

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

Vol. 3. No. 21.

Lincoln, Nebraska, June 12, 1903.

Whole No. 125.

## THE POSTOFFICE SCANDAL

The evidence shows unexpected rascality and corruption in the postoffice department. The evidence collected against Miller and Machen is conclusive proof that the interests of the public have been shamefully neglected by these officials. The offenses committed by them represent the two popular branches of malfeasance—first, the acceptance of money for official service, and, second, interest in contracts with the government. Mr. Miller is charged with receiving money for official opinions, said opinions being given in behalf of swindling corporations that wanted to use the mails. It will be seen that such conduct is not only a crime against the government, but a crime against thousands of citizens who are taken in by the advertisements sent through the mails.

The fact that the swindling concerns were allowed to use the mails for a consideration suggests the possibility of crookedness in connection with the guessing contests which some of the newspapers have been conducting. These are simply lotteries in a more vicious form. In a lottery there are a certain number of tickets and the prizes bear a fixed and large proportion of the entire money invested by patrons, but in the case of a guessing contest the contestant has no way of knowing what his chances are or what proportion the amount invested bears to the prizes. In a wheel of fortune it is always known that the owner of the wheel has a certain percentage in his favor. For instance, if there are one hundred paddles and the successful paddle carries a hundred-dollar prize, there will be more than a hundred paddles sold, say 110, and the \$10 goes to the man who owns the wheel. But in the case of the guessing contest the amount given in prizes may be \$40,000 and the amount invested by patrons may be \$400,000, so that the "wheel" gets 90 per cent instead of 10 per cent.

On another page will be found a copy of the anti-lottery message submitted to congress by President Harrison, July 29, 1890. All that the president says of the Louisiana State Lottery can be said of the newspaper guessing contests, and they are spreading over the country so rapidly that it is only a question of time when public sentiment will be aroused against them. Let the reader of The Commoner show this editorial and President Harrison's message to his pastor and to all the preachers and priests whom he knows, with the request that the matter be given attention.

Mr. Machen's offense is in another line, namely, the receiving of a commission upon sales made to the government. It is not often that an official will risk receiving money directly on such transactions, but it is more often the case that the official will become pecuniarily interested in a company that sells to the government. It is so nearly impossible for a man to deal honestly with the government where he himself is pecuniarily interested that the rule against such transactions ought to be universally and rigidly enforced. The same principle that would be violated by a judge trying his own case, or by a juror acting in a suit in which he is pecuniarily interested, is violated when an official transacts business with a company of which he is a member.

If there is no law making it a penal offense for an official to buy for the government from a firm in which he is interested, there ought to be such a law. It is to be hoped that the investigation now commenced will be continued until every guilty party has been exposed and punished.

It is a short-sighted partisanship that would lead the party in power to hush up such things out of fear of political injury. When an administration punishes the offenders it puts the responsibility where it belongs; when an admin-

istration shields the offenders it shares the odium of the individual's crime. If President Roosevelt has the courage that he ought to have, he will allow no friendship or partisanship to stand in the way of a thorough investigation and exemplary punishment.

## A Little Previous.

In a recent issue of The Commoner Mr. Bryan discussed the question of leadership and said that he was not seeking leadership, and then proceeded to say that no man is in a position to do his duty who is controlled by the ambition to be a leader or who is always looking out for his own political future, that leadership is not secured in that way, neither can one insure his political position in future years by centering his thoughts upon his own interests, that he leads who proposes the wisest measures and defends them with the strongest arguments, and that no one can see the truth who constantly gazes at himself. The republican and gold democrat papers jumped to the conclusion that Mr. Bryan was renouncing interest in public questions and removing himself from the arena of politics. Nothing in the editorial would justify such a construction. Mr. Bryan is interested in political questions and will continue to discuss them with tongue and pen. In fact, the study and discussion of public questions is the business of his life, and no paper is justified in assuming that either now, or ten years from now, or twenty years from now, he will be less earnest or active in dealing with those questions than he has been during the last ten years. Whether the arguments presented by him will have any influence will depend, not upon the wishes of the corporation-controlled papers, but upon the judgment of the people who, like himself, are seeking a just solution of all the problems with which society has to deal.

## The Fourth of July Celebration

The Fairview Jefferson club will hold an old-fashioned Fourth of July celebration at Fairview this year. The readers of The Commoner will remember that Fairview is the name given to Mr. Bryan's home and is situated about four miles southeast of Lincoln. The exercises will be held in a grove close to the street car line and about a quarter of a mile from Mr. Bryan's residence.

Mayor Tom L. Johnson of Cleveland, O., Col. Richard S. Wynne of Ft. Worth, Tex., and Dr. Howard S. Taylor of Chicago will deliver addresses. Professor Hagenow's band will furnish music for the occasion and a choir selected from The Commoner office force will lead in the singing of patriotic airs.

The celebration of the anniversary of the nation's birth has in too many places degenerated into a day of sport for the people and into a day of money-making for merchants.

The Fairview Jefferson club desires to return to the simplicity and sincerity of the earlier day celebrations when the people were wont to gather together on such a day to renew acquaintances, exchange opinions, sing together inspiring songs, hear the Declaration of Independence read, and listen to the discussions of questions affecting the national welfare. The club is fortunate in being able to secure the attendance of the distinguished citizens whose names are mentioned above. Of Tom L. Johnson it is not necessary to speak. His able and courageous defense of the interests of the masses has earned for him his position of leadership of the Ohio democracy, and he is using that leadership to bring about public reforms. Col. Wynne is one of the most prominent lawyers of Texas, an orator of note and a citizen of high ideals. Dr. Taylor is city attorney of Chicago under Mayor Harrison, and is not only an able speaker, but is so accomplished a writer of verse that he has been dubbed poet laureate of the Chicago platform democracy. All are cordially invited.

## CORRUPTION IN POLITICS

While traveling through an eastern state the editor of The Commoner had occasion to discuss the political situation with several persons and heard so much of political corruption that he took the pains to inquire for specific instances. At the conclusion of this editorial will be found a summary of the information which he received. It is worthy of the careful consideration of the readers of The Commoner. There seems to be a numbness of conscience on this question that bodes evil to the country. Surely the people cannot always be indifferent, as they seem to be now, to what is going on.

While corruption is not confined to the republican party, it has been most pronounced in that party because that party has been in power so long that the machinery of the party now completely dominates the voters. To correct this corruption it is not necessary to permanently overthrow the party, but it is necessary that there should be an organized protest among the members that will inaugurate an era of purer politics.

In some instances it was found that men high in business and high in the church lent themselves to various schemes for the corruption of legislators. There are texts for ministers in the summary as well as for political reformers.

The facts as learned can be briefly stated as follows:

1. In a certain state in a senatorial district composed of three counties, there were to be chosen two state senators, one for the short term of two years, the other for the long term of four years. The short term nomination was conceded to a man in one of these counties without opposition. A certain man in one of the remaining two counties was indorsed by his county for the long term and he had no opposition in the district until he gave out an interview in which he stated, among other things, he was going to the state senate to fight railroad corporations. The political agents of the railroad corporation which is strong in these three counties, at once set out to find a candidate to defeat this man for the nomination. They picked on a man in the remaining county of the three and he was indorsed by his county. Each of two counties having a candidate for the long term, the balance of power rested with the county in which lived the candidate for the short term. This county was about to hold a primary election for the nomination of a county ticket and it was agreed by all parties concerned that the names of these two candidates for the long term of state senator should be put on the ticket at this republican county primary and the one receiving the larger number of votes, should have the delegates from that county. The candidate selected by the railroad interests went to that county, called together thirty active republicans from all parts of the county and gave them \$50 each for their time and expenses to work for him until after the republican primary, which was in five days. He told them that if he were successful, he would give them each \$25 after the election. Between that time and the day of the primary election, a circus came to town and he gave away 800 tickets to this circus. When the votes were counted, he had a small majority.

2. At a city election in the capital city of a certain state, about 450 negroes were imported from the coal mines in various parts of that county and an adjacent county, all of whom were voted, and some three or four times. About 60 were voted as residents of a certain alley, where but four negroes lived. Among the republican leaders in this colonization business was a postmaster, a deputy United States marshal, a sheriff and a criminal judge.

3. At a republican primary at which delegates