

WARPED BY COMMERCIALISM

For several weeks the Wall Street Journal has been carrying on an interesting discussion on the subject of "controlled" or "inspired" newspapers. The Journal is, on occasions, very frank in its statements, and its editorial columns are therefore interesting. A Pittsburg publication devoted to the single gold standard and called "Money," dealing with this subject said:

"The Wall Street Journal assumes the position that large financial interests cannot be honest and that the only way a newspaper can be honestly managed is to be controlled by irresponsible persons, or by persons not having a large financial liability which is at stake on the success of the country in which the paper is published. Analytical thought and calm conclusion make it thoroughly apparent that neither the Standard Oil company nor any other corporation or individual whose investments in mines or manufacturing industries in this country is extensive will use his paper in any other than the general good. The Standard Oil company's properties cannot increase in value unless the country is prosperous. There is no wiser man in the financial world than the head of the Standard Oil company, which all will acknowledge. Consequently, it is but natural to assume that he would administer any paper which he might control with wisdom. The Standard Oil company desires general prosperity. Therefore a newspaper controlled by it might be expected to do everything they could to make prosperity general. But is not the control of a great daily newspaper much safer in the hands of an individual or corporation which has millions staked upon the general prosperity of the country than in the hands of an individual, perhaps a man controlled by passion and swayed by impulse, who owns little or nothing beyond the newspaper property itself? Small motives very frequently control the utterances of the individual-owned, and not 'controlled' newspaper of today. Because the individual owner must depend upon the paper for his income he makes it hew to the line of the advertisers' wishes, irrespective to that of the general good. In the case of the majority of the daily newspapers of the United States, the advertiser has but to express a desire to the publisher to keep certain news matter out of the paper, or to put certain news matter in, to have his wishes followed. The conclusion that we must draw from an analysis of the situation is this: Newspapers are controlled by some one, and it is far better to have that control in the hands of a person or persons who have great interests at stake, and who will be benefited, materially benefited, by general prosperity, than to have the control in the hands of a petty individual whose judgment is swayed by the inch advertiser, whose conduct of the news department of his paper is controlled by the five dollar bills he gets for advertisements. A newspaper controlled by

such a wisely administered corporation as the Standard Oil company could be expected to be above such petty influences, and to publish such valuable news."

This is a fair sample of the reasoning of the champions of plutocracy.

The Standard Oil trust, and other great combines, have cornered so much of the wealth of the country that in the opinion of this Pittsburg publication, these trust magnates should, properly, control the newspapers of the country and would not use those papers in "any other than the general good."

The head of the oil trust is "a wise man" and so in the opinion of this Pittsburg publication, "it is but natural to assume that he would administer any paper which he might control with wisdom."

These trust magnates, in the opinion of this Pittsburg publication, desire general prosperity, and "therefore, newspapers controlled by them might be expected to do everything they could to make prosperity general;" and further, in the opinion of this Pittsburg publication, when the great newspapers of the country are in the control of these trust magnates, these papers are "much safer." "Small motives very frequently control the utterances of the individual-owned and not controlled newspaper of today," and, therefore, it would be better to have these papers in the hands of the trust magnates who have great interests at stake!

The newspaper is a very important factor in popular government. It is presumed that the motto of the old Salem Register, "Here shall the press the people's rights maintain, unawed by influence and unbribed by gain," dominates the policies of the newspapers of the country. Sad to relate, this is not entirely true of all the great newspapers; and if they should be actually owned by the trust magnates, it may be depended upon that instead of protecting public interests, these newspapers would devote their energies to the selfish interests of the magnates.

The reasoning of this Pittsburg publication, carried to its logical conclusion, would be that because the head of the Standard Oil trust is such a wise man and controls so much of the wealth of the country, that after giving him control of the newspapers, the government itself should be delivered into his keeping. If he can be depended upon to operate the newspapers and to do the thinking for other men, so far as the newspaper is concerned, why not go the step farther and permit him to manage the government according to his superior wisdom. Mr. Lincoln said something to the effect that the people could not trust their own liberties to any other hands than their own.

Mr. Rockefeller is a very wise man, but his wisdom has been devoted to the accumulation of

wealth in his own name and for his own selfish ends. With more money in his vaults than a thousand men could spend within a lifetime, he has taxed the people heavily for the commodity he controls and has shown no disposition whatever to contribute to the general prosperity. The same methods would characterize his control of the newspapers.

The suggestion of the Pittsburg publication reeks with the atmosphere of thrones. Turn it whatever way you will, it is the argument of kings; and whenever we yield to the proposition that power and influence must be concentrated in the man whose reputation for wisdom has been built upon his ability to accumulate gold and oppress his fellows, then we are turning our backs upon popular government and embracing the theories of monarchs.

The Wall Street Journal's reply to the Pittsburg publication is so frank and candid that it is herein reproduced in full.

Referring to the statements made by "Money," the Journal says:

"There breathes the true spirit of the 'court circular.' For the whole theory of the 'court circular' is that what people call the 'big men' know what is good for the public better than the public knows it itself, and, therefore, are competent to rule the public. The organization of high finance is quite similar to that existing in the feudal days, when there were a number of powerful nobles, each with his own little 'court' and retainers and followers, and all united, from time to time, against a common enemy. If there had been printing and newspapers in those days, doubtless each baron would have had his newspaper. The idea that the Standard Oil company is best qualified to control newspapers because its prosperity depends upon general prosperity, contains the assumption that material prosperity is the end and object of good journalism as well as of good government. Is there no such thing as liberty? Are there no such things as rights? Or is everything to be measured by the contents of the dinner pail? Is the truth necessarily the product of a full stomach?"

"Bryan spoke the truth the other day when he said that the purpose of government was not the protection of material prosperity, but was the protection of the individual in the exercise of his natural rights. The law of the newspaper is not summed up in a full stomach or a full dinner pail, but in the words, 'the truth in its proper use.' Every newspaper must be controlled doubtless by somebody, but the best newspapers will be controlled always in trust for their readers in the pursuit and presentation of truth.

"Utterances such as those we have quoted from the Pittsburg financial paper are depressing because they show how greatly men's minds have been warped by 'commercialism.'"

pare this with the interest on the government debt in the last fiscal year, which was \$28,556,348.

"The gross earnings of the United States Steel in all its departments amounted to \$536,572,871. The receipts of the United States government in the last fiscal year were \$560,396,674. The manufacturing and operating expenses of the United States Steel were \$409,268,599, and the expenditures of the United States government, less interest, were \$477,542,659.

"The year's surplus of United States Steel amounted to \$12,304,916. The estimated surplus of the United States government for the current fiscal year is \$14,000,000.

"The United States Steel produced 15,363,355 tons of iron ore, or 45 per cent of the entire production of the United States. It made 7,123,053 tons of pig iron or 41 per cent of the entire production of the United States. It manufactured 8,658,391 tons of coke, or 37 per cent of the entire product of the United States.

"The number of stockholders of the United States Steel corporation is 79,957. The number of stockholders in all the national banks of the United States is 330,124.

"The number of employes of the United States Steel in 1903 was 167,709. The number of employes in the iron and steel manufactures in 1900, the last census year, was 222,607. The amount of wages paid by the United States Steel in 1903 was \$120,763,896. The wages paid to all iron and steel workers in the United States in 1900 was \$120,836,338.

"The United States Steel operates railroads having a mileage of 780. This is greater than the mileage of so well-known a railroad as the Chi-

cago & Eastern Illinois, which has 743.

"There are 1,134 vessels engaged in the foreign trade of the United States. The merchant marine of the United States Steel corporation amounts to 70 steamers and 42 barges, a total of 112 vessels."

Just the Same.

The Great Britain that fought the Boers in order to "give Englishmen a chance" in South Africa is the same Great Britain that now seeks to import yellow labor into that same South Africa. Yellow labor in English colonies means black bread in England.

When a Man is Down.

A number of eminent gentlemen who were eager to accept political favors from Senator Burton are now declaring that they regret the time that he was a bad man. If they rue, how much worse than they are if Senator Burton?

Special Offer.

Everyone who desires to co-operate in the effort to widen The Commoner's sphere of influence may do so by taking advantage of the special subscription offer. According to this special offer, cards, each good for one year's subscription to The Commoner, will be furnished in lots of five at the rate of \$3 per lot. This places the yearly subscription rate at 60 cents.

Any one ordering the cards may sell them for \$1 each, thus earning a commission of \$2 on each lot sold, or he may sell them at the cost price and find compensation in the fact that he has contributed to the effort to widen The Commoner's sphere of influence.

These cards may be paid for when ordered or they may be ordered and remittance made after they have been sold.

A coupon is printed below for the convenience of those who are willing to assist in the coming contest.

THE COMMONER'S SPECIAL OFFER	
Application for Subscription Cards	
10	10 I, Publisher Commoner, I am interested in increasing The Commoner's circulation, and desire you to send me a supply of subscription cards. I intend to use my utmost endeavor to sell the cards, and will remit for them at the rate of 60 cents each, when sold.
15	Name _____
20	Box, or Street No. _____
25	P. O. _____ State _____
50	
75	
100	Indicate the number of cards wanted by marking X opposite one of the numbers printed on end of this blank.
If you believe the paper is doing a work that merits encouragement, fill out the above coupon and mail it to The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb.	