

The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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On Mammon's Side

The Milwaukee Sentinel seems anxious to earn a front place among the champions of organized wealth. It recently published an interview with Mr. Bryan and then quoting a part of the interview proceeded to make an ultra-corporation argument on the questions referred to. Here is what the Sentinel quoted:

"The money question must be an issue so long as the money changers attempt to run the treasury department in their own interests, and the labor question must also be an issue, involving as it does both arbitration and government by injunction."

And this is what the Sentinel says:

"The peculiar genius for politics possessed by Mr. Bryan is admirably illustrated by the paragraph quoted. He had previously opened the way for these two issues by lining up 'the people'—a title which he gives to those who agree with him or who accept his doctrines without amendment—against the corporations. Having brought this happy business disturbing and calamity breeding matter to a focus, he would make sure of accomplishing his purpose by attacking the integrity of the national currency, and the grand climax would be reached when he brought out his labor issue.

"Just at this time, when leading union men and employers, as well as economists of national reputations, are working night and day with the hope of finding a solution of the labor problem that will insure the rights of both employers and employes, of organized labor and organized manufacturers, Mr. Bryan comes forward with the cheerful suggestion that the matter be treated as a political issue. He would adopt the policy that has brought disaster to Australian industries—compulsory arbitration—and he would abolish 'government by injunction,' which means that in cases of rioting the protection of the courts is to be withdrawn from employers of labor until after the damage is done and the property destroyed. Even labor leaders who are entitled to respect for having accomplished something of substantial benefit for organized labor do not make these demands.

"On the whole, it may be said that Mr. Bryan's program is about the most complete and promising one that could be devised for bringing about industrial chaos. It would be difficult to improve upon it in any particular or at any point. It would not be necessary to add shotguns, dynamite, and red flags in order to round it out, for they would all come in due course of time."

This reveals the viewpoint from which the Sentinel surveys the political field.

Those who object to having the treasury department run by the money changers in their own interests are, according to its logic, "attacking the integrity of the national currency," and those who prefer arbitration to strikes and who condemn government by injunction are denounced as disturbers of the peace.

Mr. Bryan has never advocated compulsory arbitration, as the Sentinel might have known, and would have known if it had placed a proper estimate upon accuracy of statement. Both the Chicago and Kansas City platforms demanded arbitration and while the republican leaders steadfastly refuse to consider the question, the sentiment in favor of voluntary arbitration is growing and will ultimately triumph.

If, in the meantime, there are disturbances, lockouts, boycotts or bloodshed, the responsibility will not rest upon those who seek to establish just and peaceable means for the adjustment of differences, but upon those servile and syc-

phantic worshippers at the shrine of Mammon who insolently assault all remedial legislation.

The Sentinel will praise the president for suggesting the arbitration of one strike after the loss of one hundred millions of dollars, but it condemns Mr. Bryan for advocating arbitration as a means of settling all labor disputes without the necessity for a strike.

The Sentinel boldly defends government by injunction and it does so with full knowledge that the purpose of this extraordinary writ is to deny the laboring man the right of trial by jury. If the editor of the Sentinel were charged with a libelous assault upon the reputation of a citizen or a murderous assault upon his employer or even with converting a subscription to his own use, he would be entitled to a trial by jury and no court could deny it to him; but he is so soaked and steeped in prejudice for the great corporations that he would rob the wage-earners of this invaluable safeguard.

Of all the forces in society no one force is doing more to create class hostility than plutocratic newspapers like the Sentinel that blindly follow at the heels of the money magnates and bark at all who plead for justice and fair play.

THE WORLD MOURNS

The universal sorrow evinced at the death of Pope Leo shows the willingness of the people of all denominations to lay aside their prejudices and do honor to those who really deserve well of their fellows—and he has earned this. In his selection there was a fortunate conjunction of the man and the opportunity. His mental and spiritual traits admirably fitted him for the eminent place which he filled and his position as the head of the great Catholic church gave him a large sphere in which to act. While he was the highest representative of one branch of the Christian church and passionately devoted to his task he took an active part in all that concerned humanity and his mighty influence was ever thrown upon the side of peace and justice.

The valiant fight which he made for life aroused profound sympathy and the prolonged struggle gave an opportunity for his admirers to lay their tributes at his feet.

His successor, while inspired by his lofty example, will find it difficult to live up to the pattern set by the recent occupant of the vatican.

"Little Unknowns."

The New York Post did not seem to know of the existence of Judge Walter Clark of North Carolina before his name was mentioned in The Commoner. This is not so much a reflection upon the judge as it is upon the Post. It is more than passing strange that the newspapers which represent the reorganizing element should be so little acquainted with the record and the merits of a man like Judge Clark. The New York World is so astonished at the obscurity of the men whom The Commoner has mentioned in connection with the presidency that it expressed its indignation in a cartoon entitled "The Little Unknowns from Nowhere." One of the men mentioned in The Commoner is a United States senator, and has been both a governor and a congressman; another is mayor of Cleveland, and has four times defeated Mark Hanna in his home city; another is on the supreme bench of a state; another has been a prominent member of congress for ten years from one of the great states of the union, and was his party's choice for United States senator in the last legislature, and the fifth is mayor of one of the leading southern cities.

Owen P. Thompson

In the discussion among democrats of possible candidates for the presidential nomination in 1904 the availability of Judge Owen P. Thompson of Jacksonville, Ill., is worthy of consideration. While he has always taken an active interest in public affairs and has been an earnest advocate of democratic principles, he has neither sought for nor held public offices outside of the line of his profession. An admirer of Judge Thompson writes as follows:

"He was born about fifty years ago in the county where he now resides. In addition to his general education he graduated from the Albany, N. Y., Law School in the class of 1876, and shortly thereafter located in Jacksonville, where he has established for himself a most deserved and enviable reputation as lawyer, judge and man. Six years ago he was elected to the circuit bench of the Capital or Springfield district, to which office he was recently re-elected without opposition.

"The opinion he rendered in the celebrated case of the People vs. the State Board of Equalization, or what is more familiarly known as the 'Teachers' Tax Case,' brought him more prominently before the general public than any of his previous decisions had done. There was a proceeding in mandamus brought in the name of the people by two Chicago women school teachers, to compel the state board of equalization to value and assess the franchises of certain public service corporations doing business in Chicago. The defendants were street railway, telephone and gas companies. The case excited general public interest. The people and the corporations soon realized the great magnitude of the issues, and how far-reaching would be the effect if the contention of the teachers would be upheld and the enormous values of franchises added to the taxable property of the state. The decision would mean either millions of dollars annually of public revenues for the conduct of the public schools and municipal and state governments, or it would mean millions of dollars to the corporations for annual dividends. No case more vital to the interest of government, or of greater magnitude, had ever been tried in the courts of this country. The property values were enormous. The franchises which the teachers were seeking to have taxed were worth hundreds of millions of dollars. Under the laws of Illinois it is the duty of the state board of equalization to value and assess for taxation the capital stock, including franchises, of public corporations. This board is composed of twenty-three members, one elected from each congressional district, and the state auditor as ex-officio member and chairman of the board. For a great many years the defendant corporations had been successfully evading all taxes on the value of their franchise property. The corporations refused to list such property for taxation, and the state board, although having the power to do so, and being urgently requested to assess them, was so completely under the influence of the corporations that they ignored all requests, and boldly declared that being assessors, and assessment of property requiring judgment, that their judgment on the matter was final, and no court under the law had power to compel them to make assessments contrary to their judgment. In this contention the board was backed by the corporations and their lawyers. Under the count as brought by the teachers, the court was asked to coerce the board into making an assessment of the franchises of the defendants. In order to do this the court would be required to make a new application of the principles of law governing the remedy by mandamus. No precedent existed in any courts for such action and the discussion among lawyers throughout the state as to the power of the court to do so was general. No one outside of the corporations and representatives and several state boards