

The Commoner

ISSUED MONTHLY

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

WILLIAM J. BRYAN CHARLES W. BRYAN
Editor and Proprietor Associate Ed. and Publisher
Edit. Rms. and Business Office, Suite 207 Press Bldg.

One Year \$1.00	Three Months25
Six Months50	Single Copy10
In Clubs of Five or more, per year.75	Sample Copies Free.
	Foreign Post, 25c 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 such 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 currency.

RENEWALS—The date on your wrapper shows the time to which your subscription is paid. Thus January 15 means that payment has been received to and including the issue of January, 1915.

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.

THE COMMONER'S FIFTEENTH YEAR

At the beginning of every year, The Commoner has reproduced the following statement, printed in its initial number:

"The Commoner will be satisfied, if, by fidelity to the common people, it proves its right to the name which has been chosen."

Whether The Commoner has fulfilled the spirit of this declaration must be left to the judgment of its readers.

During the past two years many of the reforms that The Commoner has advocated since it was established have been enacted into law by a democratic administration. The revision of the tariff, the enactment of the new currency law, the passage of the Clayton anti-trust bill and the creation of a trade commission will probably have a far more reaching effect and prove of more real value to the people, than all the other laws passed by Congress in the past twenty years. The importance of preventing any backward step from being taken in the great reforms that have been inaugurated, and the pushing forward to completion during the coming two years the unfinished legislative program of the progressive forces of the country can not be overestimated. The Commoner sincerely appreciates the loyal support that it has received from its many readers during the fourteen years the paper has been published. At the commencement of its fifteenth year The Commoner reaffirms its fidelity to the cause of the common people, and will endeavor to co-operate in every honorable way to advance their welfare and happiness.

Apparently the republican talk about a tariff for the protection of American labor has not misled all of the laboring men. Speaking at the hearing before the president upon the immigration bill, Secretary Morrison of the American Federation of Labor said that under the republican protective theory the big concerns get protection for their products, but the labor market is on the free list with the big protected companies paying their men the lowest wages. Mr. Morrison has a happy faculty of putting undeniable truths in a small compass of language.

Some partisans insist that the test of loyalty is to stand by the party right or wrong; to defend the corrupt members regardless of decency. This policy puts a premium on corruption and weakens a party by driving decent men from it. The man who sees no more in democracy than this does not know the meaning of true democracy.—Joseph W. Folk.

KIND WORDS

Jackson, Mississippi, February 4, 1915.—The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb. My dear Mr. Bryan: It is always one of the greatest pleasures of my life to subscribe to The Commoner. I believe it would almost be impossible for any one to hold your brother in higher estimation than I do. I have always looked upon him as one of the great men of the world—so true, so just, so fair, so uncompromising, so loyal to all that is true and noble in our Christian civilization. I look forward to The Commoner with pleasure every month and read it with great profit.—Rev. Dr. G. Gordon Smeade

Increasing Railroad Rates

The following is a letter written by the president of a large knitting mill at Fort Wayne, Ind., to the Fort Wayne Journal-Gazette on the subject of increasing railroad passenger rates. In view of the advertising campaign being carried on by the railroads through the press of the country in an effort to bring public opinion to the point where it will not oppose an increase, the following letter is timely and contains food for thought. The letter follows:

"The impression has been conveyed through the newspapers that at a meeting of railroad passenger agents and local business men, favorable action was taken on the railroad companies' plan to ask for an increase in their passenger rates from 2 cents to 2½ cents per mile. This must be a mistake, because from what I can learn, no business men were invited, but the meeting was attended by railroad, interurban and public utility officials. As we will hear enough of the railroads' side of the case, I would like to present a few observations on the public's side.

"Broadly speaking, the railroads base their claim on these three arguments.

"1st.—They are making no money.

"2nd.—There is no demand for their stocks and bonds.

"3rd.—A half-cent a mile is a small matter to the public, but will mean much to the railroads.

"Making no money' is not confined to the railroads, but is shared by the manufacturers, the commercial and professional men, and especially by the working people. It is conceded by all that the depression in business is caused by the war. We know that railroad stocks were held to the extent of some thousand million dollars abroad, and the foreign investors now need the money, with the result that these stocks are now offered at sacrifice prices and must be absorbed by American capital. And so money available for new issues of stock is now employed more profitably in bargain sales of old stocks. Should the American people be expected to make up the war loss to the railroads? We are already paying one war tax to the government. If our government is to reimburse the railroads, then it should reimburse the manufacturers, the business men, the working men and all others suffering because of the war. The war has thrown millions of working people out of employment who are without any income, and yet the railroads ask them to pay more money for their transportation. Manufacturing concerns are shut down in part or in total and are offering the product at reduced prices. They are losing money, and yet are asked to pay the railroads higher prices for their product.

"There is no demand for their stocks and bonds.' The war is partly responsible, but are not the owners of the railroads more responsible? Why would not investors be wary after the almost inconceivable frauds perpetrated on the investing public, as revealed in the exposures of the New Haven, the Rock Island, the St. Louis and San Francisco, and other railroads? I myself am holding some of these gilt-edged bonds (?) which I now find are worthless. Will anybody blame me for looking with suspicion upon all railroad investments? I belong to that class of 'innocent stockholders' whose money was not lost through interference by the government, but because of non-interference. It is these same owners and promoters operating in Wall street who have ordered their passenger departments to go out and hypnotize the people of Indiana into giving them larger profits. Are we not justified, in view of the past history of railroad 'blue sky' financing, in believing that the increased revenue will be immediately capitalized in Wall street by the issue of millions of additional stocks?

"They ask a small advance of half a cent a mile, but this means a 25 per cent increase. Where a passenger now pays \$2 he will pay \$2.50; where he pays \$20 he will pay \$25. Where the railroad company takes in \$2,000,000 it will take in \$2,500,000. The interstate commerce commission, after a full year's investigation with ample power and facilities for examining the books of the railroads, turned down their application for a higher freight rate, but finally after another period, in which pressure

was brought to bear on them, they reluctantly granted a 3 per cent increase. The passenger department asks an increase of 25 per cent. Think of it, you manufacturers, business men and working men, how would you like to receive an increase of 25 per cent. on your product?

"We must not forget that this increase also applies to the interurbans, and that a 10-cent fare will go up to 12½ cents; a 20-cent fare to 25 cents. The interurbans have not asked for the increase, nor is it assumed that they had any intention of doing so, as it is common knowledge among those who know that a 2-cent fare for interurbans in this section affords a vast field for speculation and stock promotion. These interurbans have much to do with reduced receipts of railroads, and up to now have met the railroad rates between points. It is significant that only last week they notified the state public utility commission that, beginning immediately, they would demand 2 cents for every mile traveled. That means that where the railroad, which usually travels in a straight line, covers the distance between two points in 100 miles, the interurban covers it in 105 or 110 miles even, as they take in all the towns along the way. Heretofore the interurban charged \$2, the same as the railroad. Now they expect to get 2 cents for every mile, or \$2.10 or \$2.20. The inference is that the interurbans could hardly sustain their position in expecting an increase in rates, when they were not collecting the full 2-cent rate to which they are at present entitled. A 25 per cent increase in the interurban passenger rates would be like deliberately stuffing some ten or twenty million dollars into the pockets of about a half dozen men owning the interurbans of this state. Can we afford to be so liberal with multi-millionaires, when the average man is asking his wife and children to be more economical, and in thousands of cases, asking them to eat less? And how about the manufacturers, the jobbers and other business institutions, whose salesmen practically live on the railroad trains and who are the main support of the railroads? How do they feel about having the traveling expenses of their salesmen increased 25 per cent?

"This rate increase movement is a Wall street proposition. The first bomb was fired last week in editorials of the leading Wall street papers. The leading editorial in Saturday's New York Commercial, a stock exchange paper, presents the railroad's side of why the legislature of Indiana should grant this increase.

"We will have another exhibition of 'why it pays to own the legislature,' and the same corrupt agents of the public utilities—those half dozen bosses—who put over the public utility law of 1913, the fake 'constitution' bill and the 'twenty-two lost amendments' will no doubt put over this 25 per cent passenger rate increase. Watch the performance.

"In my opinion this advance in rates should be rejected without compromise of any kind. It is unfair, discriminating, and out of tune with the time."

THEO. F. THIEME.

PROVIDING PUBLIC PARKS

In speaking at Baltimore recently, at the opening of McHenry Park, Mr. Bryan suggested a means of adding automatically to the park area of growing cities.

The park is the people's common; it is the joint property of all, and not only furnishes breathing space that the individual could ill-afford to own, but invites a neighborliness and a companionship which contribute to the social life of the community. When, as in the case of Fort McHenry, patriotic recollections entwine about the gathering-place, the value of the ground is many times multiplied.

We have not reached perfection in the development of our communal life; the problem of the city is still unsolved; the last word is yet to be spoken on the subject of joint holdings. The usefulness of these areas set apart for recreation will some day be so highly esteemed that the municipality will, when acre property is converted into lots, appropriate to itself for public parks a part of the unearned increment created by the city's growth. In platting new additions ground is given for streets—why not for parks?

The war may have the unexpected result of transferring the financial centre of the world from London to New York. The chief duty of a financial centre is to supply the world's needs in the way of money, and if the conflict lasts the three years some eminent experts predict, there won't be enough left on the other side of the waters to finance any enterprise of magnitude.