

the question of a bank issue plainly before the country.

The president thinks that "some additional legislation is desirable" and we can obtain an idea of the magnitude of the word "some" when we read the next sentence and find that a "mere outline of any plan sufficiently comprehensive to meet these requirements would transgress the appropriate limits of this communication."

He advises against a reduction of the tariff, and yet he could bring an elaborate discussion of the subject "within the appropriate limits of this communication," but space forbids an elaboration of the currency scheme which he indorses. Ample space for a tariff, but no space for the statement of a definite financial plank. Why? Those who are at all conversant with the history of financial legislation can easily answer the question. Because the public is never consulted in advance about financial legislation however important.

Backed by a blanket indorsement from the administration the financiers may now proceed to force through congress any measure which they desire, and which they think they can compel the people to submit to.

Owing to the president's speeches on the trust question that part of the message will probably be considered the most important by the public generally.

*Trust Question Handled With Soft Gloves* That portion of the message is given in full in order that the readers of The Commoner may

see how cautiously and conservatively the president feels his way on that subject. More space is given to the defense of those who have won great fortunes in the industrial development of the country than to the condemnation of those who have accumulated money by means of government favoritism or in violation of the rights of others. As no one is attempting to interfere with honestly acquired wealth the president need not have wasted time in praise and justification of the holders of such wealth. He says that the trust "evils are the outgrowth, not of misery or decadence, but of prosperity—of the progress of our gigantic industrial development. This industrial development," he adds, "must not be checked, but side by side with it should go such progressive regulation as will diminish the evils."

Again in speaking of the caution to be observed he says: "In curbing and regulating the combinations of capital which are or

*Makes Plea For "Good Trusts"* may become injurious to the public we must be careful not to stop the great enterprises which have legitimately reduced the cost of production, not to abandon the place which our country has won in the leadership of the international industrial world, not to strike down wealth with the result of closing factories and mines, or turning the wage-worker idle in the streets and leaving the farmer without a market for what he grows."

After scattering numerous "Keep off the good trusts" signs along the narrow anti-trust road which he is following, he reaches the conclusion that "monopolies, unjust discriminations, which prevent or cripple competition, fraudulent over-capitalization, and other evils in trust organizations and practices which injuriously affect interstate trade can be prevented under the power of congress to 'regulate commerce with foreign nations and among the several states' through regulations and requirements operating directly upon such commerce, the instrumentalities thereof, and those engaged therein." This is an indictment of the republican party for its failure to legislate for the past six years.

It is a plain admission that the democrats were right when, two years ago, they insisted that an amendment to the constitu-

*A Plain Admission Made* tion was not necessary to the enactment of efficient anti-trust legislation. It is also a confession that the constitutional amendment which he spoke of in his speeches last

summer is not absolutely essential to progress in the direction of abolishing private monopolies. It will be remembered that the democrats after opposing the constitutional amendment proposed by the republicans in 1900 insisted on immediate legislation and helped the republicans to pass a bill which, while not sufficiently drastic, was a step in the right direction. It will also be remembered that this bill died in the senate after the election of 1900, and was not even passed through the house at the first session of the present congress. For two years the republican speakers have hidden behind this attempt at a constitutional amendment, and have charged the democrats with obstructing anti-trust legislation. Now the president announces an opinion in perfect harmony with the democratic contention, and the democrats will be more than willing to join in an effort to secure legislation within the scope of the constitution. Should the supreme court nullify such legislation by judicial construction the president will find the democrats willing, to join with him in urging a constitutional amendment which will give congress plenary power without depriving the states of the power which they now have.

The significant and disappointing feature of this part of the message is that, except a brief reference to publicity, he makes no definite suggestion; he points out no specific method; he outlines no positive plan. He leaves the subject just where his predecessors have left it. His condemnation of the trusts is no more emphatic than Mr. Cleveland's, and yet Mr. Cleveland's administration passed without any serious attempt to protect the people. The president's hatred of the trusts, to judge from his language, is no more intense than the hatred expressed by President McKinley in his messages, and yet President McKinley allowed more than four years to pass without any active effort to interfere with the operations of the trusts. If President Roosevelt is going to do anything on the trust question it is time to start. His enthusiastic supporters have pointed to his speeches as evidence that he was going to strike private monopolies in a vital part, but he must know that such an evil cannot be killed by words alone. If he knows of a plan that will, in his judgment, be effective he owes it to congress to present it. If he does not know of any plan it is hardly fair for him to expect members of congress to be better informed than himself.

*Significant and Disappointing* He gives no rallying cry to the people, and says nothing that will alarm the trusts. He makes no reference to the criminal section of the Sherman law, a section which he neglects to enforce.

*Says Nothing to Alarm The Trusts* He grossly exaggerates the work of the department of justice, when he says that it has done "very much in securing the enforcement of the anti-trust law." It could not well have done less. He suggests that it could have done "more" if a special appropriation were made for the purpose. By all means, let the special appropriation be made, and while it is being made let the courts be instructed to give immediate attention to suits brought by the government for the violation of the anti-trust law. Certainly an offence by a corporation against an entire country should be given preference over suits of minor importance.

The Commoner has already pointed out a plan—the Kansas City platform plan—for destroying every private monopoly. It has given numerous reasons in defense of this plan, and it stands ready to commend any effort which Mr. Roosevelt or a republican congress will make toward the destruction of the trusts, but the editor of The Commoner cannot see in the president's message any evidence that he intends to strike a real blow at the prin-

*No Real Blow Struck at Private Monopoly* ciples of private monopoly. On the contrary, the message furnishes proof that the president either really does not desire to do more than restrain the trusts from extreme abuses, or, that, if he believes all private monopolies bad, he is entirely at sea in regard to a remedy. His message, taken as a whole, would indicate that he regards private monopolies as a necessary part of our industrial development; that he sees no real harm in the control of an industry by one corporation, but that he thinks a monopoly may develop offensive traits and that attention ought to be given to these offensive traits. His solicitude for the managers of great enterprises; his fear lest legitimate business may be interfered with; his repeated cautions against hasty action; his elaboration of the difficulties in the way of wise action—all these indicate that he is more concerned lest the people may hurt the trusts than he is lest the trusts may hurt the people.

His attitude recalls the story of the mother who, in order to impress upon her son the sufferings of the Christian martyrs, called his attention to a picture in which the Christians were being devoured by lions in the arena. The boy looked at the scene for a while and then, his face lighting up as he thought he caught the lesson taught by the picture, he said to his mother, pointing to one lonesome beast: "There is one poor little lion that isn't getting a bit."

The president seems more concerned lest some of the lions may not get their share than he is to prevent any of the lions from tasting human blood.

*His Concern Only For the Trusts* In his treatment of the labor question the president expresses himself strongly on the side of the wage-earner, and yet he is unfortunate in his attempt to identify the labor organizations with capitalistic combines. He enters into an elaborate argument to show that there is no difference between a combination of capital and a combination of labor, and he thus injures labor. In his justification of the labor organization he includes a justification of the capitalistic organization, just as in his suggestion that the capitalistic combine may do wrong he includes the labor organization.

There is a wide distinction between the purpose, the operation and the effect of the capitalistic combine on the one side and the labor organization on the other. The former gives emphasis to what are called property rights, the latter to what are described as human rights; the former deals with inanimate coin, the latter with living souls. In the former the magnate at the head of the trusts commands cold, hard cash; the labor leader appeals to the conscience and intelligence of the members of the order. The capitalist can do what he pleases with his money; the members of a labor organization can do what they please with their officers. The industrial monopoly attempts to victimize society for an enormous pecuniary reward, the members of the labor organization are attempting to secure wages, hours and conditions that have the approval of the public.

*Labor Unions and Capitalistic Combines* If the president will compare the influence of the two organizations upon society and note the difference between the salaries paid to trust magnates and the salaries paid to officers of labor organizations, he will not class the two organizations together as he does in his message. He fails to advocate arbitration or a law abolishing government by injunction, both of which laboring men desire.

After pointing out those parts of the message which seem weak when viewed from a democratic standpoint it is gratifying to be able to indorse the president's failure to commend the ship subsidy bill. (Possibly the president would have spoken out against the ship subsidy instead of ignoring the

*He is Silent on the Ship Subsidy*