

A "Country Editor" Puts Some Timely Questions to a Plutocratic Daily

The following letter from one of the best known "country editors" of Missouri is self-explanatory:

Jackson, Mo., Jan. 12, 1912.—Editor Commoner: One of the great daily papers in this state claims for itself the distinction of being the leading democratic paper of the west. This paper, nevertheless, refused to help elect the democratic candidate for president in 1896, 1900 and 1908. It maintains a department on its editorial page set apart for letters from the people. These letters discuss candidates, political issues and other things as well. I sent the following letter to that paper recently for publication. It was returned to me, with this note from the editor accompanying it:

"—We have yours of Dec. 26th, inclosing an article for publication and regret to advise that we will not be able to print it. We thank you for submitting it.—"

Here is the letter we sent to that paper and which its editor rejected:

Editor of the —: I read with interest your editorial in Sunday's paper on Mr. Underwood as a presidential candidate. Your defense of the south's right to present a candidate for the presidency was to the point. To exclude Mr. Underwood or any other man from the list of presidential candidates because he is a southerner would be, politically speaking, a crime. As a democrat, I would rejoice exceedingly to see the right kind of a democrat from the south carrying the party standard in the campaign next year. But while the south has a number of available democrats for the presidency, Mr. Underwood is not among the number. His nomination would be considered by a majority of the party as a triumph of the conservative or reactionary element who led us through the slaughter-house in 1904. The Denver platform, you know, promised the people that, if given a chance, the party would pass a tariff bill through congress placing trust-controlled products on the free list. Taking the party at its word, the people put it in control of the house of representatives. They swept the republican majority from the house and gave the democrats there the chance they had asked. A few shrewd corporation democrats crept in along with the others. By flattery and cajolery they silenced the voice of the man who should have asserted leadership in the house and succeeded in having Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama made floor and party leader there. And the pledge made in the Denver platform was speedily broken according to program. The floor leader led but he led astray. Mr. Underwood, you remember, was stung by a criticism of his leanings toward the steel trust which appeared in Bryan's Commoner, and in a speech on the floor of the house severely arraigned Mr. Bryan and denounced him as a falsifier. Dispatches from Washington at the time told us also that Mr. Underwood admitted in his speech that every dollar he had in the world was invested in the steel trust. Do you believe, Mr. Editor, it is advisable for the democratic party to nominate a man for president who admits that every dollar he has in the world is invested in the steel trust?

A COUNTRY EDITOR.

On the 8th of January I sent another letter to the same paper and asked that it be published, with the following note to the editor in person:

"Although a letter I sent you recently for publication in regard to Mr. Underwood and the presidential nomination was returned to me, I am sending you another with the same request. You may not think it advisable to publish it, but I will submit it anyway. I will say to you that I am a democrat in good standing in my party. I have no other purpose in writing this letter than the welfare of my party, and to speak in behalf of those who, I think, compose its rank and file. Neither do I wish to parade my identity before the public. To prove to you that I do not I attach no other signature to the letter than that of a country editor and omit the name of the town from which I write. I really believe you ought to publish the letter—certainly, at any rate, to answer the questions I ask."

This second attempt of mine to break into the columns of the "leading democratic paper of the west" was also a failure. This second

letter of mine was probably considered impertinent, as the following note from the editor seems to indicate:

"By what authority have you established an inquisition?"

My second letter to that paper is here given: Editor of the —: It is generally believed that the great daily papers of the country, with probably few exceptions, and irrespective of party name, are under plutocratic control. Many believe this was shown to be true in the political campaigns of 1896, 1900 and 1908, when the metropolitan dailies, professing to be democratic, refused to help elect the democratic candidate for president. Some of the most influential openly opposed the nominee, and for so doing their candor was certainly more to be commended than the hypocrisy of those that simply "laid down" and neither advocated nor opposed. What may the democratic party expect from this class of papers in the campaign this year? Your paper is in a position to enlighten the democratic masses within the wide circle of its influence on this question. To that end, will you allow me to ask a few questions? During the last fifteen years the — has itself shown signs of plutocratic leanings, and many democrats have lost faith in the paper on that account. I am sure the confidence of those can be won back, and your paper's influence among democrats increased, if it will answer satisfactorily the following questions:

1. Does your paper favor the income tax amendment?
2. Does it advocate the election of United States senators by popular vote?
3. Does it believe the initiative and referendum amendment to our state constitution is good law and good democracy?
4. What about the recall of judges?
5. Would your paper favor a bank guaranty law similar to those now in operation in Oklahoma and other states?
6. Does your paper favor the Aldrich currency scheme?
7. Does it advocate the plank in the Denver platform putting trust-controlled products on the free list?
8. Does it believe in a tariff for revenue only?
9. Does it sanction that part of the supreme court's Standard Oil decision which reads an amendment into the anti-trust law that congress refused to make?
10. If the democratic party this year nominates a man for president with progressive views in politics similar to those held by Joseph W. Folk, Champ Clark or William J. Bryan, will your paper help elect him?

Pardon me if I say the strong editorials now appearing in the columns of your paper in behalf of the party are no guarantee of the paper's support of the nominee after he has been named. Before the convention of 1908, it strongly urged Mr. Bryan's nomination, but after he was nominated it refused to urge his election.

The above questions, it seems to me, are questions which no real democrat should be either afraid or ashamed to answer. Will your paper answer them? A COUNTRY EDITOR.

AS MARK SULLIVAN SEES IT

Mark Sullivan, the political expert for Collier's Weekly, describes the situation in this way:

If the democratic party should hold a primary election tomorrow, Woodrow Wilson would get fully two-thirds of the vote and carry about three-fourths of the states. He is really the only one of the democratic candidates who outside of his own state, in the country at large, has a personal following—the sort of following that would go with its candidate into a third party if the occasion arose. Wilson has a large group of this sort of adherents; none of the other democrats have. There are many party leaders in small communities, local machines and state and county bosses who are for Harmon. But outside of Ohio, Harmon has no devoted following among the rank and file. Clark has a few small and isolated groups of followers of this kind in rural Kansas and rural Kentucky. Underwood's strength is confined to his own state wholly. Folk has a considerable personal following, but it is scattered. Much of Wilson's

following is subject to Bryan's veto, so to speak. That is to say, if Bryan were a candidate himself, or if he should give the sign of his favor to some one else, Wilson would lose probably half the support he now has. But even so, Wilson, alone among the democratic candidates, has a large following which is personal to himself. Wilson's problem will be to hold his present position for six months; if he is to lose it, his opponents must find arguments against him more fundamental than the Carnegie pension story and the resurrection of old letters.

An important trend in the democratic presidential situation, which has not yet become obvious, is suggested by this paragraph from the "Wall Street Journal":

"The leader of the majority in the house of representatives at Washington, Mr. Underwood, spent the first half of the present week in this city (New York). Ostensibly he took this brief vacation so that he might conveniently accept invitations to make a public address. But he doubtless was as fully persuaded to spend a few days in New York by an invitation sent to him last week to become the guest of honor at a private, somewhat informal, dinner. Mr. Underwood learned that at this dinner there would be some thirty or forty representative citizens of New York. Some of them are of his own party, some of them prominent as republicans. All of them are men distinguished for professional, educational, or other achievements. This dinner was held on Monday evening of this week, and of it the public has had no knowledge. There were no formal speeches. Instead, the informal questioning, conversation, and exchange of views which are frequently of so much greater consequence than set addresses kept the host at the dinner table until a late hour. It is sufficient, perhaps, to say that Mr. Underwood charmed every one of the guests, not merely by the revelation of that unusual gift of personality which has served him so well as leader in the house, but also by the acuteness, as well as the broad-mindedness of his comments on conditions as these now exist in the United States."

There is a disposition on the part of those conservative business men who are commonly supposed to be supporting Harmon, to turn from the Ohio man and look with increasing favor on Underwood. As one of the most powerful of the old democratic machine leaders in the east expressed it: "Harmon's been on the shelf a long time; he's getting shopworn." Underwood is a sound progressive on the tariff, and that, together with his splendid generalship in the management of the democratic congress, commends him to the radicals; on such issues as the initiative and referendum, he is an avowed standpatter; that commends him to the conservatives. The New York and eastern leaders would probably make up their minds definitely to back Underwood but for a lurking fear that he may be handicapped as a vote-getter by the fact that he is a southerner, a doubt which grows less the longer it is looked in the face.

THREE TIMES AND IN

Houston (Texas) Post: That the governor of the Sunflower state may the more readily come into appreciation of the attitude which Mr. Roosevelt holds toward the nomination for the presidency, we reproduce the following inspiring witticism, which the New York Herald avers came to it from an unknown source:

During a local election in a German town only one man appeared at the nomination desk. "Whom do you nominate?" inquired the official.

"Myself," was the answer.

"Do you accept the nomination?"

"Well, no."

"Then we must try again. Whom do you nominate?"

"Myself."

"You accept the nomination?"

"No."

A subdued "donnerwetter!" escaped the lips of the perplexed official, but he went on:

"For the third time, whom do you nominate?"

"Myself," came the invariable reply.

"Do you accept the nomination?"

The man rose with a smile of satisfaction spreading over his face and he answered proudly:

"Having been three times solicited by my fellow citizens to accept the nomination, I can no longer decline to accede to their wishes."

There can hardly be a shadow of doubt that Teddy, like Barkis, is eternally and persistently willing—only let Governor Stubbs and his kind keep on calling more urgently and "overwhelmingly."