

The Commoner.

ISSUED WEEKLY

Entered at the Postoffice at Lincoln, Nebraska, as second-class matter.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN Editor and Proprietor
RICHARD L. METCALFE Associate Editor

CHARLES W. BRYAN Publisher
Editorial Rooms and Business Office, 324-330 South 12th Street

One Year.....\$1.00
Six Months......50
In Clubs of Five or more, per year.. .75

Three Months..... .25
Single Copy..... .05
Sample Copies Free.
Foreign Post. 5c Extra.

SUBSCRIPTIONS can be sent direct to The Commoner. They can also be sent through newspapers which have advertised a clubbing rate, or through local agents, where sub-agents have been appointed. All remittances should be sent by post-office money order, express order, or by bank draft on New York or Chicago. Do not send individual checks, stamps or money.

RENEWALS—The date on your wrapper shows the time to which your subscription is paid. Thus 1912. Two weeks are required after money has been received to and including the last issue of January, January 21, '12 means that payment has been received before the date on wrapper can be changed.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS—Subscribers requesting a change of address must give old as well as new address.

ADVERTISING—Rates will be furnished upon application.

Address all communications to

THE COMMONER, Lincoln, Neb.

FIRST NATIONAL CONVENTION

Thomas B. Gregory in Hearst's New York American: The first national convention (which happened to be of the democratic persuasion) was held eighty years ago—May 21, 1832—in the city of Baltimore. Conventions had been held the year before by the "anti-Masons" and whigs, but they were not national in the sense that the convention of '32 was.

When the country was young and the voters comparatively few in number national conventions were not thought of. Washington was taken by unanimous consent, Adams as his legitimate successor, Jefferson as the natural leader of the "republicans," as the anti-federalists were then called, and Madison and Monroe as pre-eminently fitted by training and experience. When the party spirit became strong the nominating was done by congressional and legislative caucuses, and the caucus remained king of the situation until it was dethroned by the national convention idea.

"King Caucus" was put out of business by that great slayer of dragons, Andrew Jackson. "Old Hickory" got it into his head that the "King" was a scoundrel, and the suspected monarch was pulled from his throne, uncrowned and hustled into oblivion.

It would be impossible to describe the party venom and fury of 1830-32. The "issues," each active as a "live wire," crowded upon each other thick and fast—protective tariff, national bank, nullification, party patronage, the French troubles, the Cherokee Indian question, the "bargain and sale" charge against Adams and Clay, the Polly Eaton row in the cabinet and a multitude of minor matters were, like so many typhoons, lashing the public mind into a tempest of excitement.

To meet all these issues, and to formulate the "policies" which should quell the storm and prevent its recurrence, the national democratic convention met at Baltimore.

Three hundred and twenty-six delegates were present, representing every section of the union. Among the delegates were many of the ablest men in the party and nation, and all the issues were thoroughly ventilated and earnestly debated; but no "platform" or "address" was issued to the nation. Jackson's messages were all that were needed. They were platform enough. Of course, Jackson was renominated.

It is said that the reports of this first democratic national convention took no less space in the New York papers than is given today to an ordinary meeting at Tammany hall.

The national convention system of nominating the president has held the stage for eighty years, and may maintain itself for a while longer, but it looks as though its days were about over. As the congressional caucus, the legislature and "King Caucus" himself were finally put down and out by the national convention, the direct primary seems in a fair way of dethroning the national convention as the agency for the naming of the candidates for the presidential office.

Shall the Democratic Party Go Republican?

Some democrats misled by the representatives of special interests have argued that if the republicans should nominate what they call a "radical" like Theodore Roosevelt, the democrats should nominate a "conservative" like Underwood or Harmon. The Columbia (S. C.) State takes up this argument and answers it in this clear-cut way:

"The argument starts with the admission that a progressive can defeat a conservative. It ends with the implied admission that the democrats can hope for success against a republican progressive only with the assistance of republican conservatives or standpatters.

"Reduced to its simplest terms, the proposal that the democrats nominate Underwood or Harmon is equivalent to one that if the progressives capture the republican organization the democratic party should slide into the place that the republican party vacates and become a coalition of democratic conservatives and republican standpatters, the progressive democrats consenting that the character impressed upon it by Mr. Bryan and other leaders for the last sixteen years be abandoned and repudiated.

"We dare assert that it is plainly evident to every intelligent observer that the great majority of the American voters are progressives. In the republican party Mr. Roosevelt's strength can be accounted for on no other theory. The man who disputes that Roosevelt and La Follette together stand for a majority of the republican voters shuts his eyes to every sign and salient manifestation of the times.

"In the democratic party the progressives are represented by Woodrow Wilson and Champ Clark. Mr. Clark's important following is wholly progressive. Without the stamp of approbation on his policies of progressives like Bryan he would not have a delegate in Baltimore except, possibly, those from Missouri. The strength at Baltimore of the democratic progressives will be represented by Clark and Wil-

son, and together it will constitute the overwhelming preponderance of party sentiment. Manipulation may bring the Wilson and Clark candidates into sharp antagonism, but, before the body of democratic voters, they stand for the same thing. That no intelligent democrat questions.

"Harmon is a conservative. He is opposed by the progressives of his own state and will go into the convention with a negligible support.

"Whence come the Underwood delegates? Not one will register at a Baltimore hotel from a state beyond the Mason and Dixon line. Alabama, Georgia, Florida and Mississippi, so far, are his array. There is not one sign of Underwood strength in a single doubtful state or in a single state where the cleavage is evident between progressives and conservatives in both parties.

"If the democrats nominate a conservative—Underwood or Harmon—they will nominate him with the full knowledge that the progressives are a tremendous majority of the American people. They will nominate him though they know that the verdict in favor of progressive policies is already written. They will knowingly nominate the candidate of a minority of their own party and one appealing only to a small minority of independent republicans. The independent republican is a progressive. He is an "insurgent." The standpat republican is a "regular;" he abides with the "machine;" he votes the ticket and he has always voted it. What democrat is credulous enough to think that Boss Penrose in Pennsylvania, Boss Cox in Ohio and Barnes in New York will desert the "Grand Old Party?"

The State is right. The argument presented by these highly deceived democrats resolves itself into the question, Shall the democratic party go republican? It is not at all likely that the faithful democrats in session at Baltimore will give consent to such a proposition.

PRESS OPINION ON THE LORIMER REPORT AN OMINOUS SIGN

St. Louis Republic: The expected has happened. Five of the eight members of the special committee of the senate on the Lorimer election have presented a majority report, declaring it free of taint of corruption, as foreshadowed in the Republic of March 28.

It is not necessary to pause long on the merits of the case, for on that the American public long ago made up its mind. Link, White, Beckemeyer and Holstlaw confessed that they accepted money to vote for Lorimer. Spurred by a sense of guilt, they laid bare what they had done and asked for the forgiveness and mercy of their fellow-men.

Nothing in all the range of human utterance is more convincing than confession, the word of a man who finds the agony of an accusing conscience worse than the sting of popular reprobation and for the health of his soul reveals his wrongdoing. Yet the majority of this committee has the effrontery to declare in its report that "whatever money White, Beckemeyer, Link, Holstlaw or any other person received was not paid to him or them by anyone on Mr. Lorimer's behalf or in consideration of or to secure such vote or votes for him."

In other words, the American people is asked to believe that the precious signers of this report know men to be innocent who confessed that they were guilty. It is not necessary to pause here to reflect on the moral sensitiveness of these gentlemen. The prospect is gloomy enough if we contemplate only their common sense.

The report pronounces the testimony of Clarence W. Funk to be without value or significance. It goes without saying that this verdict leaves the general opinion concerning the Funk testimony exactly where it was before.

The evidence laid before the committee which made the first report of the charges, though reviewed and passed upon, is nevertheless ruled out as "res adjudicata"—a thing already passed upon, and therefore not subject to review. This is a little intricate; but the plain man in the street will find it much easier to understand how five men could say with one breath that a thing could not be passed upon and proceed to pass upon it in the next than to comprehend how they could expect to break the force of personal confessions of bribe-taking

by the general statement that the crimes confessed were never committed.

The "res adjudicata" doctrine is absurd here for the reason that it smacks of strict technical procedure; and never were the proceedings of a tribunal conducted with a more flagrant disregard of the elementary laws of order and dignity. For days on end the time of the committee has been consumed with long recitals of matters utterly foreign to the issues actually before it.

All the devious ways of Illinois politics have been followed to their obscure and tangled ends. The committee has listened with the utmost patience to childish gossip intended to discredit Governor Deneen politically, and much other matter of equal dignity. The evidence fills 8,588 printed pages. It is probable that the entire literature of public records contains no like amount of matter in which so much shell conceals so little meat.

Like committee, like senate. The parent body should long ago have rebuked its appointees for their frivolous waste of time. It should have been stung to action by reflection upon the fact that the matter in hand was of the utmost gravity, striking at the very foundation of popular confidence in the springs of government. The Lorimer scandal has done much more than utterly to discredit the election of Lorimer. As committee after committee has paltered with it, it has shown the nation as a whole how lightly the senate holds the popular trust in its own moral earnestness—an ominous sign in a democracy.

ABSURD

Chicago Record-Herald: The two reports of the Lorimer case, foreshadowed weeks ago, certainly join issues with a vengeance. Almost everything asserted in the majority's document is denied in that of the minority with vigor and emphasis. Where the minority finds conclusive evidence of bribery and corruption the majority sees merely "rumor, gossip and opinions."

No amount of further talk will convert the minority to the majority's view, and it is, alas, apparently equally out of the question that the majority should accept the minority's conclusions. A brief debate and early vote should, in the circumstances, be acceptable to both sides. The great public, weary and disgusted with the malodorous affair and shocking scandal, has also fully and irrevocably made up its mind as to the essential facts and principles of the case. It has spoken in Illinois, and none misunder-