

# The Commoner

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## THE DEMOCRATS SHOULD WIN

A Forecast of the 1916 Election by W. J. Bryan, in New York Independent

No one who has had any considerable experience in politics will risk an opinion on platforms very far in advance of the conventions, especially at a time like this when the situation is undergoing constant change. Who could have foreseen in 1912 the problems with which the administration has had to deal? And who could have predicted a year ago the changes which have taken place in the opinions of men within the last twelve months? The qualifying phrase, "other things being equal," affords some protection, but, as other things are never equal, forecasts are always subject to discount. If the campaign of 1916 could be fought upon the party's remarkable record of achievement, a democratic victory ought to be reasonably sure; but even then, it would be necessary to remember that we won in 1912 not because our party secured a majority of the votes cast, but because the opposition was divided into two almost equal factions.

There are three factors which must be taken into consideration in our calculations respecting the outcome of the presidential election of 1916; first, the impression made by the domestic policies of the administration; second, the impression made by the foreign policies of the administration, and, third, the unity or lack of unity in the republican party.

The democratic party can with confidence submit its claims upon a number of important reforms.

First: The popular election of senators. This is a reform of the first magnitude; a reform in the methods of government which could not have been achieved a few centuries ago without vast bloodshed. The democratic party began the fight for this reform in congress in 1892; it embodied a demand for it in its platform in 1900, 1904, and in 1908, and in 1912 endorsed the amendment which was then before the states for ratification. The republican party never endorsed this reform in any platform prior to its submission, and as late as 1908 overwhelmingly defeated a resolution approving it. The people ought to give the democratic party credit for thus opening the way to other reforms.

Second: The democratic party reformed the rules of congress and gave to the house of representatives real representative government. The people ought to give to the party credit for this reform also.

Third: The democratic party reduced the tariff and put upon the statute books the best revenue law which the country has had in fifty years. The tariff law included an income tax and the democratic party can claim credit not only for the income tax law, but also for the fact that the constitution has been so amended as to authorize an income tax. In 1904 a democratic congress enacted an income tax law, but the law was declared unconstitutional by a di-

vided court, one judge changing his mind between two hearings of the case. The democratic party then proceeded to agitate for an amendment to the constitution, specifically authorizing an income tax, and, while the necessary amendment was submitted under a republican administration, it came as a result of democratic labors and was really submitted for the purpose of preventing an income tax. The republican leaders who assisted in securing the submission of the amendment did it to defeat a bill providing for an income tax and did not expect the amendment to be ratified; they were caught in their own trap.

Fourth: The democratic party is entitled to credit for the new currency law. The republicans had talked currency reforms for twenty years, but did nothing; the democrats went to work and brought about a change which gives us the best currency law we have ever had. It vindicates the right of the government to issue paper money; it destroys the monopoly which the national banks have held of favor from the federal government; it takes from Wall street its controlling influence as a money center and establishes twelve financial centers in different parts of the country, all linked together at Washington and controlled by responsible government officials. The democratic party has a right to expect gratitude from the business world, which has been released from the grip of the money trust, and from the political world, which has been set free from the tyranny of a few money magnates.

Fifth: The democratic party deserves credit for having entered upon a program which contemplates the complete overthrow of the principle of private monopoly; it has already made a start and is building upon the only sure foundation, namely, that a private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable. Its services ought to

be appreciated by the smaller corporations which find an added sense of security in the anti-trust laws already passed.

Sixth: The democratic party deserves credit for the enactment of the long promised measure giving to the Philipinos the promise of independence, thus answering the charges that have been made against our national purpose and restoring to us freedom to proclaim to the world the doctrine that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed and not from superior force.

Seventh: These are some of the substantial results of harmonious co-operation between a democratic President, a democratic senate and a democratic house. During the accomplishment of these domestic reforms the administration has been dealing with diplomatic problems of great delicacy. It deserves credit for having resisted the demands of those who tried to force the government into intervention in Mexico. The policy of "watchful waiting" has saved us untold loss in life and money, and it is not improbable that by refusing to intervene this nation escaped the awful responsibility of starting the European war.

Eighth: The democratic party deserves credit also for the fact that it has not allowed the country to be drawn into the European war, although the course of neutrality has been beset by many difficulties. Our nation has suffered at the hands of both sides, but the injuries were not intended against us, they were incidental to the war which belligerent nations are waging against each other.

Ninth: This administration has very much improved our relations with Latin America. A policy of friendly co-operation has been substituted for dollar diplomacy, the legations in Argentina and Chile have been raised to embassies, the offer of mediation tendered by Brazil, Argentina and Chile was accepted in the dispute with Mexico, important treaties have been negotiated with Nicaragua, Colombia and Hayti, and all South and Central America has been brought to the cordial support of the Monroe Doctrine.

Tenth: The democratic party deserves credit for the negotiation, by this administration, of thirty treaties, on a new plan, providing for investigation by an international tribunal of all disputes of every kind before any declaration of war or commencement of hostilities. These treaties are with nations exercising authority over one billion, three hundred million people, or three-fourths of the inhabitants of the world, and make war between the contracting parties a remote possibility.

On the subject of preparedness the record of the party has not yet been made up. The President has announced a program and made a non-partisan appeal in its behalf. According to

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