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THE UNION LABOR VOTE AT THE RECENT GENERAL ELECTION

WILLIAM J. BRYAN IN THE COMMONER

Now that the election is over and our party defeated, the explainer is abroad in the land. Some of the explanations are based upon observations in a precinct, some upon the conditions in a state, and others take a national view of the situation. The Commoner has received several letters containing complaints that "the labor vote was not cast for the democratic ticket" and that "the labor planks alienated more votes than they won."

Until the returns are all in and tabulated it is impossible to make any intelligent estimate as to the relative influence exerted by the various causes which contributed to the party's defeat, and it is not fair to announce a conclusion until a substantial foundation can be laid for such conclusion. While an adverse vote in a city containing a large labor element might be accepted as prima facie evidence that the laboring man did not support the ticket, a closer inspection of the returns might show that the labor vote was actually cast for the ticket, but that losses in other parts of the city overcame the gain.

Mr. Gompers and those closely associated with him as labor leaders must be credited with sincere, earnest and effective support of the democratic ticket. Their arguments may not have convinced as large a percentage of the vote of organized labor as was expected—upon this subject the statistics are not yet available—but it must be remembered that under present conditions it is necessary to do more than convince. A great many people were convinced that the democratic position was the correct one, and yet were afraid to follow their convictions. The republican leaders confessed this themselves when they began to appeal to the fears of the employes. Many cases have been brought to our attention where employers warned their employes not to vote the democratic ticket under threat of reduction in wages. At Newark, Ohio, Mr. Bryan called attention to such speeches made by representatives of the New York Central Railroad. There were cases where the support of the ticket in labor precincts perceptibly diminished when these threats were applied. It is easy enough to say that a laboring man ought to stand by his convictions and vote as he believes, regardless of threats, and yet human nature must always be considered in passing judgment upon human beings.

After forty-eight years of almost continuous republican rule, the wage-earners are living so near to the hunger line that a few weeks' loss of employment brings the family face to face with want. The election comes in November—just at the beginning of winter, with fuel to buy, house rent to pay and warmer clothes to provide for the children. The laboring man is under a constant duress. A laboring man who has but little, if anything, laid up for the future, must have a strong heart to defy the expressed wish of his employer and cast his ballot for something which he believes to be permanently good, at the risk of passing through a period of idleness before that good can be secured.

Four months elapse between the election and the inauguration—four cold months. Be not too harsh in judging the man who bends to the lash and surrenders his citizenship when his conscience tells him that he should resist injustice and vote for better conditions. Be not too harsh in judgment—even in the holiest wars there are deserters; even when free government is at stake, many have turned back rather than endure the hardships and privations called for by the struggle. Let us rather be thankful that there were as many heroes among the laboring men as there were—even if there were not enough.

It must be remembered, too, that not all labor is organized, and the leaders of organized labor are not in touch with unorganized labor. On the contrary, the enemies of labor lost no opportunity to array the unorganized laboring men against the democratic party. There ought to be no feeling of antagonism between organized and unorganized labor for every advantage secured by organization for those who are members of the organization is soon enjoyed by those who are not members. When wages are raised or conditions improved, all labor ultimately enjoys the gain, although the burdens of securing the improvement falls upon the members of the organization.

It is also true—let it be admitted with a blush—that there are those so prejudiced against laboring men as to be alienated from the democratic party by the very fact that our platform contained labor planks.

Some of the officials of the Manufacturers' Association, of which Mr. Van Cleave is president, boldly appealed to this prejudice and attempted to make the labor question paramount in the minds of all those who look upon the laboring man as a sort of dangerous creature who, if not surrounded by actual bars, ought to be under constant surveillance.

Then, too, it must not be overlooked that a large percentage of the population seems to be entirely indifferent to the laboring man's condition and to his demand for remedial legislation.

The merchants, while they may not sympathize with the hostile attitude of some of the large employers, are not brought into sympathetic connection with the employes engaged in wealth production.

The clerks in the stores do not count themselves in the same class with the laboring men; they do not regard their interests as identified with those of the toilers.

The farm laborers also regard themselves as in a different class and they labor under conditions quite dissimilar from those which surround the factory worker or the miner. The farm laborer is employed by an individual rather than by a corporation. His personal acquaintance with his employer protects him from the injustice to which the employe of the corporation is subjected.

The farmers do not as a rule understand the labor situation. Their business does not bring them into contact with the industrial life of the city, and the relations between themselves and their employes, instead of informing them on industrial conditions, is apt to give them a wrong impression as to the city laborer.

Now, what is our party to do? Admitting that the laboring men are not as free as they should be to vote their sentiments; admitting that unorganized labor does not feel the sympathy that it should feel for organized labor; admitting that some of the larger corporate employers are distinctly hostile to labor as a class; and

admitting that merchants, clerks, farm laborers and farmers do not thoroughly understand the legislative needs of the industrial laborers, what is the democratic party to do? Should it follow the example of the republican party and form an alliance with the forces that seem to control politics? Should it cater to the corporate employers; should it encourage the indifferent by misrepresenting the attitude and the plea of the laboring men? The democratic party is a permanent party and an universal party. While free government exists and wherever it exists, there must be a democratic party—a party in sympathy with the common people and devoted to the welfare of the common people. If the party which calls itself the democratic party fails to meet the requirements of the situation,

some other party will step in and become the champion of the masses. It is impossible for any party to become a successful rival with the republican party for plutocratic support. If the democratic party were to adopt a platform entirely satisfactory to the beneficiaries of privilege and favoritism, it would simply commit suicide, for its record and the record of its leaders would make it impossible for the democratic party to secure any considerable portion of the plutocratic vote, while an abandoning of the democratic position would alienate the rank and file of the party.

The hope of our party, therefore, lies not in apostasy to democratic truth; not in the surrender of ideals; not in the desertion of the cause of the people, but in education.

The laboring men should be strengthened to resist the temptation which is presented every four years when they are asked to accept the promise of temporary employment in exchange for the hope of better things. It is an old saying that "no one need be a slave who has learned how to die;" bondage is only possible because men prefer bondage to death. With equal truth it may be said that no one need suffer injustice in a free country who is willing to risk his all in the effort to secure justice.

Unorganized labor should be taught that its interests are indissolubly linked with the interests of those, who through organization, are seeking to improve the condition of all who toil. The employer should be taught that industrial peace and harmonious co-operation between labor and capital are possible only upon a basis of justice and that it is short-sighted to deny to the laboring man legal protection in the enjoyment of his rights. It is time that the large corporate employers were forced to abandon the cant and hypocrisy in which they indulge when they express solicitude about the protection of non-union men from the union men. They are no more interested in non-union labor than they are in union labor. They used unorganized labor to defeat the demands of organized labor, but they are just as ready to oppress the unorganized working men as they are to oppress those who are organized. They arrogate to themselves the championship of law and order, and yet, they know that order can better be observed by the enactment of remedial legislation than by the continuation of abuses that have grown up under the law or because of the absence of needed law.

The democratic platform contained four demands for legislation asked for by the laboring men. First, the creation of a department of labor with a cabinet officer representing the wage-earners. Is this revolutionary? We have a department of Commerce and Labor now, but commerce overshadows labor, and this department, without giving to labor the representation it deserves, is used as an answer to the laboring man's demand. Who would say that it would be dangerous to the country, or that it would work an injustice to any class to give to the toilers a spokesman in the president's council? And yet this is one of the labor planks of our platform which was opposed by the large employers.

Our platform demands an amendment of the anti-trust law excluding the labor organizations from the operation of that law. Is this revolutionary? It is only five years ago that this very demand was endorsed by a republican house of representatives in the federal congress. When the Littlefield anti-trust bill was before the house, the democrats introduced an amendment exempting labor organizations from the operation of the law, and the amendment was adopted by a vote of two hundred sixty to eight. Must our party be assailed now for urging an amendment which was so recently endorsed by republican congressmen on a roll-call?

Another plank of our platform demands a limitation of the writ of injunction so that the writ will not be issued in a labor dispute unless the conditions are such as to justify an injunction even if there were no labor dispute. Is this revolutionary? Should a labor dispute be in itself a cause for the issuance of a writ of injunction. Should a court of equity be permitted to issue an injunction to prevent a labor dispute or to end one already begun, when no injury is threatened to life or to property? That plank in our platform cannot be misunderstood, and yet the republican leaders constantly endeavored to misrepresent it because they were not able to meet the proposition which the platform itself presented.

And what of the fourth proposition, namely, the demand for a trial by jury in cases of indirect contempt? Is that revolutionary? Our platform expressly and specifically endorsed a measure that passed a republican senate twelve years ago by a vote so overwhelming that no roll-call was demanded. In fact, it is stated by a senator who voted for the bill and who was instrumental in securing its passage, that only one vote was cast against it. Are we to be condemned for endorsing a proposition so sound and elementary that twelve years ago republican senators dared not present an argument against it?

And yet these are the planks of our platform that were made the basis of an appeal to the prejudices of large employers and a basis of misrepresentation to those not thoroughly informed as to labor's needs.

The democratic party seeks to build society upon an enduring basis; it seeks to promote peace and good will among those who must necessarily co-operate in the production of the nation's wealth. Our party's platform, and our party's purpose are entirely in harmony with the spirit of the report of the President's Board of Arbitration in the anthracite coal strike, as set forth in the language of Bishop Spaulding, one of the commission:

"All through their investigations and deliberations the conviction has grown upon them that if they could evoke and confirm a more genuine spirit of good will—a more conciliatory disposition in the operators and their employes in their relations toward one another—they would do a better and more lasting work than any which mere rulings, however wise or just, may accomplish. Fairness, forbearance, and good will are the prerequisites of peace and harmonious co-operation in all the social and economic relations of men. The interests of employers and employes are reciprocal. The success of industrial processes is the result of their co-operation, and their attitude toward one another, therefore, should be that of friends."
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Home Industries Worth Fostering

A Series of Articles Relating to Lincoln Business Enterprises that Should Command Lincoln Support

THE CITIZENS RAILWAY COMPANY.

The average American municipality is wonderfully patient—sometimes to the point of asininity. And Lincoln was for many years no exception to the rule. But Lincoln finally rebelled. For years it submitted, with many a murmur and many a useless protest, to a street car service that was abominable in the extreme. The powers that managed the street railway acted on the presumption that it had a "lead pipe cinch" and did not have to spend any of its receipts in extensions or betterments. As a result the growth of the city was retarded and the recording angel kept working overtime keeping the accounts of citizens who said things and thought things hardly suitable for publication in a great religious journal like *The Wageworker*.

Finally, when forbearance had ceased to be a virtue, some longheaded and enterprising men got together and organized the Citizens Railway company. This company is essentially a "home institution," because its stockholders are, with one or two exceptions, Lincoln business men, and the one or two exceptions noted own so little stock that they do not, fortunately, count for much in the management of the company's affairs.

There was very little of flourishing of trumpets about the organization of this company. The organizers were business men who have the habit of saying little and doing a whole lot. The old street railway company's managers living in New York, laughed the new company to scorn. "We've got the franchise, and we've got the streets; what can a new company do?" they asked.

But the new company did not waste any time in explanations. It secured a franchise long dormant and proceeded to build its lines. It went into territory long neglected by the old company, and it built "for keeps." It took the people into its confidence, and it also shared the proceeds of its business with the people who own the streets and let the company use them. The city council acted promptly, because the councilmen knew the temper of a long suffering public, and the new company was given every reasonable thing it asked. Those parts of the city that had been longest neglected were the first taken care of. Then the new company went gunning for business in what might properly be called competitive territory. So successful has been its management, and so adequate its service, that the Citizens Railway Company is now operating upwards of twelve miles, and is building additional miles all the time.

The latest line to be opened by the Citizens Railway Company is the College View line. The first car was run over the new line on Friday, November 13, the day and date showing that the company pays no attention to ancient superstitions, but goes right ahead doing business. This line operates on South Twelfth street to South street, east on South street to Twenty-seventh street, and thence in a southeasterly direction to College View, going across the crest of the divide without either cut or fill worthy of mention, and opening up a new residence section that will in a short time be the pride of Lincoln.

Franchise and right of way have been secured for a line through University Place to Havelock, and work on this extension is being pushed with all possible speed. It appears that this enterprising company is determined to make Lincoln the hub of a lot of radiating spokes of interurban rails. The New College View line is shorter by a mile and a half from Twelfth and O to College View than the Traction company line.

The equipment of the Citizens Railway company is of the latest model and make. Everything that will add to the comfort and convenience of its patrons is given especial attention by the management. In brief, the managers, contrary to custom, are acting on the presumption that they owe something to the public; that they are in duty

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