

# The Commoner.

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## Paramount Issue.

The reorganizers, with the dishonesty that has always characterized their political movements, are shouting that "Bryan wants to make 16 to 1 the paramount issue." They have read what he says and they have read the platform adopted at Kansas City and they know that 16 to 1 is not regarded as the paramount issue by Mr. Bryan or by the other advocates of that platform. The money question was declared to be the paramount issue in 1896; in 1900 it was expressly declared not to be the paramount issue, but that it is an issue is perfectly evident to any one who will read the papers published by the reorganizers. These papers show that they regard the money question as an issue in two ways: First, they make that the test in the selection of candidates. The man may favor high tariff or low tariff or he may have no opinion at all on the tariff question, but he must believe in the gold standard and be willing to allow the financiers to do his thinking for him. And so with other minor questions, but on the money question the candidate to obtain favorable mention must be sound according to Wall street standards. This proves that with the financiers the money question is not only one of the issues, but really the paramount issue. Second, why are the reorganizers so alarmed when silver is mentioned? If it is a dead issue, why make such a fuss over every reference to it? If it is lifeless and has no supporters, how can it justify "conservative democrats" in bolting? The very fact that the reorganizers are so afraid of the money question is proof that there is life enough in it to prevent its burial by its friends.

The truth of the matter is that the reorganizers are trying to deceive the rank and file of the party and it makes them mad to be discovered and exposed. They know that some phase of the money question is always before congress and lacking the courage to meet the issue honestly they seek an advantage under cover of deceit. They also know that back of all the surface issues is the controlling one, namely, whether the money changers or the people shall control the government. To surrender the money question would not conciliate the reorganizers. Take the result in Ohio. Tom Johnson expressly denied that he favored free silver and yet he was as bitterly denounced as if he had been an original silver man. Why? Because he was opposed to the rule of corporate wealth. Mr. Clarke, the democratic candidate against Mr. Hanna for the senate, was against the party in 1896; he helped the republicans that year and last fall avoided the money question. Was that satisfactory to the financiers? Not at all. In spite of the fact that all the republican papers reproduced his speeches against free silver he was beaten worse than any senatorial candidate in recent years. Why experiment longer? Concessions and compromises are not expedient even if they were right. Try to draw a platform without reaffirming the Kansas City platform and see what the result will be. No honest statement of the party's position can be made without indorsing the position taken in 1900. The whole aim of the reorganizers is to secure an ambiguous platform with which to fool the people and a presidential candidate under secret pledge to the money magnates.

Mr. Bryan will not co-operate with them in this effort and therefore he is the recipient of their abuse and malice. But neither abuse nor malicious misrepresentation will avail. The issue must be met.

## The Subservient Sun.

The New York Sun, the most subservient of all the servile tools of predatory wealth, has with characteristic mendacity misrepresented and then attacked one part of Mr. Bryan's speech. In speaking of the Aldrich bill, Mr. Bryan said that it provided for the loan of about three hundred millions of government money to pet banks at one

and one-half per cent, or about four and a half million dollars. He condemned it, among other reasons, because it would furnish the basis of an enormous corruption fund and he pointed out that three hundred millions of government money loaned by the banks at four and a half per cent would give the banks nine millions a year above the interest paid the government, or thirty-six millions in four years. He then suggested that by giving one-fourth of this sum the banks could supply a campaign fund of nine millions, or enough to buy four hundred and fifty thousand votes at \$20 apiece—enough votes to have changed the result of the last national election.

This argument was made against the Aldrich bill and had no reference to past campaigns. The Sun so distorts the above argument as to make it refer to the last campaign and then bitterly denounces Mr. Bryan.

That the republican party spent enormous sums in both 1896 and 1900 is well known but no democrat has been able to ascertain the exact amount, nor have the republican managers published any statement showing how it was expended, but it must be apparent to all that the corporations that put up the money have dominated the administrations. This is the question that papers like the Sun fail to meet. On this question they are silent. The Sun has even praised the president for surrendering on the trust question—it congratulated him on his masterly retreat. The great trouble is that the government is being used by the representatives of organized wealth to advance their business enterprises and papers like the Sun are run for no higher purposes than to aid in the deception of the public. The Sun dares not state the proposition fairly because it can neither disprove nor defend.

## As Clear as Mud.

Republican organs are now beginning to discuss the Foraker bill which practically repeals the Sherman anti-trust law, and an editorial in the Wall Street Journal is a sample of what we may expect in this line. The Journal objects to the word "reasonable" in the Foraker bill, and says that word is "altogether too broad and indefinite. It would open the door for infinite imposition."

Then the thoughts of the Journal editor seem to revert to the distressed condition of the trust magnates, and so he adds:

"But of course some relief is necessary. Some law must be passed which shall permit the corporations to secure the benefits of proper regulations of competition. A decision adverse to the Northern Securities company would probably hasten such legislation. It seems to us that it should take the form of an act enabling the railroads and other corporations to pool their business subject to government supervision and a comprehensive publicity."

It will be observed that after all of its waddling and its wabbling the Wall Street Journal does not get very far from the Foraker bill itself.

The Foraker bill would prohibit combinations except in cases where they were "reasonable" and the question as to the reasonableness of the combinations would be a matter for judicial interpretation. But the Journal—while objecting to that word "reasonable" as being "altogether too broad and indefinite," and yet realizing that "of course some relief is necessary" for the poor, overburdened trust magnates—thinks that railroads and other corporations should pool their business "subject to government supervision" and "a comprehensive publicity."

Now that is just about as clear as mud.

The Foraker bill would permit railroads and other corporations to pool their business provided the pooling process was "reasonable." The Wall Street Journal, criticizing the Foraker bill, is in favor of "an act enabling the railroads and other corporations to pool their business subject to government supervision and a comprehensive publicity!"

## A Dictator.

The reorganizers are with one voice accusing Mr. Bryan of trying to "dictate" to the democratic party. What has Mr. Bryan done to justify the charge? He has expressed it as his opinion that the Kansas City platform should be reaffirmed, and for this he is now being censured by the bolters and by those who are trying to put the bolters in control of the organization. If Mr. Bryan had declared himself in favor of abandoning the Kansas City platform would they have accused him of dictating? Not at all. He would have been praised by the gold organs and they would have abused any one who dissented from him. "Dictating," it would seem, is defined, not as the offering of suggestions, but as the offering of suggestions objectionable to the men and newspapers to whose opposition the party owes its recent defeats. Mr. Bryan has a right to agree with them, but no right, they think, to differ from them.

Mr. Cleveland has been offering advice; he has declared that the party ought to return to what he calls "sanity" and yet none of these organs have denounced Mr. Cleveland as a dictator. They have not even questioned the propriety of his expressing an opinion on party policy. The fact that Mr. Bryan has twice been the candidate of his party would, according to their logic, compel him to keep silent, while the fact that Mr. Cleveland has twice thrown his influence to the republican party gives him a right to speak. Even republican papers can seriously counsel the democratic party without arousing a protest from those editors who mask their plutocratic designs under a democratic name; but it is regarded as utterly reprehensible that a former candidate should confer with those who voted for him.

What is the explanation of this bitter and unreasonable criticism? Simply that the reorganizers are attempting to deceive the public and it makes them angry to have their plans exposed. Mr. Bryan has not sought to force his opinion on any one. He has expressed himself, as every citizen has a right to do, and he has no desire to influence his co-workers except insofar as his arguments are found to be sound. It is not Mr. Bryan that they have to meet, but the honest convictions of the millions of democrats who have maintained their integrity in spite of threats and bribes. A little child can, by quoting the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," throw a crowd of would-be burglars into confusion. They would fear not the child, but the doctrine he proclaims. And it would seem that Mr. Bryan's suggestion of an honest platform has brought similar consternation among the men who are plotting a betrayal of the people. If theirs was an open and an honest work they would not abuse Mr. Bryan—they would be content to announce their platform, give their reasons for it and appeal to the voters of the party, but instead of that, they fly into a passion and deny the right of any one to differ from them. They may as well know that their scheme will be opposed and that they will be compelled to come from under cover.

For seven years the corporation newspapers and the leaders of the reorganization movement have been working for the most part under ground—they have lauded every tool of organized wealth and attempted to assassinate the character of every one who would not join them. They have made a constant assault on democratic principles and were expecting to complete their plans at St. Louis, but they now realize that they must face the indignation which their repeated perfidy has aroused.

Their chief argument is that they can point the way to victory and they have impressed a few who have forgotten the disastrous defeat of 1894 when the reorganizers last led and the rout of the Palmer and Buckner ticket which they supported. They have won over a few whose hunger for spoils is stronger than desire for reform, and promising a large corruption fund, they, of course, attract those who want to handle the money, but