

RAILROAD INFLUENCE

In the course of his speech at Memphis, Mr. Bryan referred to the speech made by Secretary Shaw at that place, during which speech the secretary discussed government ownership of railroads. Mr. Bryan reminded the audience that President Roosevelt had in two messages declared that government ownership was the only alternative, if the people failed to secure effective regulation, and asked why Secretary Shaw had not attacked the proposition of government ownership, when the president suggested it as an alternative. After setting forth his plan, which he proposed as a substitute for the national ownership contemplated by the president and showing that the dual plan, federal ownership of trunk lines and state ownership of local lines would give the advantages of government ownership without the dangers of centralization, he said:

"One of the things which led me to believe that the ultimate remedy is to be found in ownership is the corruption which the railroads have brought into politics. And there is one illustration of this corruption, with which Secretary Shaw himself is familiar. When he was governor of Iowa, the Iowa penitentiary held a convicted criminal named Frank Shercliff. Shercliff belonged to a group of men who were influential in ward politics and Governor Shaw was asked to pardon him in order that he might assist in the election of a republican congressman and the request was made by a railroad lobbyist, who made the request for a pardon in return for favors rendered by the republican congressman in the passage of a railroad measure. I will read you the letter which was found in the files of the governor's office, after Secretary Shaw retired from the governorship of Iowa. I will omit the name of the republican congressman, who is now out of politics, and the writer of the letter, who is now dead. I will also omit the name of one person mentioned in the letter, because I do not know anything about his connection with the matter. Otherwise, the letter is as follows:

"Cedar Rapids, Ia., Sept. 15, 1900.—Hon. Leslie M. Shaw, Des Moines, Ia. My Dear Governor: When I was in Washington last winter I became acquainted with _____. He helped pass our bill for the settlement of the Sioux City and Pacific indebtedness. As soon as the bill was passed 'Dave,' as he is familiarly called in Washington, came to me and asked for a parole of Frank Shercliff, who is now in the penitentiary for robbing somebody on the Sioux City and Pacific road. My son and Mr. _____, I understand, have written you urging you not to pardon or parole him. 'Dave' don't ask that he be pardoned, but paroled on good behavior, and he tells me that the judge who tried him and the attorney who prosecuted him will make a request, or have made a request, to you to parole him. I suppose there is no doubt he is guilty of the crime charged, but 'Dave' says he has been punished pretty well now, and that it will be worth three or four hundred votes from the relatives of Shercliff if he can be paroled. 'Dave' is one of the best fellows I ever met in Washington and I want to beseech you in his behalf to parole this man, if you possibly can. Of course I don't know the details of this matter, but 'Dave' was so kind and helpful to me in Washington last winter that I am very anxious that he should be gratified by this parole, provided, of course, that it is not going to do too much injustice to the public.

Very truly yours,

"Now here is an attempt on the part of a railroad lobbyist to secure the pardon of a criminal on the ground that the pardon will help elect a republican congressman, whose election is urged on the ground that the republican congressman had helped the railroad in the passage of a measure in which the road was interested. It would not be possible to find a better illustration of the extent to which the railroads are interfering in politics. Here is a great agricultural state, strongly republican, presided over by a high minded citizen, for Mr. Shaw is a high minded man, who is intensely republican, and yet this lobbyist had the impudence to ask for the pardon of a criminal for political purposes and as a reason for doing so, he boldly stated that he wanted to pay the congressman back for services rendered the railroad. Now if a lobbyist will approach a man like Secretary Shaw with such a proposition, what influence do you suppose would be brought

to bear upon less conspicuous men, or men of less integrity? Among the files there was another letter from a railroad attorney asking for the pardon. The pardon was afterwards granted. I would not, of course, assume that in granting the pardon Secretary Shaw was influenced by these requests, but I regret that he did not in some way admonish these railroad attorneys that their request was in itself an insult. Secretary Shaw seems to be very much afraid of government ownership, but I doubt if he can find an instance where government ownership has introduced the demoralizing influences that, according to this letter, have been at work in his own state under private ownership."

THE WAR BURDEN

Few Americans appreciate the large amount expended by this peace loving nation for war and preparations for war. Representative Livingston presents this simple eye-opener:

"The estimated receipts of the government exclusive of the postal service, for the fiscal year 1906 are placed at \$589,093,000.

"Therefore we have the startling knowledge that 55 per cent of the taxes paid by the people goes to maintaining the army, navy, fortifications, and payment of pensions.

"Contemplate, if you will, the fact that of every 100 cents collected from the people 55 is used for these purposes in a time of profound peace.

"I know of no better method of comparison by which to impress the taxpayers of this great republic of the fact that their annual appropriations are excessively high than to compare the sum of these four appropriations with the value of some of our farm products, as given by the census of 1900.

"This \$319,188,308.08, required to meet army, naval, fortifications and pension obligations, would have nearly paid for every bale of cotton raised in the country in 1899, valued at \$323,758,171.

"These appropriations would have lacked only \$50,000,000 of paying for every bushel of wheat raised in 1889, valued at \$369,000,000 in round numbers.

"This amount would also have paid for all of the oats, barley, rye, buckwheat, broom corn, rice, clover seed, hemp, flax seed and grass seed raised in 1899, and would have purchased five tobacco crops such as was raised in 1899, and with a few millions to spare.

"Our corn crop of 1899, valued at \$828,192,388, could have been paid for with the total appropriations made at this session, and a few millions to spare.

"If by the presentation of the above facts I can be the means of arousing the interest of the great mass of our population who are the producers of the wealth of the country and in that way call their attention to the enormous amount expended on the military side of our government as against the lesser sum that is expended for the advancement of commerce and the development of the boundless resources of our land, I shall feel gratified indeed that I have made the effort. With full knowledge of the facts I am sure the people will stand for measures that tend for peace, for improving and developing our resources, for stimulating our foreign commerce and international trade by lessening the tax burden.

"Let us appropriate liberally for measures that stimulate agriculture, manufacture, mining and other pursuits that make for our industrial growth and prosperity."

"BOBBY," OF COURSE

C. W. Crossley of Corpus Christi, Texas, sends a newspaper clipping which represents Mr. Bryan as saying in the conclusion of his Madison Square speech: "I propose a stanza, but slightly changed, from one of the simplest of the poems of Scott the great democratic bard." Mr. Crossley says: "The enclosed quotation used by Mr. Bryan in his recent New York speech—a grand one—is from 'Bobble' Burns' 'Cotter's Saturday Night.' Burns was and is the simplest, purest and greatest democratic bard. Scott? No! Mr. Bryan simply made a lapsus linguae—a slip of the tongue."

The newspaper from which Mr. Crossley took his clipping was guilty of a typographical error. Mr. Bryan proposed a stanza from one of the poems of "Scotland's democratic bard," instead of from "Scott, the great democratic bard." It is not difficult to see how the error occurred.

FROM THE PEOPLE

A. K. Grow, Hamilton, Mont.—There is great need of a master mind guided by the sagacity of righteousness to checkmate the wiles and duplicity of the sagacity of unrighteousness. One can not look abroad, nor walk abroad for an hour but what he can see and instinctively feel, the same as the cattle of the field the presage of an approaching storm. The seeds have already been sown in the rate bill which passed, and other legislation, which did not pass, at the last session of congress, that will bring about sooner or later a complete dissolution of the machine part of the republican party. There is a great ado and a great deal of fuss and feathers about our national prosperity and about the per capita of money and the Associated Press is carefully concealing the source of its accumulation from the pockets of the people without a just return to the strong box of the monopolies which are each day throttling the nation. Eventually the crash will come and suddenly, too, like a clap of thunder from a clear sky. Will it come this fall, or has the machine so fortified itself that it will elect a majority of the house of representatives and thus keep back an investigation that would investigate without whitewash the extravagant legislation which has overtaken the nation like a devastating simoon of the desert. The public conscience has been greatly demoralized; therefore, it needs to be quickened by the fiery zeal of a political evangelist.

Mrs. G. T. Watson, Portales, N. M.—Please give me your opinion as to the best preparatory school for boys, a school that looks after the moral development of boys as well as the learning of books. I am a reader of The Commoner, and one of its staunchest friends.

(Will some educator among The Commoner readers give this reader the desired information?)

Charles R. Cook, Salem, Ind.—I have always felt a great interest in The Commoner, and can not do without it. It is always read by others when I am through with it. I have always been an independent voter. I love principle more than party. The people of this country are as much in slavery as the negro was before the war. Oppressed by excessive tariffs upon what we eat and wear, coupled with the trust and combinations of capital is getting to be so burdensome it is almost impossible for one to live and support large families on the wages paid to common laborers. Even skilled labor is handicapped to live as they should with the enormous prices now in vogue. The question is asked, what are we going to do about it? The answer can be given thus: Vote for the man, not the party; vote for honesty. I am always interested in primary conventions and attend them all and vote accordingly. I am opposed to boss rule and packed conventions. In conclusion I am opposed to everything that is corrupt and unfair towards the human race and in politics the same.

J. M. Stowe, Davidson, Sask, Canada—As I am under another flag my support can not help you much up here, but I expect to be of service in 1908, when I will not be a "still democrat," but a live one, all the time.

William Orr Farmer, Kirkland, Wash.—I send you a clipping from the Seattle Times containing an extract from the address of Prof. Ross, given at the commencement exercises at the Washington state university. Prof. Ross' remarks are certainly opportune, in view of the wholesale disclosures of corruption in high places that have recently been made in the crimes condoned because of the social position of the criminal who remains unpunished.

W. E. Burgener, Los Angeles, Cal.—Enclosed you will find two editorials from the Los Angeles Times of June 18. In these editorials Editor Harrison Otis tries to explain away the vindication of the quantitative theory of money. I send these clippings to show you the trend of republican argument here, and hope you will reproduce that part of Mr. Roberts' speech touching on the quantitative theory, in The Commoner. It would pass for an extract from one of Mr. Bryan's 1896 speeches.