

# The Commoner.

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VOL. 7. No. 28.

Lincoln, Nebraska, July 26, 1907.

Whole Number 340.

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### IS HE REALLY FOOLED?

The Topeka (Kansas) Herald referring to John D. Rockefeller's appearance on the witness stand says: "The result of the whole affair will be to create a better feeling toward Rockefeller. His efforts to escape an appearance in court on previous occasions were exasperating in the extreme to the public, and only served to lend color to the charges made against the company and its leading men. Now it appears that Mr. Rockefeller has not been actively connected with the company for a good many years, and that he has all along known nothing to tell. Under the circumstances it is regrettable in the extreme that he did not appear on the stand on previous occasions when his presence was desired by the court. If he had never made any effort to escape both he and his company would have avoided a large proportion of the ill feeling that has been aroused against them."

Is it possible that any man with sufficient intelligence to secure a position on a newspaper really believes the absurd statements above quoted—statements which appeared in a leading editorial in the Topeka Herald?

Has the editor of the Herald really fooled himself or does he imagine that he can fool his readers?

Surely some of these republican editors ask a great deal of their patient, long-suffering readers.

### THREATENING PANIC

Whenever the people show any disposition to stop the extortion practiced by the trusts the trust magnates threaten to bring a panic if they are disturbed. They learned it from the tariff barons who have for a generation warded off tariff reform by the threat of panic.

Now come the manipulators of our great railroad systems and threaten panic if they are interfered with. The trust magnates, the tariff barons and the railroad magnates have their hands in the pockets of the people and they demand that they shall be permitted to continue their exploitation of the public as the price at which they will allow the people to enjoy prosperity.

Have we reached the point where all legislation must await the consent of the beneficiaries of privilege and favoritism? Is this the condition to which the republicans have brought the country? The sooner reform comes the easier it will be accomplished—the longer it is delayed the more radical the change.

### AT ALL EVENTS—PROVOKING

The Milwaukee Sentinel says: "Let us be fair with Mr. Rockefeller, even if he is provokingly rich." Yes, or provokingly lawless.



"DON'T MOVE OR YOU WILL CREATE A FEARFUL PANIC."

## Government Ownership Not An Issue

As the campaign approaches it becomes more and more evident that of the economic questions, three—the trust question, the tariff question and the railroad question will share public attention, and these three really present the same issue between the general public and the privileged classes. Shall the government be administered in the interest of the whole people or in the interest of a few? This is the issue presented by the trust question, the tariff question and the railroad question.

Government ownership is not an immediate issue. A large majority of the people still hope for effective regulation, and while they so hope, they will not consider ownership. While many democrats believe—and Mr. Bryan is one of the number—that public ownership offers the ultimate solution of the problem, still, those who believe that the public will finally in self defense be driven to ownership, recognize that regulation must be tried under the most favorable circumstances before the masses will be ready to try a more radical remedy.

Regulation can not be sufficiently tried within the next year, and there is no desire anywhere to make government ownership an issue in 1908. Mr. Bryan fully agrees with those who believe that it would be unwise to turn attention from regulation, on which the people are ready to act, to government ownership, upon which the people are not ready to act. To inject the government ownership question into the next campaign would simply give representatives of the railroads a chance to dodge the issue of regulation and deceive the public.

So far, the railroads have been successful in preventing effective federal regulation, and

state regulation has, as a rule, been restrained by the United States courts. It is about twenty years since the interstate commerce commission was created. It required about ten years for the courts to find out that the powers conferred were insufficient, and then it took about ten years to secure an amendment. The railroads fought the amendment at every step, and the president was finally forced to compromise with the railroad republicans in the senate in order to secure their support. Even that amendment, secured after tremendous effort, falls short of what it should be. It aims to stop rebates and passes—and the railroads profit pecuniarily by both the stoppage of rebates and the prohibition of passes—but extortionate rates still exist, and state legislation for the reduction of rates has resulted in an agitation on the part of the railroads for legislation which will deprive the state of authority and centralize all regulation in congress. The democratic party must meet the issue presented; it must resist the encroachments upon the authority of the states. It must insist upon the exercise of federal power for the regulation of interstate commerce, and it must insist upon the exercise of state authority for the exercise of all of the power vested in the state. This question has grown in importance during the past year and its prominence will be increased if any attempt is made to impair state authority. The republican party is as impotent to regulate the railroads as it is to exterminate the trusts and to reform the tariff.

The democratic party has in three national campaigns demanded effective railroad regulation, while the republican national platforms have been silent upon the subject. The presi-