

Mr. Taft on the Primary

The Rocky Mountain News of September 23 gives editorial space to ex-President Taft's views on the primary. The News describes Mr. Taft as "the plain people's advocate" and credits him with presenting upon the whole the average citizen's view of things."

The editor of the News speaks approvingly as if he considered himself an "average citizen." And what has Mr. Taft said to call forth this editorial eulogy? The reader will find the editorial reproduced in full on another page. Attention is called to it for the purpose of pointing out that Mr. Taft's objection to the principle of the primary is not new: he has a constitutional distrust of the people. He did not expect to see the "good men" selected at primaries. According to Mr. Taft—and he is as honestly aristocratic as the democrat is honestly democratic—the best men will not be candidates because they know that "the masses" will not vote for the so-called "best men."

It is not true that the primaries are a failure. We have never had a better lot of men in office than we have today as is proven by the legislation of today. Reforms became possible when the primaries put the selection of representatives in the hands of the people—they were not possible until then. Mr. Taft points to California as proof that the primary is a failure—no, it is proof that the liquor interests tried to control BOTH parties and failed. ONE party ESCAPED. Is Mr. Taft sure that either party would have escaped under the convention system? The saloons used to control the conventions in BOTH parties in nearly all the states. They nominated different men but men equally subservient to the liquor power.

Mr. Taft does not complain of the saloon but he finds fault with the primary which has played a large part in the overthrow of the saloon. Mr. Taft also complains of the expensiveness of the primary to the candidate—that is an evil that can be remedied.

Let the government limit expenditures and issue a bulletin giving space for statement of claims and objections. Let the facts be laid before the people—the people can be trusted to pass upon them.

Mr. Taft is a most lovable man and has added to his admirers by the way he has taken defeats—he has been "a good loser." And he has given splendid support to the administration in the prosecution of the war, but he has a great deal to learn about democracy.

Shall we give thousands of lives and expend billions of dollars to "make democracy safe" in Europe and then retreat toward autocracy in this country? No, the "plain people" have their faces to the front and will march forward toward more and more and more popular government.

W. J. BRYAN.

Such progressive democratic senators as Shafroth, Walsh, Overman, Sheppard, Lewis and Thompson deserve re-election, and such progressive democratic candidates as Osborne, Folk, Ford, Stanley and all other progressive democratic candidates.

A GRATIFYING CHANGE

Mr. James Faulkner, the veteran newspaper correspondent whose facile pen has so long enlivened the political columns of the Cincinnati Enquirer, has discovered a very important change in Ohio. He said in his recent weekly review:

"Indeed, it's a fact that in times like these the souls of men are tried and even though they are as pure as ice and as chaste as snow they do not escape calumny. Nowadays when everybody is nutty upon the subject of prohibition, the saintly are required to be circumspect and to walk in wariness. If one of them should happen to go into a hotel barroom to ask the bartender what was the hour he would be lost forever. And as for getting peppermint for the colic; shucks! nobody would accept that defense on a stack of Bibles."

That is gratifying. The Ohio politicians used to be afraid of offending the brewers—now they are afraid of offending the friends of prohibition. A revolution, indeed.

W. J. BRYAN.

STATES VOTING ON PROHIBITION AT NOVEMBER ELECTIONS, 1918

- OHIO—Constitutional amendment by petition.
- CALIFORNIA—Constitutional amendment by petition.
- UTAH—Constitutional amendment submitted by Legislature.
- NEVADA—By statute effective as soon as result is proclaimed, which result must be proclaimed within thirty days.
- WYOMING—Constitutional amendment submitted by Legislature.
- MINNESOTA—Constitutional amendment submitted by Legislature.
- MISSOURI—Constitutional amendment submitted by Legislature.
- FLORIDA—Constitutional amendment submitted by legislature.

MR. BRYAN'S PROHIBITION SPEECH

The readers will find in this issue of The Commoner Mr. Bryan's speech in support of the prohibition amendments submitted in the several states and in favor of the ratification of the national amendment. The speech delivered at St. Joseph was selected for publication because Missouri is a pivotal state and The Commoner has a large number of readers in that commonwealth. The arguments presented ought to have weight, however, in all states that have not yet ratified, and additional weight in the states that vote on state prohibition. Read the speech and loan it to your neighbor.

NOT NECESSARILY

A German paper tells its readers that the rejection of the recent (Austrian) peace proposals means that "peace is attainable through our victory or at the price of our utter destruction." Not necessarily. Victory is, of course, out of question, but "utter destruction" is not a necessary alternative. There are several things they might try. Why not return the stolen goods, or tip over the throne, or pitch the kaiser and crown prince into the Rhine, or execute the leaders of the military party? These are only a few of the interesting experiments that might be suggested.

PEACE PROSPECTS

Peace prospects grow brighter. The President's last war speech, backed by the superb fighting qualities of our soldiers and the splendid patriotism of the people, has brought the enemy to the point of suing for peace. The terms proposed by the President are so just that friends and foes alike see in them the basis of permanent peace. The people support the President in his demands and share his hopes.

THE KINGS ARE LEARNING.

The press dispatches report that Crown Prince Charles of Roumania has renounced his right to the succession in order to marry the woman he loved. He remarked that thrones are a little unstable now anyhow. The kings are learning, but it ought not to require a shaky throne to convince a man—even a king—that a good wife is better than any throne.

A BREWERY BOUGHT ORGAN

On another page will be found the news report of the exposure of the brewery activity at Washington—the purchase of a paper for Arthur Brisbane. It comes at an opportune time—it increased the majority in favor of war prohibition. This is not the only case. Will the others be exposed?

A COSTLY FIGHT

The brewers who secretly furnished Brisbane the money with which to buy his paper are now employing advertising space to prove that they are not disloyal. It will cost them more to establish their patriotism than it did to fight prohibition.

One explanation of why so many marines are to be found in the front line of the Americans doubtless is that they can be used very handily when the Kaiser wants someone to tell his peace terms to.

Kaiserism in Minnesota

The brewers of Minnesota are spending a large amount of money buying space in the newspapers for the publication of their claims of loyalty—the immediate cause being the exposure of their secret effort to influence public opinion at the national capital, through a paper which they established there, by furnishing the owner \$375,000 with which to buy it.

The Minnesota brewers will have difficulty in separating themselves from the German-American Alliance which did its work largely on money furnished by the brewers. But difficult as that will be, they will find it still more difficult to explain why they began applying the Kaiser's methods to government in Minnesota twenty years ago.

Knowing the criminal character of their business and foreseeing that the people would not tolerate their sordid conspiracy against the homes of Minnesota, the brewers, through their representatives in the legislature secured the submission of an amendment to the constitution which virtually ties the hands of the people, and makes popular government extremely difficult in this state.

The Minnesota constitution formerly provided that an amendment to the constitution could be adopted by a majority of the voters voting on that amendment. That was democratic; it enabled the people to change their constitution at will. The brewery interests, being as autocratic in opinion as the Kaiser himself, and despising popular government as thoroughly as the Kaiser does, secured a change making it necessary for an amendment to have a majority of all the votes cast at the election, but not cast on that particular proposition. It was an ingenious scheme and it has admirably accomplished its purpose.

When a few years ago the initiative and referendum was submitted to the voters, largely through the activity of the laboring and the agricultural interests, the vote on the amendment stood about 170,000 for, and 40,000 against—more than four to one of the votes cast on the amendment but as the total vote cast at the election was a little more than twice, 170,000, the amendment failed because it did not have a majority of all the votes at the election.

The brewers opposed the initiative and referendum because they feared that the people, if given the right to initiate legislation, would submit the liquor question to the people. Thus they took advantage of the amendment on their side more than 130,000 votes cast at the election, but not cast on the amendment, defeated the initiative and referendum.

According to the brewers' idea of government, four to one is not enough to override the brewery autocracy.

In the present campaign the brewers have no hope of defeating the amendment by polling as many votes against it as will be cast for it. Their only hope is by counting on their side the support of all voters who vote at the election, but fail to vote on the prohibition amendment. They can still continue the "open season in Minnesota," and thus pile up fortunes by the ruin of all those whom they can allure into the dram-shop.

Because of the amendment which the brewers secured two decades ago, when the people were not on the watch, the friends of prohibition in Minnesota today must work all the harder to secure a majority of all the votes cast on the amendment.

It may help arouse the people to lay before them this evidence of the brewers' disloyalty to the form of government under which they have made their money. The people who are furnishing millions of men and billions of money to make democracy safe throughout the world, can spare a little time on election day to make democracy safe in the United States, and especially in Minnesota where the brewers have so plainly shown their sympathy with the Kaiser's method of strangling the public conscience.

Now is the time to strike a blow at the kaiserism in Minnesota. Prohibition will be the severest punishment that the people can inflict upon the beer oligarchy that has grown rich manufacturing criminals and paupers, and filling insane hospitals and idiotic asylums with the victims of its poisonous product.