

# Progressive Reforms in Indiana

Lebanon, Ind., March 2, 1917.  
To The Commoner,  
Lincoln, Nebraska.

The dry democrats of Indiana are very much elated at this time over the splendid reform measures that have been written into law in the present legislature. They have had much to contend with for the past ten or twelve years but have continued to make progress. Their work has been somewhat retarded by the opposition but the progressive democracy of Indiana knew what they were fighting for and had the courage to continue their battles.

In the last democratic state convention the wet forces of the democratic party were in absolute control. They wrote a platform to their own liking without regard for the great majority of dry democrats in the state of Indiana. The brewery crowd refused to recognize dry democrats for any political preference or position.

One of the leading dry democrats of Indiana, a man with splendid business and political judgment, one who had contributed practically all of the money to defray the expenses of the primary fight in the 1915 legislature which, by the way, was a victory for the dry democracy of Indiana, was denied the right to even have his name go before his district caucus as a candidate for delegate to the St. Louis convention. This democrat was James H. McGill of Valparaiso, a personal friend and strong supporter of W. J. Bryan, and about the time McGill was being skidded in Indiana the brewery crowd was defeating Mr. Bryan in Nebraska for delegateship to the national convention; however, the wet forces reckoned without their hosts both in Nebraska and in Indiana because Nebraska was voted dry in the last election and Indiana has just been given, by the present legislature, statutory prohibition and, strange as it may seem, the two men mentioned, McGill of Indiana and Bryan of Nebraska, have had much to do with winning this great victory in Indiana.

Early in November Mr. Bryan was invited to come to Indiana to assist in organizing a dry democratic movement. He gladly accepted the invitation and on November 18th met with one hundred fifty of the leading dry democrats from all sections of the state at the Claypool hotel in Indianapolis for a conference.

Mr. Bryan's address before that conference was one of the most remarkable of his career. His scathing rebuke of Steven B. Fleming of Ft. Wayne, Indiana's brewery boss, will long be remembered. He pointed out how Fleming had dominated the Indiana democratic state convention in 1916 and how a wet platform was put over in that convention by brewery control and how Fleming insult-

ed the womanhood of Indiana and the nation in the St. Louis convention and was again supported by the wet forces of Texas and New Jersey. In this conference it was unanimously decided to join with Mr. Bryan in his fight for state and nation wide prohibition and plans for a permanent organization were made and James H. McGill of Valparaiso was selected as the chairman of the movement.

Just sixty days later Mr. Bryan again returned to Indiana to address the democratic dry organization. It was found necessary to hold this meeting in Tomlinson hall, and it was certainly gratifying both to Mr. Bryan and the Indiana democrats who were responsible for the organization to find that their number had increased from one hundred fifty men to more than fifteen hundred present at the meeting. Mr. Bryan's address again aroused renewed interest throughout the state for the cause of temperance.

On the forenoon of January 19th, by invitation, Mr. Bryan addressed the Indiana senate, presenting his views on constitutional convention, statutory prohibition, and woman's suffrage, and gave sound reasons why the Indiana legislature should pass all three of these measures. Mr. Bryan was cordially received and it was conceded immediately after his address that the brewery control of Indiana had been broken—in fact, routed—and there was never a question from that moment as to what the results on all three of these great issues would be.

The constitutional convention bill passed the lower house with seventy-eight votes for and twenty votes against. It passed the senate with thirty-four votes for and fourteen against. Prohibition passed the lower house seventy votes for and twenty-eight votes against. It passed the senate with thirty-eight votes for and eleven votes against. Woman suffrage passed the senate thirty-two votes for and sixteen against. It passed the lower house with sixty-seven votes for and twenty-four votes against. It occurs to us that miracles are still being performed.

It is quite true that there were other great influences in the state working for the passage of all of these laws which had much to do with the statutes being written and yet, I think, we are justified in claiming that, without the support of W. J. Bryan, none of these great reforms would have been written into law. It is gratifying indeed to those who have been so closely allied with Mr. Bryan for the past twenty years in all of his great reform measures, both political and otherwise, to give testimony to the wonderful influence he exerted in this recent battle for reform.

It is also with pleasure that we express our appreciation of our own

good citizen, James H. McGill, who has rendered such splendid service and given so liberally of his financial means and contributed so generously with his time during the legislature of 1915 and the session just now closing. The real democracy of Indiana will always be under many obligations to Mr. McGill for the reason that he has made his fight and the sacrifices of money and time without any selfish motives. He has had no desire to hold office and has not expressed a willingness to do so in future. The only favor that he has asked at the hands of his party was the privilege of representing his district in the national convention in 1916, and this privilege was immediately denied him by the wet forces of Tippecanoe and Lake counties. Mr. McGill was informed by the men who have dominated the democratic party in these two counties that he was entirely too dry and for that reason they would not even allow his name to come before the caucus, much less permit him to go as a delegate.

Indiana has been one of the states in which Mr. Bryan has been extremely popular since he first made his appearance in American politics. Indiana has given Mr. Bryan more votes as a presidential candidate than any other candidate making the race for president on the democratic ticket. Mr. Bryan received in 1908 fifty-seven thousand votes more as the candidate for president than Woodrow Wilson received in 1912, and Mr. Wilson's vote of 1916 was six thousand votes short of the Bryan vote in 1908.

The real democracy in Indiana rejoices in the great work that Mr. Bryan is now doing for the splendid cause of temperance. We are glad to note that the liquor control of Nebraska is at an end and we are glad of the conspicuous part that Mr. Bryan played in crushing it. We are extremely glad in Indiana for the great service he has rendered in our state for the cause of temperance and the writer appreciates more than words can express the privilege he enjoyed by being present at the great temperance dinner tendered Mr. Bryan in Washington on December 6, 1916, and I am of the opinion that Mr. Bryan's stand in Washington at that time in favor of temperance had much to do in advancing the temperance legislation in the present congress.

I desire to call the attention of the Indiana readers of The Commoner to the activities of Governor Goodrich in regard to these great reform measures. I am sure it is generally conceded that the governor himself wielded a wonderful influence in behalf of these great reforms. It is also conceded that he accepted with great honor the privilege of signing all three of these great reform measures. Governor Goodrich has taken the side of the common people in many instances during the session of the legislature. His fight for an excise tax law and the placing the burden of taxation on those who are able to bear it is indeed commendable, and yet the general impression is that his efforts will fail because the system or the big business interests in both the democratic and republican party are opposed to the legislation that he has recommended. The governor appreciated very highly the appeal made by Mr. Bryan in his address before the Indiana senate in January in behalf of the governor's economic program, and it is quite regrettable that the democratic members of the senate have not voted for more of the governor's recommendations.

The dry democracy of Indiana is well organized for the selection of delegates to the constitutional convention. They are not going out as partisans to fight for democrats but are going to join with the progressive citizenship of Indiana in selecting men capable of rewriting Indiana's organic law.

The Indiana Forum, the democratic state organ that was started in October, 1915, under the management of Horace H. Herr for the purpose of fighting for constitutional convention, statutory prohibition, and woman's suffrage, has had much to do in advancing the cause of real democracy, and its splendid editor, Mr. Herr, is rendering a great service to the state as an advocate of real democratic reform. All democrats in Indiana who desire party success along right lines should read Mr. Herr's splendid paper.

We are glad in Indiana to give expressions of our appreciation for the great service rendered to our state by the great Commoner and it is gratifying to furnish information to The Commoner readers of the nation of the wonderful work that has recently been accomplished in our state by Mr. Bryan in his fight against the liquor traffic.

JAMES K. RISK.

## LEAGUE APPROVES GOODRICH PROGRAM

[From the Indianapolis News.]

The Wilson and Bryan League of Indiana, by its executive committee, has come out in resolutions approving the efforts of Governor Goodrich to get economic legislation in the abolishment of unnecessary offices and also indorsing the excise tax measure proposed by the governor.

The league goes on record in favor of the part suffrage bill for women, commends the general assembly for the enactment of the state-wide prohibition law and for its action in calling for a constitutional convention. The league opposes repeal of the primary law, but believes, if changes are made, that these should be to extend the principle.

The Wilson and Bryan league, a democratic organization was formed three years ago in a state-wide meeting at Marion, Ind., and since that time it has always put in its best efforts for meritorious legislation and has stood for progressive ideas in party management. The league was organized principally for the purpose of getting a constitutional convention and to bring about the enactment of a state-wide primary law. The state-wide primary law was enacted two years ago and the act calling for a constitutional convention passed on favorably by the present legislature only a few days ago completed the second half of the task outlined by the league.

The league was militant two years ago in bringing about the enactment of the primary law, and it was through the activities of the league that pressure was brought to bear on some of the members of the session two years ago. It was also through the work of the league that the attention of Indiana democrats in Washington was called to the efforts that were being made to defeat the primary measure.

While the league is a democratic organization, its officers say that it believes in promoting good legislation, no matter what the origin of such proposed legislation may be. The indorsement by the league of the efforts of Governor Goodrich, although he is a republican, is not unusual the league officers say.

## For a Dry Nation

The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb.: I am in favor of driving the saloon out of the democratic party and out of the nation and I will endeavor to secure the number of subscribers to The Commoner marked (X) in this coupon. I will remit for these subscriptions as I send them at your clubbing rate of 60c per year. Yours truly,

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