

The Commoner.

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It is Wrong Again

The New Orleans Picayune now admits that the supporters of the Chicago and Kansas City platforms only asked for the reinstatement of the law which Andrew Jackson signed, but it attempts to dodge the issue by complaining that conditions are different. It says:

Today silver is worth per ounce in London, the greatest silver market of the world, about 50 cents, so that our silver dollar would be worth about 38 cents. If we had the free coinage of silver, anybody could go into the market and buy silver at, say 50 cents an ounce, and have it coined and pay it out at the rate of 129 cents an ounce."

The position taken by the Picayune is absurd. It is strange that a man who has enough intelligence to occupy a position on the editorial staff of any paper should be guilty of so ridiculous a statement. Why would any man sell his silver at 50 cents an ounce and let another man make the profit on it? We do not sell hogs or corn, cotton or cattle, in that way. The moment the price goes up in New York it goes up all over the country, and so when a man can go to the mint and coin an ounce of silver into \$1.29 he will not sell it to the editor of the Picayune for 50 cents or for anything less than \$1.29.

The argument of the Picayune recalls the story told by Ignatius Donnelly. It ran like this: Two men were discussing the money question in a sleeping car, and as they talked others came up and asked questions. Finally one man asked the silver man if he thought it was right for the government to pass a law that would enable a person to buy silver for 50 cents and coin it into a dollar and make the difference (the same argument advanced by the Picayune). The silver man explained that under free coinage any man in the world could take an ounce of silver to the mint and convert it into \$1.29, and then asked if, under such a law, anybody in the car would sell an ounce of silver for less than \$1.29 and let some other person make the profit. There was silence for a moment, and then a voice in a remote corner said: "I would." The silver man went to see from what source the voice came, and found that it came from a young man who was sitting by his mother, and the mother said: "Don't pay any attention to the boy. He is an idiot, and I am taking him to the asylum."

If the editor of the Picayune would not sell his silver for less than its market value, why does he suppose any one else would; and if nobody would sell his silver for less than it was worth at the mint, how could anybody buy an ounce for 50 cents and coin it into \$1.29.

The trouble is that the editor of the Picayune, like other goldites who discuss the question without understanding it, talks about buying silver before a free coinage law passes and then talks about coining it after the free coinage law passes, without considering the influence of a law-created demand upon the price of silver.

Arguments Against Second Term.

A reader of The Commoner asks whether Mr. Cleveland did not in his first campaign use language condemning a second term. Yes; he said

in his letter of acceptance, given to the public August 18, 1884:

"When we consider the patronage of this great office, the allurements of power, the temptation to retain public place once gained, and, more than all the availability a party finds in an incumbent whom a horde of office-holders, with zeal born of benefit received and fostered by the hope of favors yet to come, stand ready to aid with money and trained political service, we recognize in the eligibility of the president for re-election a most serious danger to that calm, deliberate and intelligent political action which must characterize a government by the people."

It will be seen that Mr. Cleveland at that time fully recognized "the serious danger" of a second term, but the knowledge of this danger did not prevent his being a candidate for re-election in 1888; neither did it prevent his accepting the service of a "horde of office-holders, with zeal born of benefits received and fostered by the hope of favors yet to come." He was not only willing to use a "horde of office-holders" for his own benefit in 1888, but he was willing to use the ex-office-holders for his own advantage in 1892, and in 1896 he used the office-holders, as far as his influence extended, to defeat the democratic party.

There is, however, supporting Mr. Cleveland a more dangerous horde than the horde of office-holders. It is the horde of plutocrats—the predatory rich, the beneficiaries of class legislation, the exploiters of the public. These have found in Mr. Cleveland a man who can be trusted to do their bidding.

HISTORY DISTORTED

A Kansas reader of The Commoner quotes a magazine writer as saying that the gold standard was adopted by the United States in 1834 under the leadership of Andrew Jackson and Thomas Benton. It is strange that any one could be so ignorant of history or so devoid of conscience as to make such an assertion. The law of 1834 merely reduced the size of the gold dollar, so as to make it weigh one-sixteenth as much as the silver dollar, it having weighed one-fifteenth as much from 1792 down to that year.

Free and unlimited coinage at the ratio of 16 to 1 continued to 1873, and every holder of gold or silver bullion could have his bullion converted into unlimited legal tender money at the established ratio. Prior to 1834 the gold dollar was undervalued at the mint, and was therefore at a premium. Between 1834 and 1873 the silver dollar was undervalued at the mint, and therefore at a premium.

When in 1896 and 1900 the gold standard advocates declared that the gold standard was adopted in 1834 the advocates of bimetallism answered them conclusively by offering to accept as a settlement of the question, the very law which Jackson signed, but as that law provided for the free and unlimited coinage of gold and silver at the ratio of 16 to 1, without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation, it was of course not acceptable to the gold-bugs. All that bimetallists ask for today is the re-enactment of the very law of 1834 to which Andrew Jackson affixed his signature.

More Money Needed

Who would have thought it? Harper's Weekly, that thick and thin exponent of scarce money, dear dollars, cheap goods and plutocracy in general, has at last recognized that we need more money! It says:

The vision of financial reform and of a much-needed elasticity of currency, held out before American business men, has passed in a political wrangle in which jealousy and the spite of factions have unfortunately figured. It was hardly to be expected that a short session of congress could have passed a measure of so much moment and one so radical in comparison with our own antiquated system. But the crisis of last fall demanded that legislative precedent be set aside in the universal clamor for ways and means of conducting the business of a constantly expanding nation.

Financial reform is needed and an elastic currency! There is a "universal clamor" for ways and means of conducting the business of a "constantly expanding nation." What are the measures advocated by Harper's Weekly? First, an asset currency. This is defended on the ground that we need an elastic currency, one that the banks can let out and draw in at pleasure, a currency that will put the people still more at the mercy of the financiers than they are today. If an elastic currency is needed why do they not provide that any person having a government bond shall be permitted to deposit it and draw the money, foregoing the interest while he uses the money? This would give instant relief in case of stringency. It would simply convert an interest-bearing non-legal tender obligation into a non-interest-bearing legal tender obligation. Nobody would deposit the bond unless the money was needed worse than the bond, and he would withdraw the bond as soon as money became easy.

According to the republican plan the banks are to issue the money when money gets scarce and then they loan it out to the people at the high interest rate which a money stringency makes.

The democratic plan allows a person having a government bond to obtain relief without the aid or consent of any banker. No advocate of asset currency will claim that an asset currency is as safe as greenbacks, or as convenient or as certain in its automatic action. Why, then, is an asset currency favored? Because the bankers want it.

Harper's Weekly also wants the Aldrich bill, which provides for the loaning of government money to the banks. Why? Because we need the money in circulation, is the reply. It is less than seven years since we were told, in the campaign of 1896, that we had plenty of money in the country and did not need any more. Since that time the volume of money has been increased over five hundred millions, and yet money is still so scarce that the financiers insist upon the loaning of all surplus money to the banks in order to keep business going—this, in addition to the asset currency defended by the same arguments. If we need more money, as we certainly do in spite of the enormous increase since '96, why not use good money instead of bad money? A Nebraska banker who went over to the republican party in 1896 to