

quences that our party rightfully declared it to be the paramount issue. Without abandoning its position on the tariff question or on the money question it again espoused the people's side of a great issue. That it did not win that year was due to a conjunction of causes any one of which would have been insufficient to have accomplished defeat. The administration having carried on a brief and successful war fell heir to the enthusiasm which usually attends a victorious conflict; an unexpected increase in the supply of new gold and an unexpected influx of European gold, due to large crops here and a famine abroad, increased prices, relieved the stress of hard times and gave to the people the benefits that always flow from a growing volume of money. While the advantages which followed a larger volume of money vindicated the principle contended for by bimetalists they were appropriated by the party in power, and those who were influenced by conditions, without attempting to realize the conditions, gave the republican party credit for an increasing prosperity.

The protected manufacturers, of course, stood by the administration which had given them a Dingley law. Trust promoters and trust magnates, recognizing in the democratic party an inveterate foe, and numbering among their stockholders many of the most influential republicans, threw all their strength to the republican party, and by their support purchased immunity from punishment. The republicans were greatly aided by another influence, namely, the influence of the financiers who not yet having completed their schemes were willing to risk trusts, imperialism or anything else rather than forego the advantage which they expected from a gold standard and a bank currency. In spite of all these obstacles the campaign of 1900 only showed a net change of 150,000 votes in favor of the republicans out of a total vote of over thirteen millions. And what is the situation today? Since the election of 1900, imperialism is more openly avowed and imperialistic methods more boldly entered upon because the administration can point to that election as an apparent indorsement, although the party leaders at that time vehemently denied imperialistic intent. Those who expect to make a profit out of a colonial system favor it on the ground that it will pay; those who think that it opens up the Philippines to proselyting insist that it is providential, while those who are simply seeking some reason for supporting their party's policy fall back upon the doctrine that circumstances got us into the trouble and that we must stay in until circumstances get us out.

Since the election of 1900 the trusts have grown and flourished under the republican administration, as might have been expected. Almost two years have elapsed since the last presidential election, and no legislative attempt has been made to interfere with them, and the executive efforts, instead of being directed toward the enforcement of criminal statutes, are confined to the equity side of the court and these efforts have not in the least retarded the formation of new combines.

Since the election the financiers are seeking to carry their advantage a little farther and are planning an asset currency, a system of branch banks and the redemption of the silver dollar. Recognizing the enormous iniquity of the bill they did not dare to press it during the campaign, but having secured a favorable report in the house, postponed its consideration until December.

Since the election a republican congress has turned a deaf ear to the laborer's cry for relief from government by injunction and a republican senate has refused to grant the demand of the people for the election of United States senators by a direct vote.

And all the while an exorbitant tariff is working injustice to the consumers and enabling the

beneficiaries of protection to sell at home at a high price and compete in foreign markets at a lower price.

While the exploiters have been pressing their advantages at home and abroad the interests of the producers of wealth on the farm, in the factory and in the mines have been utterly ignored and the small business man has been left to such precarious existence as the trusts permit him to enjoy.

How can the opponents of aristocracy and plutocracy be united for a successful attack upon entrenched privilege? Not by making peace with the enemy; not by imitating their works, their methods or their phraseology, but by an honest straightforward appeal to the American people upon a platform that can be understood and with an organization that can be trusted. Already many of the republicans are wavering, but they can never be won to the democratic party as long as they can say that our party is as bad as theirs. Not by surrender, not by compromise, not by equivocation, not by ambiguity, not by vacillation, is the victory to be won, but by bold, constant, persistent, steadfast defense of the interests of the people at all times under all circumstances and on all questions. To lose faith in the expediency of such a course is to lose faith in the omnipotence of truth. Upon this basis we can not only harmonize all who are democratic in sentiment and sympathy, but we can draw to our party those of the opposition who cherish democratic ideals, but have been misled by republican arguments.

In the accomplishment of this work the New England Democratic League can be, and I doubt not will be, a powerful factor.



Municipal Ownership in Ohio.

A special session of the Ohio legislature will meet soon to pass upon a municipal code for the government of cities and villages. This special session is made necessary by a recent opinion of the supreme court which holds unconstitutional a law passed on this subject by a former legislature. According to the decision of the court it will be necessary for the legislature to provide charters for cities and villages, no other divisions being allowed. The advocates of municipal reform will have a splendid opportunity to present their views upon this growing subject of public interest, and the people of Ohio are fortunate in having a strong and intelligent man like Mayor Johnson of Cleveland to lead their fight. As municipal government is a question which must be considered in all the states, and as the principles governing it are the same everywhere, The Commoner takes advantage of this opportunity to present a general view of the subject. In framing a charter for cities or villages the first thing to be borne in mind is the doctrine of local self-government. Every community should be permitted to control its own affairs. The people of a city know better what they need than outsiders can possibly know, and they will take more interest in their own affairs than outsiders can possibly take.

If mistakes are made by those who control from the outside they are not so apt to be remedied, because those who make the mistakes do not suffer from them. But where there is local self-government the people recognize that the mistakes made are their mistakes and that they can only have good government by watching their government.

In some of the states there has been a tendency to take authority from the municipality and deposit it with the governor of the state. This has been especially true of the police power and the change has been made on the theory that the state government can give a city a better police service than the people can secure for themselves through their local government. The fact

is, however, that the theory is only applied where the state government differs in politics from the city government. It then gives to the dominant party in the state an excuse for assuming control of a city which would, if left to itself, be under the control of another political party. That partisanship rather than principle controls in such matters is evident from the fact that prominent partisan politicians have been on both sides of the question, the side taken depending upon the partisan advantage to be obtained. It is to be hoped that the legislature of Ohio will recognize not only the right of the people of a city to self-government, but also the educational value of self-government. In proportion as people are compelled to look after their own government they will acquaint themselves with government and constantly grow in capacity for self-government.

The legislature of Ohio should also recognize the growth of sentiment in favor of the municipal ownership of municipal franchises. The statistics show a constant and rapid growth in the direction of municipal ownership. An ever increasing number of cities own and operate their water plants, and while a less proportion own and operate their lighting plants the trend is decidedly toward municipal ownership. There is no reason why a city should allow private corporations to control any municipal franchise. It is impossible to have competition between water plants, lighting plants, heating plants, telephone plants, or street car lines. It would be a great inconvenience to the city to have its streets torn up for pipes or filled up with wires or tracks of competing companies, and then, too, as a matter of economy the public should not be taxed to pay dividends on a large number of plants. Where there can be no competition there must be monopoly, and where there must be monopoly it must be a government monopoly and not a private one. The friends of municipal reform in the Ohio legislature can afford to plant themselves firmly upon the Kansas City platform doctrine that private monopolies are indefensible and intolerable. The new charter should contain provisions that will make it possible for every city and village to carry municipal ownership just as far as the people desire to carry it. This is a matter which can safely be left with the people themselves, and if the charter provides a method for taking the sense of the people on these questions municipal ownership will make rapid progress in the Buckeye State.

Franchises would seldom be granted to private corporations but for the profit that the members of the city council find in giving away that which does not belong to them and which the people themselves would never give away if they had any voice in the matter. Where the people think best to grant franchises to municipal corporations the grant should be for a short term with a provision that the property of the corporation can be taken by the public upon the payment of a reasonable compensation, and that compensation should be measured by the value of the physical property of the corporation. The city council not be compelled to buy back at a high price a franchise benevolently given to a private corporation. The corruption that has so often disgraced city government comes almost entirely from the turning over to private corporations the business which the city itself should attend to.

In some states the mayor has been given large powers in the appointment of municipal officers, the mayor thus becoming responsible for the carrying out of a definite policy. Where the mayor is elected by the people and holds office for a short time this plan is entirely in harmony with the theory of self-government, and has been found to work well in practice. But whether more or less power is placed in the hands of the mayor is not so important as that the people of a city shall be permitted to control their own affairs and that they shall have the right to decide for themselves whether they will do their own municipal work or grant franchises to private corporations.