

The Commoner.

tion of a monopoly within its borders, and it can prohibit, or should be able to, a monopoly organized outside from doing business within the state, but this power is not sufficient. If a trust has absolute control of the production of the necessaries of life, a law preventing the monopoly from doing business within a given state might bring great hardship upon the people by depriving them of the article controlled by the trust. Under the constitution congress has power to regulate interstate commerce, and it does not tend towards centralization for congress to exercise that power in behalf of the people. The law proposed would not take from the state any right that it now has; it would not encroach upon the domain of the state, it would simply provide that the state, while at liberty to create corporations for domestic purposes, could not create corporations to prey upon the people of other states. No state ought to permit a corporation to water its stock, but if it does what harm can come from requiring such corporations to confine their business to the state of their origin? If the people of a state are willing to create a corporation and give it control of an industry in the state, that is a matter for the people of that state, but when that corporation attempts to secure a monopoly of the industries of other states, then the people of other states become interested parties and, as they cannot effectively act singly, they must act together through the power conferred upon congress by the constitution. Congress cannot refuse to regulate interstate railroad rates on the ground that the federal government would be exercising too much power, neither can congress refuse to protect the people against trusts on the ground that the federal government will be strengthened. The federal government was organized to give to the people of the nation that protection which must be secured by the joint action of the people of the several states, and such joint action is imperatively demanded at this time.

Mr. Post assumes that the only anti-trust legislation necessary is to withdraw all special privileges granted by law.

Every trust or monopoly rests upon a corporation, and the entire abolition of corporations would destroy trusts, but Mr. Bryan has not believed it necessary to apply so radical a remedy. He has sought to eliminate the evils of corporations without destroying their advantages. He has sought to draw the line at the point where they become injurious.

Mr. Post asserts that a monopoly would be impossible without the possession of "some legal advantage—transportation, tariff, location, patents or sources of natural supply." It has been pointed out in a previous editorial that a corporation which can export its products can have a monopoly, even under free trade. It is also true that a monopoly can exist without any reliance upon discriminating freight rates. Tariffs have benefitted monopolies, and railroad discriminations have aided them, but a monopoly could exist without either. Patents have been the foundation of monopoly, but such a monopoly is only temporary, and the benefits of such a monopoly have

been given to the owner of the patent as a reward for his genius. It would be possible for a monopoly to exist without owning any of the "sources of natural supply." We have for instance, woollen mills enough in the country now to manufacture all the woollen goods needed by our people. Let us suppose that they join together under one corporation. Being the only purchaser of wool that corporation could fix the price of wool; it could fix the price of the manufactured article, and unless organized labor could protect itself against such a corporation, it could fix the price of labor. It would be very difficult if not impossible, for a corporation having a less capital to compete with it, for it would be possible for the monopoly to reduce prices in the neighborhood of the competing factory and, by keeping up prices elsewhere, bankrupt its small rival without serious loss to itself. This has been the experience of many small factories. Why permit the creation or the continuance of a monopoly? Why allow a corporation to engage in inter-state commerce for such a purpose? The private monopoly is to the industries of a nation what the highwayman is to an honest citizen; the industrial life of the nation needs protection from the monopoly as much as human life needs protection from the highwayman.

Mr. Post suggests no remedy for the trusts, that is, no specific remedy, he says: "Take away their under-lying privileges of transportation, patents and land, and competition, actual or possible, would make quick work of their oppressive power. That is the key to the trust question."

Is it possible that Mr. Post believes that private ownership in land is the foundation of trusts? If so, must we calmly submit to monopolies until the people are willing to accept Mr. Post's views on the land question? Is it not the part of wisdom to apply such remedies as are within our reach? There are many very earnest and very intelligent men who believe that the private ownership of lands is the greatest of all evils; they believe that the ultimate solution of the social problem is to be found in public ownership of land, but will they refuse to assist in securing other methods of relief until they can try their own method? Certainly not. The single taxers, as the followers of Henry George call themselves, have helped the democratic party in recent campaigns, (and no one was more active than Mr. Post) not because the democratic party endorsed the single tax idea, but because the single taxers were willing to put the government in the hands of those who believe in Jeffersonian principles, and permit a trial of the remedies which the democratic party proposed.

Speaking of competition, it is only fair to say that competition, like any other useful thing, may be carried to excess or, to speak more correctly, there can be fair competition only where there is measurable equality between competitors. Competition between the standard oil company or the steel trust and an ordinary individual is as one-sided as a combat between two individuals, one armed with bow and arrow and the other with a repeating

rifle. Society may protect the principle of competition and yet place limits upon it, just as society permits the collection of interest and yet limits the rate. Fire is necessary to human life, and yet fire uncontrolled becomes a destructive force; water is required for man's existence and yet the devastating flood may do immeasurable damage; the air which we breathe is indispensable, and yet when that air is put into violent motion it becomes the cyclone or the tornado. Competition is necessary; it is the law of trade; it is a controlling force in human affairs, and yet it may become destructive. If competition leads parents to put their children into factories at an early age, we pass laws fixing the age at which the children may be employed; if competition unreasonably prolongs the day's work we fix maximum limits, and so if competition with the man-made giant called a corporation becomes destructive of the rights and interests of the God-made man we can place restrictions upon the corporation, prescribe conditions upon which it can engage in inter-state commerce, and if necessary arbitrarily fix the amount of capital that may be associated together in one corporation, say what proportion of the total product one corporation may control, or prohibit entirely the co-operation of distinct and separate corporations. All the corporations ask is to be let alone but the people need relief now, and we should secure such relief as is possible now. If, in the years to come, some better remedy is found it will be welcomed when it arrives, but those who object to the remedy suggested in the Kansas City platform do not propose any remedy which is complete or which has a prospect of speedy trial.

A Criticism Answered.

My attention has been called to a communication published in the Washington Post of July 15, from which the following is an extract:

"It is a well-known fact, and susceptible of ample proof, that Mr. Bryan, while conducting his campaign for election to the office of chief magistrate of this great republic, required his admiring friends at each point where he addressed them throughout the western states to hand up to him or his financial representatives an envelope containing money in proportion to the size of the town.

"In one small town in Indiana, not very far from Brazil, the democrats of the region had expended the full amount of the collection upon the grandstand from which Mr. Bryan was expected to speak. It was decorated and presented a very bright appearance. Upon the arrival of Mr. Bryan's train and the meeting by him of the committee of beaming admirers, Mr. Bryan asked if any person had handed up the envelope, and upon being informed that there had been none 'handed up,' he declined to leave the train, and remarked that he would say from the car platform that which he intended to utter, and declined to go to the near-by platform. This decision was made because the quantum sufficient was not forthcoming. This was commercialism with a vengeance. If men—democrats—did not pay him for appealing to them for their votes for him, he cared not to leave his sumptuous railway train."

Similar charges have appeared from time to time during the last five years and I have answered them. Every person has had an opportunity to know of the falsity of these charges, but as the Washington Post is usually careful in its statements I make this denial for its benefit. I never received any compensation of any kind from the National Committee, from any State Committee, County Committee,