

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

Vol. 6. No. 51.

Lincoln, Nebraska, January 4, 1907.

Whole Number 311.

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### IS THIS PROSPERITY?

R. F. Orr, Buffalo Center, Iowa, writes:  
Regarding Lawrence Callahan's barn I wish  
to say this.

Had Mr. Callahan built his barn in 1885, during a democratic administration he would have paid for his lumber (supposing he lived in Iowa) as follows: For dimension, \$16 per thousand feet; for best quality of sheathing, \$16; for drop siding, \$18, and for a good quality of shingles, \$2 per thousand. Had he sold hogs to pay for it he would have received for them from \$6.50 to \$7 per hundred, and had he sold corn to pay for it he would have received from 50 to 60 cents per bushel.

Had he built his barn in 1893 (under another democratic administration, but before Grover Cleveland became a republican) he would have paid the same prices, or perhaps a little lower. He would have paid for it in hogs at from \$5 to \$6 per hundred, or corn at 45 to 50 cents per bushel.

Had he built in 1898 just before the g. o. p. got things reorganized he would have found that he could buy dimension at \$14; the sheathing, \$12 to \$14; the drop siding, \$16 to \$18, and the very best shingles at \$2.75 per thousand. For his hogs he would have received \$5 per hundred and his corn 30 cents per bushel.

But let Mr. Callahan build now, and he will pay \$28 to \$30 for his dimensions, \$26 to \$28 for his sheathing, \$35 for his drop siding and \$4 for his shingles. He will sell his hogs at \$5.25 or \$5.50 per hundred and his corn at 30 cents per bushel.

Now let us drop all fine theories and get to hard facts. Is this prosperity?

### THE POSTAL DEFICIT

The eminent gentlemen who have taken it upon themselves to find a way of wiping out the postal deficit seem sadly in need of new spectacles. They are quite sure that the only way to wipe out the deficit is to raise the rates on second class matter 400 per cent, being utterly unable to see the very plain fact that the postal deficit could not only be wiped out but a neat surplus secured by simply compelling the railroads to transport the mails for a reasonable compensation. The railroads furnish cars for the express companies and then haul the express for about one-eighth of what they charge for hauling mail in cars rented to the government at an annual rental that pays for the cars every year. Instead of increasing second class rates 400 per cent the commission ought to devote some time to getting a fair rate from the railroads.



How Long Will the Old Tub Stand the Racket?

## OLNEY ON LABOR UNIONS

Hon. Richard Olney, Mr. Cleveland's attorney general and afterwards his secretary of state, has contributed to the Inter-Nation an interesting article on labor unions and politics. His views will attract the more attention because of the position he took in the Chicago strike. He insists that the labor organizations ought to enter actively into politics. The main reason that he gives is that it is necessary for them to do so in order to protect the country from the evils that have attended the trustification of industries. He regards the trust as an economic development. He says: "It should be added that the trust has earned the right to be regarded as an economic evolution." As the strongest proof of this he cites the fact that it not only continues to exist but to actually grow and flourish. He even credits it with steadying the wages of the laboring man. While the opponents of the trust will take issue with Mr. Olney on the two propositions that it is an economic evolution and that the mere fact it still exists, is proof of its beneficence, and while they will not agree with him that it is an advantage to the laboring man, they will agree with him in placing emphasis upon the part which the laboring man has of influencing politics and on the responsibility which accompanies the opportunity.

Mr. Olney says: "If it be assumed that the free institutions of this country are on the whole

better for mankind in general than any that human wisdom has yet devised and are to be preserved at all hazards, it necessarily follows that the so-called laboring class has an interest in those institutions surpassing that of all other classes of the community." This is a sound position. The laboring man has an interest in free institutions because they are the only ones in which his voice can be made effective.

It is to be regretted that Mr. Olney mars the force of the preceding paragraph with the following sentence: "How he may so act politically as to promote that interest is a question which the ordinary laboring man is incompetent to decide and feels his incompetence to decide."

It is not true that the laboring man is incompetent to decide the questions that concern him and his country. The great questions of politics involve moral questions, and questions of right and wrong can be decided by a laboring man as well as by anyone else. It is a common error to assume that the average man on the farm and in the workshop is not competent to deal with the problems of government. Jefferson pointed out this error and asserted that the principles of right and wrong were so easily discerned as not to require the aid of many councilors.

Mr. Olney in the course of his article states with force and clearness certain things which the laboring man should contend for. The cata-