

NOT BACK TO CLEVELANDISM

When an editorial entitled "On to Sham Battle" appeared in a recent issue of *The Commoner* a dispatch was sent out from Lincoln to the effect that Mr. Bryan had declared in *The Commoner* "that the next fight of democracy must be along the lines of Cleveland's victory." Some of the eastern papers still further misrepresented the article by putting headlines over the press dispatch like the following: "Nebraskan says democracy must get back to Cleveland's tariff ideas, etc." In order that history may be kept straight, *The Commoner* ventures to suggest that the democratic party began a fight for radical tariff reform in congress in 1892. The McKinley bill had aroused opposition to the principle of protection, and the democratic house passed several bills dealing with separate schedules and providing for substantial reductions and recognizing the principle of free raw material. Mr. Bryan made his first congressional tariff speech in support of house roll 6007, which was a bill "to place wool on the free list and reduce the duties on woolen goods." This speech was delivered on March 16, 1892, and was widely circulated. In this speech Mr. Bryan attacked the principle of protection and advocated a tariff for revenue only. It was after a democratic congress had gone on record in favor of free wool and several other measures recognizing the doctrine of free raw material that the victory of 1892 was won. The platform adopted by the national convention in 1892 was not written by Mr. Cleveland or his immediate friends; in fact, it was much more radical than the platform which Mr. Cleveland favored. When the ways and means committee sent a sub-committee to Mr. Whitney, the chairman of the democratic national committee, to ask whether further tariff legislation was desired before congress adjourned, Mr. Whitney expressed dissatisfaction with the radical position taken by the convention and declared that no more tariff legislation was desired at that time.

After the election the more radical of the tariff reform element urged a special session of congress for the purpose of proceeding with tariff revision along the lines laid down by the platform, but President Cleveland was not willing to convene congress for that purpose, although he did call a special session later for the consideration of the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law.

While there is no reason why Cleveland and anti-Cleveland democrats should fall out over the tariff question at this time, still it is not fair for the friends of Mr. Cleveland to accuse tariff reformers of taking up with Mr. Cleveland's tariff ideas. Neither is it fair to denounce the doctrine of free raw material as a Cleveland doctrine. It had the support of the democrats in congress before the election of 1892, and the platform of 1892 was the outgrowth of the fight made in congress, and Mr. Cleveland not only did not write the platform but even disliked it.

Tariff reform, however, should stand or fall upon its merits. An idea is good not because it is advocated by some particular person, but because it has merit in itself. The advocates of tariff reform and the advocates of free raw material as a means of securing tariff reform do not have to rely upon the name of any supporter of the policy—they can support their position by argument and are willing to let it rest upon its merits.

"PLAIN BILL"

A Boston dispatch carried by the Associated Press referring to President Taft's visit to Yale says: "He became plain 'Bill Taft' again to many of his old classmates and college companions."

It would be well if Mr. Taft would become plain "Bill" to the American people, getting nearer to them through a more sympathetic concern for their interest and farther from Aldrichism by reason of a proper appreciation of its evils.

TIMELY

The Matoon (Ill.) Commercial, reproducing *The Commoner* editorial entitled "On to Sham Battle," says:

"In an editorial published under the heading of 'On to Sham Battle' in last week's issue of *The Commoner*, William J. Bryan calls the democratic party back to its old time principles of 'tariff for revenue only.' It is a timely article in these days when democracy is represented in Washington by protectionist senators."

Plain Talk By a Newspaperman on a "Free Press"

By William Marion Reedy of St. Louis Mirror

That is what the newspaper is here for nowadays—the money. It were folly to attempt to disguise the fact. Teach the boys to write! Whoever sees an item in a newspaper well written? Time was when journalism had kinship with literature. Now the chief requisite in a reporter is legs. All he has to do is to get his misinformation as quickly as possible, shout it over the telephone to the office, where it is misunderstood, and then the facts are set up in a "box," topped with headlines and followed by loosely written slush.

The prizes for journalism are not for those who can think soundly or write well. The man who writes has no chance to reach the real top-most power in journalism. He can only become an employe of some rich concern, writing nothing that he believes but what his employers order him to think. What editor today controls his paper? I can think of but one—dear old Henry Watterson, a relic from the golden age. Where is there an editor today like Dana, Greeley, Halstead, McCullough, Hyde, Joseph Medill, Raymond—a man who makes his paper's policy the expression of himself alone? There isn't one unless it be Joseph Pulitzer. He is the only great newspaper owner who can write. Except him, and possibly Mr. Hearst, there is no newspaper owner who holds general principles, or literary grace, or any form of idealism supreme. The owners of papers are business men. They want dividends. They want the business, the commercial ideal, upheld at all hazards. They must get the money from the men that have it, they must cater to please the men who run the community, and such men are out for their own pockets, first, last and all the time. All the rest is "leather and prunella." The great intellectual personality no longer dominates the paper. The supreme headship of a great newspaper is not the man who may be turned out in the school of journalism, but a moneymaker. The journalist proper can never be more than a "hired man" on a great paper. So a school of journalism does not promise the sort of success that means the exercise of the real power of journalism. And yet I come with a protest against the commercialization of journalism and with a plea for a return to idealism.

Everything in this country has been regulated, more or less, except the daily press. The daily press has participated more or less, in the regulation, but there are reasons for believing that one of the greatest evils in the United States is this same daily press itself, and I have thought that this might be a good occasion to present some of my reasons why a great many people, including myself, believe that daily journalism, in some of its most successful manifestations, is really a great menace to democracy.

All of us admit all the good that may be claimed for the press and for publicity—and the Lord knows the press can "toot its own horn" with all sufficient plangency—but no person capable of observation, or of thought, can nowadays cling to the superstition that the great daily press is free, or independent, or in any sense an organ of public opinion.

I may state what is well known to you all, that it is impossible, nowadays, to found a newspaper unless a man be a millionaire, or through a combination of capitalists in any large city, it is impossible to escape including in the number, men who have chiefly acquired their wealth through investments in corporations based upon public franchises of one sort or another and this being the case, we know it is only human nature that such men will insist upon the conducting of the newspaper in a way to insure the protection of their own interests.

In the case of newspapers founded by men of small means in the past, and now attained unto greatness, we must remember that the founder in each instance has invested his money in exactly those enterprises which look for their success to the exploitation of the public. Thus, his interests become the special interests and whether he will or no, in conducting his newspaper, he will have sympathy with all private interests similar to his own. Take the case of the *New York World*, and Mr. Pulitzer. Mr. Pulitzer has reached his present state from humble beginnings. He has conducted a great newspaper, generally speaking, along free and independent lines, and yet, when a certain popular candidate for president replies to the strictures and attacks of Mr. Pulitzer's *World*, with

an inquiry concerning the railroad and other investments of Mr. Pulitzer, there is none of us that fails to realize the perfect appositeness of the retort.

It is for this reason that we find so many of our great newspapers tearing the air with their shrieks and pawing up the earth about minor evils, but remaining silent when fundamental wrongs are brought under fire. We find these newspapers very strong on the idea that we shall have good men, but ever ready to attack the good man when he comes out in support of an idea, the tendency or purpose of which is to exact from the holders of privilege a share of the gains from those privileges that belong by right to the community which, by its growth and activity, has made those privileges valuable. There are many great newspapers pretending to be friends of the people, but where is there one that does not at the first faint symptom of attack upon the source of corrupt wealth, with which its proprietor is in sympathy, immediately fall back upon the so-called constitutional guarantees of property, and check progressive democracy with the cry of conservatism?

To one on the inside of daily journalism it is laughable to observe how, with the decline of interest in the editorial, the daily newspaper, in order to accomplish its purpose of swaying the public, has had recourse to doctoring the news.

There is not a great, powerful interest in the United States that is not, at the present time, maintaining a press bureau, the sole purpose of which is to get into the news columns of the papers, articles so framed as to constitute effective arguments against all proposed interference with such interests. We have long been familiar with the action of the book publishers in furnishing to newspapers printed reviews of new books. We have all seen the excellent work of the theatrical press-agent in generating an interest in the show or the star which he represents. But it is not so generally known, I imagine, that all of the public service corporations of the country are cemented in one organization, which conducts a press bureau, and so has nearly every other big interest in the country.

Every great railroad has its bureau to accomplish the same general purpose of giving the public the "dope" that is to the best interests of the corporation. During the insurance investigation in New York it was shown how the press was worked by agents on big salaries, to boost the business and increase the graft of the men at the head of the enterprise, who were taking the cream off the top of the milk supplied by the general public; and even while the investigation was still in progress there were instances in which there appeared in the columns of the dailies dexterously worded articles, the purport of which was to take the edge off the facts uncovered in the examinations by Mr. Hughes, now governor of New York. There were clear cases in which paid notices at one dollar per line were run in the newspapers as part of the record in the investigation, and during the whole sensational period of the inquiry the greatest St. Louis paper, in point of wealth and power, never at any time gave the facts more than a column of space.

Furthermore, when we look at the great newspapers, we observe another laughable feature in the manner in which they work upon the general public, the most elaborate confidence game known in the history of America. We read in the editorial columns here and there, the most violent denunciation and scathing derision of the wealthy and fashionable, but we turn to the news columns and find this same newspaper catering slavishly, in gorgeous description and striking illustration, to all the basest vanity of the wealthy and to the curiosity of the poor. We are told what the millionaire eats for breakfast, dinner and supper, and whether he prefers night-shirts or pajamas.

We see illustrated the lingerie and the stockings of the golden brides of foreign noble adventurers, and we are treated to such a sickening celebration of wealth as is not to be found in any other country on the globe. To those of us who are, as we say, "in the know" this is a deliberate policy. The great newspapers play to the masses for circulation, and then turn around and coddle the classes for advertising.

The most violently socialistic and anarchistic editorials are found in the papers that cater most to the glorification of the pleasures and possessions of the extremely wealthy; but, let there impend in the community in which any of these sensational papers is printed, any proposal for the regulation or the destruction of the system which produces our most offensive wealth, and we find the anarchistic page grown suddenly