

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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## A Democratic Message

President Wilson's first message to congress is thoroughly democratic. Like most of Mr. Wilson's writings it will bear re-reading. Under the circumstances it must be regarded as a great public paper. This is so because it displays wisdom in its devotion to one subject—the tariff; and for the further reason that it deals with that subject in the frank and thorough fashion that has already come to be accepted as the Wilson characteristic.

There is, first, the recognition of the duty laid upon the party in power at the recent elections—the duty of doing something that shall actually give the people relief. The program suggested is not an abnormal one. On the contrary, it is an effort to restore harmony in our fiscal affairs. There have been radical changes in the conditions of our economic life during the last generation, but, in the language of the president—and this paragraph should be held firmly before the eyes of those who object to tariff changes—in the language of the president: "While the whole face and method of our industrial and commercial life were being changed beyond recognition the tariff schedules have remained what they were before the change began, or have moved in the direction they were given when no large circumstance of our industrial development was what it is today. Our task is to square them with the actual facts. The sooner that is done the sooner we shall escape from suffering from the facts and the sooner our men of business will be free to thrive by the law of nature (the nature of free business) instead of by the law of legislation and artificial arrangement."

There is here no apology to the system that stands today frankly for plunder where a generation ago its advocates honestly regarded it as patriotic. According to the president it is now "direct patronage of the government" for the private industries of the country which were once merely to be "protected." In the building of our tariff schedules the thought uppermost in the builders' minds has been "to give each group of manufacturers or producers what they themselves thought that they needed in order to maintain a practically exclusive market against the rest of the world." As a result of this bad practice we have built up a set of privileges behind which monopoly has been organized and the result is that "nothing is normal, nothing is obliged to stand the tests of efficiency and economy, in the world of big business, but everything thrives by concerted arrangement."

In the president's view, "the object of the tariff duties henceforth laid must be effective competition, the whetting of American wits by

contests with the wits of the rest of the world." He does not advise that this course be adopted with "reckless haste" but it is our business to discover genuine remedies and then apply them. The anxiety to avoid "reckless haste" is not to be taken as an excuse for a do-nothing policy. On the contrary, the president makes it clear that when the tariff program has been completed it will commend itself to the intelligent American citizen who well understands the difference between political bombast and patriotic effort.

President Wilson has, in a nutshell, outlined the democratic program on the tariff question and his first message to congress will be given a place by democrats alongside of his splendid inaugural address.

### THE "CROSS OF GOLD"

The Literary Digest, in its reproduction of newspaper comments upon what it calls "Rescuing China from the Cross of Gold," says: The crucifixion of China upon a cross of gold would naturally be repugnant to an administration whose foreign affairs are in the hands of the present secretary of state, and our keen editorial observers see in the disapproval of the Chinese loan a similar chilling attitude toward the entire Taft program of "dollar diplomacy." By "dollar diplomacy" the press mean the use of government influence to aid and protect our bankers and traders in their transactions with Latin-American republics and with China, a striking example being our armed interference in the revolution in Nicaragua. In China's case it now appears from the president's statement that the Taft administration requested our bankers to join in the "six-power" loan to China, a loan so onerous in its terms as "to touch very nearly the administrative independence of China itself," and it has been openly charged by our advocates of recognizing the Chinese republic, that recognition has been delayed by all the powers to put the screws on China and force acceptance of the loan. Now the Wilson administration explicitly disapproves the entire Chinese transaction, and most of those who were waiting for an unequivocal declaration of the new administration's attitude toward "dollar diplomacy" are satisfied by the president's statement that this policy of the Knox regime has been definitely repudiated. The change of front is made more emphatic by the resignation of Huntington Wilson, assistant secretary of state, who was closely identified with the development of "dollar diplomacy" under Secretary Knox. As the Springfield Republican sums it up, the present administration takes the stand that "banking houses making foreign loans can not have Uncle Sam as their collecting agent."

### THE FIRST FOUR WEEKS

With the close of the first month of President Wilson's administration general satisfaction is expressed by men of all political parties. The American people have, clearly, implicit faith in the new president. The Boston (Mass) Traveler recently printed this editorial:

"President Wilson closes the fourth week of his first term. Thus far he has not done many unusual things, but he has done some usual things in an unusual way. It is too early to say that he has made good, but it is not too early to say that he is beginning like a president who will make good. There is not a lingering doubt that he will be his own man, and the number of democrats who have not already learned that fact is few, as far as prominence goes, and unimportant as far as numbers go. He is acting every day like a President who intends as far as possible to live up to his reputation, as well as to the platform of his party, and it is no more probable that he will bunco the people than that he will allow himself to be buncoed by so-called friends of the people. So far he has made mighty few mistakes. Every patriotic citizen, regardless of his politics, will rejoice that this is so."

## Flood Prevention

For years the people of the lower Mississippi and those living at intersections of the Ohio and Mississippi rivers have been subjected to losses and great inconveniences through floods. There has been considerable discussion and some effort in a small way to relieve these conditions. The recent floods will serve to direct attention to a duty the discharge of which has all too long been neglected. Engineers agree that the bad conditions referred to could be prevented through the application of laws with which engineers are familiar. The sections affected by these floods lie in the very heart of the United States and it goes without saying that extraordinary efforts ought to be made to protect these sections. The work of protection should be commenced in earnest and should be carried to successful conclusion even though it requires an enterprise on a scale so large as the Panama canal. A comprehensive engineering plan will provide the people living in the heart of America with protection from floods. This is the opinion of experienced engineers. The good work can not be commenced any too soon. Such an enterprise is in harmony with the pledge given by the democratic national convention for 1912. The Baltimore platform declared:

"The present devastation of the lower Mississippi valley accentuates the movement for the regulation of river flow by additional bank and levee protection below, and the diversion, storage and control of the flood waters above, and their utilization for beneficial purposes in the reclamation of arid and swamp lands and development of waterpower, instead of permitting the floods to continue, as heretofore, agents of destruction. We hold that the control of the Mississippi river is a national problem; \* \* \* the building of levees to maintain the integrity of its channel, and the prevention of the overflow of the land and its consequent devastation, resulting in the interruption of interstate commerce, the disorganization of the mail service and the enormous loss of life and property, imposes an obligation which alone can be discharged by the general government."

Let this platform plank be faithfully carried out.

### EXPRESS BUSINESS

Express companies in a brief filed with the Interstate commerce commission, claim that through the new parcel post they lost in February revenues from small packages amounting to nearly five hundred thousand dollars. The express companies' attorney failed to say, however, that for years his clients have been violating the law in carrying the small packages that are explicitly forbidden by existing statutes from going through the express and explicitly reserved for the mail.

### WILLIAM J. NORTHERN

William J. Northern, former governor of Georgia, is dead, but his memory will long be treasured by men, women and children who were inspired by his ever-willing service to society. Governor Northern was a modest man but the great work he did was known outside of his own state and many men of all sections and of all parties will join with his Georgia friends in keeping his memory green.

### TENNESSEE AND PENNSYLVANIA

Tennessee and Pennsylvania have ratified the proposed amendment to the federal constitution providing for the direct election of United States senators. Pennsylvania is the thirty-fifth state to ratify. Only one more state is needed to complete the good work.

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