

might be well to investigate the operation of the Connecticut law which limits the earning power, or at least the dividend paying power, on the main road of that state.

Elevator sites and private tracks should also be under the supervision of the railroad commission in order that all patrons of the road may have equal treatment. The elevator monopolies, working in league with the railroads, have despoiled the farmers of hundreds of millions of dollars.

Express companies, sleeping car companies, telegraph companies, interurban electric companies and interurban telephone companies should all be treated like the railroads and put under the control of the railway commission, and the constitution should vest in the legislature or in the commission, or in both concurrently, the authority to exercise any control necessary for the most ample protection of the public.

Labor is deserving of special consideration, for the wage earners in the city and the farmers in the country produce the wealth of your state and to a large extent will bear its burdens. The legislature should be empowered to fix the length of the working day on state, county and municipal work and to prescribe the maximum length of the contract day as between private individuals. As the courts have sometimes held unconstitutional laws which, like the eight hour day law, have attempted to limit the length of the working day I hope that your constitution will specifically confer upon the legislature authority to fix the minimum age at which children may be employed in factories and the maximum hours at which adults may be employed. The same reasoning that justifies a law protecting the borrower from an extortionate interest contract justifies legislation protecting the employe from excessive hours.

The lobbyist, as he is generally known, should be driven from the capital. No one should be permitted to act as attorney or agent of any corporation or individual interested in legislation until he registers as such, and then his arguments should be submitted to committees rather than to individuals.

The legislature should be given plenary power in matters of taxation. It should be authorized to provide for a land tax (on the improved or unimproved value of the land, as experience may prove best, a tax on personal property, on franchises, on corporations, on occupations, on incomes and on inheritances.)

Arbitration of differences between labor and capital ought to be carefully provided for. Where an employer has but a few men under him and comes into daily contact with them, the personal relations which exist between them insure both sides against injustice, but when a corporation employs a large number neither the stockholders nor the directors, nor yet the superintendent, comes into close acquaintance with the employes and some impartial board is necessary before which disputes may be brought. While the subject has not yet gone beyond the experimental stage, I suggest that your constitution should specifically authorize the legislature to create such a board and bestow upon it such power as may be necessary. A permanent board of three or five, temporarily increased for each dispute by two members, one designated by each side, could, I believe, almost prevent the occurrence of strikes. If the board has power to institute an investigation of its own motion, or at the request of either party, it would not be necessary to make the finding binding upon the parties because public opinion would compel the acceptance in all but the most exceptional cases.

But I shall conclude. I have by no means covered the entire field which you, as members of the convention, will be compelled to traverse, and I fear I have given you little that is new. Where I have used the word "should" you will please understand the qualifying words "in my judgment," for I can do no more than express an opinion and I ask for that opinion only such consideration as you think it deserves.

With the earnest hope that the constitution which you prepare may be entirely acceptable to your constituents and that each delegate to the convention may look back to his record with increasing pride, I am with great respect,

Very truly yours,
W. J. BRYAN.

CHRISTMAS

The Christmas season is here, and who does not rejoice at its approach? Does it cost something to celebrate Christmas? Yes, but the expense can be proportioned to the ability. The writer remembers when, as a boy, he saved his nickles to buy Christmas presents. Possibly a

dollar was all he had to spend, but what an experience to go through the stores and pick out a little present for each member of the family! Father was the hardest to suit, for it was difficult to find a five or ten cent present for a grown man. A cake of soap made into the form of an animal answered the purpose, and it was appreciated sometimes by the head of the family even though he did sometimes inquire whether there was any significance in the fact that soap was so often the thing selected; but no, it was all that the money would buy, and it was bestowed and received in the most kindly spirit. Then Christmas is the home-coming day. The children who are away at school return for their vacation, filling the house with noise and gaiety. Well, let them enjoy themselves. They are children but once, and the home would be a lonesome place without them.

The family gathering when the parents and the children and the children's children meet about the family board to review the events of the days during which they have been separated—how these domestic assemblies add to the deep enjoyment of life!

But we must not forget the spirit of Christmas in the keeping of the letter. Our communion with those who are bound to us by the ties of blood must not lead us to forget those with whom we are indissolubly connected even though the relationship is more remote. The origin of Christmas is not to be overlooked. We commemorate a great gift with the gifts that are bestowed and received. God's gift of his Son is the inspiration that leads us to the observance of Christmas day, and as His gift was for all, our benefactions should extend as far as we are able to extend them. We enjoy Christmas more as we enlarge the circle of those to whose lives we can add some joy on this annual festival.

The Commoner wishes its readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, a Christmas made greater to them by their generosity to others, a new year made happy by the bringing of happiness.

THE PEACE PRIZE

Every American citizen must feel proud of the fact that the awarding to the president of the United States, by the Norwegian parliament, of the Nobel peace prize, meets general approbation throughout the civilized world.

By his part in the conclusion of peace between Russia and Japan, Mr. Roosevelt won this high prize and in the winning brought to himself and his country honors that will not only be beneficial to both, but will serve as inspiration to all men everywhere.

In one of his messages to congress, Mr. Roosevelt said: "If the great civilized nations of the present day should completely disarm, the result would mean an immediate recrudescence of barbarism in one form or another." Between the Theodore Roosevelt announcing this astounding and abominable doctrine and the Theodore Roosevelt winning the prize for the best efforts toward the promotion of the world's peace, it will not be difficult for the American citizen to choose the figure which will best serve as the representative of genuine Americanism.

Congratulations to the Norwegian parliament which conferred the prize, and to the American president who earned it; congratulations to the American people whose most promising line of leadership lies along the paths of peace, and to the world whose progress depends upon the abolition of war!

ROOT ON CENTRALIZATION

The Commoner will discuss the subject more at length in future issues, but it enters its protest now to the doctrine of centralization which Secretary of State Root endorses in his latest speech. He asks: "What is to be the future of the states of the union under our constitutional form of government? The conditions under which the clauses of the constitution distributing powers to the national and state governments are henceforth to be applied are widely different from the conditions which were, or could have been, with in the contemplation of the framers of the constitution and widely different from those which obtained during the earlier years of the republic."

And then he proceeds to point out the causes which have led to new conditions and declares: "It is plainly to be seen that the people of the country are coming to the conclusion that in certain important respects the local laws of the separate states which were adequate for a due and just relation and control of the business which

was transacted and the activities which began and ended within the limits of the several states, are inadequate for just and due control of the business and activities which extend through all the states, and more power of regulation and control is gradually passing into the hands of the national government."

He seems to rest his argument upon the old idea of destiny—the refuge of the man who wants to do a thing which he can not defend. The destiny argument carried us into our expensive experiment in imperialism, and now destiny is relied upon to obliterate the states and centralize all government at Washington. The constitution, while made more than a century ago, is adequate for today. The changes that are needed are changes of method, not of principle. The division of the powers of government was founded upon the doctrine of self-government, and the preservation of the nation depends upon the careful observance of the limitations between the things that are local and the things that are national. Those who do not recognize the doctrine of local self-government can make an argument in favor of the transfer of all power to the federal government, but those who believe in the doctrine of self government recognize that the people can be trusted best with that with which they are best acquainted and that the people are best acquainted with the things which are near them and immediately concern them.

Secretary Root may have had in mind the Japanese question as it presents itself in California. If so, he will find that the American people, while anxious to protect foreigners in all their rights, will not be willing to turn the school system over to the federal government merely to please any foreign nation, however friendly. It is entirely possible to protect all the interests of the Japanese and scrupulously regard all their rights without changing our form of government or depriving the people of the community of their right to regulate the schools which their children are to attend.

If Secretary Root has in mind the elimination of the trusts, he will find that it is not necessary to deprive the states of their present powers in order to make congressional action effective.

Democrats may well scrutinize the remedies proposed by those who ignore the arguments upon which local self-government is based. Such remedies are apt to involve changes that are not only not necessary but really dangerous. The democratic party stands for remedies which apply old principles to new conditions. The president intimates in one of the Storer letters that Secretary Root is a valuable man in the cabinet because he can present the president's views. The president will not strengthen his hold upon public confidence by allowing the impression to go out that Secretary Root expresses his views in what he says about the abandonment of the constitutional distinctions between state and nation.

TREASON!

William B. Ellis of Trenton, New Jersey, writes to The Commoner: "Some moons since we heard much of fiat money and inflation. Who is howling for fiat money and inflation now? Where was 'restored confidence' when money was at \$1.25 discount in New York recently?"

Look out, Mr. Ellis, the United States marshalls will be scouring New Jersey armed with capias for your arrest on the charge of treason, if you are not careful!

Do you not know that for the government to provide, through the orderly channels of bimetalism, sufficient money with which to conduct the business of the country and at a time when contraction best suits the purposes of the money trusts, is "inflation?" But the unloading by the banker of asset currency to the extent of twenty per cent of his bond-secured currency, at a time when the banker is hard pressed for funds—that is not inflation; that is simply "elastic currency" issued to "meet an emergency;" that is "a sound dollar," "honest money," and is to be used for the purpose of enabling those eminent gentlemen who care for us while we sleep and lay awake nights thinking of our interests to defend the "national honor," and protect the "business interests of the country."

The financiers insisted that free coinage with the mints open to silver at the rate of one dollar and twenty-nine cents per ounce would give us a silver dollar with "fifty cents of fiat;" and a "fifty-cent dollar" is not to be thought of by these Napoleons of finance. But a dollar of asset currency issued on wind—a dollar for, of and by the banker—that is not fiat money; that is "a dollar good the world over;" that is "a sound dollar;" that is "as good as gold!"