improved conditions which have followed an increase in the currency. The money question has been eliminated as an issue only because an unexpected and unprecedented increase in the production of gold has brought relief from the appreciation of the dollar and lifted prices toward the bimetallic level. On all other questions our position has been strengthened by the failure of the republican party to bring any material relief. It continues a policy of imperialism at an enormous expense to the country, while a promise to the Filipinos, like the promise made to the Cubans, would reduce expenses and restore our country to its legitimate position as an advocate of government resting upon the consent of the governed. It has refused to reform the tariff even where the tariff has become the bulwark of trusts—yes, even when the protected interests have shown their ingratitude by selling abroad at a lower price than they sell at home. It has failed to satisfy the demands of the laboring element of the country. Where the republican party has made any progress, it has made it along democratic lines. It promised to do nothing on the trust question, and where the president has attempted to enforce the law, he has done so in accordance with the demands made by the democratic party years ago. His recommendations on the question were also in line with the

democratic platform, but a republican senate very much weakened the bill which the president asked for and which the democratic members of the house and senate almost unanimously favored.

The president has educated the people up to an endorsement of many of the democratic policies which were violently denounced a few years ago, and there is every prospect now of a democratic victory in 1908. Whether we shall succeed at the polls rests largely in the hands of the democrats themselves, and I take this opportunity to point out the two things which, in my judgment, will most contribute to that success.

First, the presentation of democratic arguments to the public. Every democrat should make himself a committee of one to get the democratic position before the public, for that position will grow in favor as it is better understood. Democratic speeches which present the democratic position clearly ought to be circulated. The local papers which champion democratic ideas ought to be heartily supported, not only for the good that the editorials do but for the encouragement which enthusiastic support gives to those who write the editorials.

Second, the organization of the democratic party must be in sympathy with the people. When the tariff question was the paramount issue, the party demanded that the members of the organization should be in harmony with the party's purpose to reform the tariff; when the money question was the paramount issue, the people demanded that the members of the organization should be in harmony with the party platform on that subject; when imperialism was the paramount issue, the people demanded that the members of the organization should be in harmony with the party's avowed policy. Upon no other basis can a fight be made. Individuals may dissent from parts of the platform—they may even dissent from the party's position on the question declared by the party to be paramount—but candidates and members of the organization, if known to be antagonistic to the party's purpose, can not render any services sufficiently impor-

tant to overcome the damage done by their attitude. So today, when the trust issue is the paramount issue, the democratic candidates and the democratic organization must stand out boldly against corporate domination in politics.

NO MAN WHO IS FINANCIALLY CONNECTED WITH A CORPORATION THAT IS SEEKING PRIVILEGES OUGHT TO ACT AS A MEMBER OF A POLITICAL ORGANIZATION BECAUSE HE CAN NOT REPRESENT HIS CORPORATION AND THE PEOPLE AT THE SAME TIME. HE CAN NOT SERVE THE PARTY WHILE HE IS SEEKING TO PROMOTE THE FINANCIAL INTERESTS OF THE CORPORATION WITH WHICH HE IS CONNECTED.

This may be accepted as axiomatic. It is the statement of an old-fashioned truth which none can dispute. It is simply a paraphrase of the Bible declaration that "no man can serve two masters." Upon so simple a proposition there should be no dispute. If you believe with me in the importance of having the democratic organization free from the taint of corporate control, I urge you to present this matter to your neighbors and to apply the principle to your local and state as well as national organizations. Doubtless there are many democrats connected with these corporations—some of them officially—who would put the good of the party above the interests of their corporations, but such men know enough about human nature to know how impossible it is to convince the public of their disinterestedness, and if they really feel a deep interest in the party's success, they will not thrust themselves upon the party in an official way or even allow themselves to be persuaded to become officers of the party organization. It is no reflection upon them personally to say that they can not aid their party in this capacity.

Believing that you earnestly desire a real democratic victory—a victory which, instead of being barren of fruit, will bring relief to the people and establish the party in public confidence for years, I take the liberty of presenting these suggestions to you.

W. J. BRYAN.

THE DUMA—MR. BRYAN'S LETTER

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each individual that stimulus to improve his land, which is the important element in individual ownership. In riding through a country one can distinguish with considerable accuracy between the farms cultivated by their owners and those cultivated by tenants, because the tenants, as a rule, are unwilling to make permanent improvements. One Russian economist estimates the income from the owned lands of Russia at thirty per cent above the income of the same area of communal lands. He attributes it to the ability of the land owners to supply themselves with proper tools and to furnish or borrow at low rates the money needed for cultivation, but it is possible that this difference may be in part due to the fact that ownership makes the incentive to labor greater, and offers a richer reward to superior effort.

There is an upper house, or council of empire as it is called, which shares the legislative power with the duma, but it does not receive much attention because its composition is such that it can not reflect public sentiment, and can not oppose the will of the people except at the risk of its existence. Half of the members of this council are appointed by the emperor and the other half elected by different interests. The nobility elect some, the universities some and the zemstvos some.

The duma does not recognize the council of empire as a co-ordinate branch of the government and will not be slow to express itself in favor of a radical change in the method of selecting the members of this upper house, or even its abolition, if it stands in the way of measures which have a large majority in the duma.

What will be the outcome in Russia? A Russian would hardly venture a prediction, and for an outsider prophecy is even more hazardous. The situation could scarcely be more complicated. Generations of misrule have brought an accumulation of questions, all pressing for solution. The duma wants a great many things done and wants them done at once, while the government, if it remains under the influences of the bureaucracy, will give as little as possible. So far, the government has been unfortunate in that it has delayed making concessions until still greater concessions are demanded. The program of the present ministry has been so completely repudiated that

the emperor may find it easier to appoint a new ministry than to humiliate the present one by compelling it to propose what it has heretofore refused. If a new ministry is formed and the duma is consulted about its personnel, Ivan Petrunkevich will probably be the premier. He is a member of the duma and the head of the parliamentary organization of the constitutional democrats. He has already proposed a constitution to Nicholas II. If the duma is disregarded and a ministry formed from the emperor's present advisers, it will at least be more liberal than the one now in office.

The duma is a permanent institution; it could not be abolished by imperial decree without endangering the crown itself, and it can not be dissolved or prorogued with safety. The government must, therefore, treat with the duma and agree to such compromises as may be necessary to maintain peace between the executive and the people. The officials, too, are learning from the duma something about the science of government. When there was no one to speak for the people, the czar could claim to voice their sentiments. He can claim this no longer. When the people were denied a hearing, the officials could deny that the people desired reforms, but the officials can not put their unsupported opinions against a unanimous duma. The elections have shown how insignificant a support the government has among its subjects, and these figures contain a warning, which even the bureaucracy can not entirely disregard. Does the government rely upon the army? The soldiers are drawn from the people and serve for three years, a half million raw recruits being enlisted each year. Is it possible that they can be different in sentiment from their fathers and brothers? In three years the Russian army will be made up of men in hearty accord with those who speak through the duma. Without an army to rely upon what answer can the bureaucracy make to the legislature?

The czar has already suffered much at the hands of his advisers; he is no longer the idol that he was, and reverence for the church has abated somewhat as reverence for him, its temporal head, has decreased. What can he do? There is but one course open to him. He asked the people what they wanted and they have told him. As he can not doubt that they have told him the truth, he must either accept their an-

swer or confess that he does not intend to consider their wishes. If he would appoint a new ministry, propose a measure guaranteeing freedom of speech and freedom of the press, recommend an agricultural bank to protect the peasants from the small money lenders, recall the exiles, release political prisoners and invite the leaders of the duma to confer with the ministry in regard to the land question, he would be restored to the affection of his subjects and have no reason to fear bomb-throwers or hostile criticism. He would find a hundred and thirty millions of loyal subjects a much stronger bodyguard than a few hired soldiers. His position is a difficult one because his environment is unfriendly to the masses, but having burned the bridges behind him, he must go forward.

Russia is not decaying. She has extent of territory, abundant natural resources and an immense population. To be sure, a majority of her people were serfs until a generation ago, but there is no race distinction between the nobility and the peasant, and with education the extremes of society are being drawn closer together. That Russia has a great future is not open to doubt. What experiences she may pass through before she emerges a free, self-governing and prosperous nation no one is wise enough to foresee, but the people who have sacrificed as much for liberty as have the Russian patriots have in them the material of which mighty nations are made. The duma is ready to do its part; will the government rise to the occasion? Time alone can tell.

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THE DINGLEY SCHEDULES

The republican orator who speaks in defense of the present republican tariff law and justifies it upon the theory of the honest advocate of protection refuses to give consideration to the fact to which Senator Dolliver of Iowa testifies that Mr. Dingley himself stated that the schedules of the present tariff law were purposely placed high in order that they might be used as a basis for obtaining reciprocity treaties. Although there are no infant industries to be protected, and the tariff barons have taken advantage of republican legislation to impose upon the people, we are now told that the Dingley schedules are so sacred they must not be touched.