

# The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

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## Judge Reagan's Letter and the Answer

Below will be found a letter written by Judge Reagan of Texas to Mr. Bryan and Mr. Bryan's reply. The letters explain themselves. Many loyal democrats have been deceived by the adroit appeals made for harmony by the reorganizers, and the editor of *The Commoner* regrets that these arguments have had an influence upon Judge Reagan. He is one of the noblest specimens of American democracy, and it is unfortunate that his influence should be thrown unwittingly upon the side of those who are seeking to deceive the voters of America.

The *Commoner* has more faith in Judge Reagan than have the reorganizers, who are making use of his letter. If the reorganizers will nominate Judge Reagan without any platform at all, Mr. Bryan and those who believe like him will enthusiastically support him, but that is not their purpose. Judge Reagan being an advocate of genuine democracy and a sincere friend of the people, his candidacy would be as objectionable to the reorganizers as was the candidate of 1896 and 1900. But to the letters:

### JUDGE REAGAN'S LETTER.

Palestine, Texas, April 25, 1904.

Hon. Wm. J. Bryan, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Dear Sir: Your letter of the 22nd instant is received. I send a postal money order for one dollar to renew my subscription to *The Commoner*. I generally read it before any other papers which come by the same mail. In your public converses, and through *The Commoner* you have done a great work in the interest of good government and of the American people; and I have often said that, while I might not approve your views in every thing, I regarded you as one of the ablest statesmen, and best democrats and as the truest man to the interests of the people among all our political men. And if I could name the president of the United States it would be Wm. J. Bryan.

I think you will know that I could not descend to unmerited flattery. And I make the above statement in order that you may not misunderstand what I am going to add.

If I were asked what I regard as the most serious menace to our constitutional system of government and to the rights and liberty of the American people I would say:

1. The disregard of President Roosevelt for the constitution and for political morality, his selfish and reckless partisanship, and his failure to enforce the criminal law against trusts and monopolies.

2. The policy of the republican party, in substituting the will of a popular majority of the people of the union for the provisions and limitations of the constitution of the United States, and its class and monopoly legislation, including a high protective tariff, the trusts and the monopolies fostered by it, and the notorious political corruption which has grown out of its policy.

If I were asked for a remedy for these dangers I would say the defeat of Roosevelt for the presidency, the reversal of republican policies, and the restoration of constitutional, honest and economic government.

If I am asked how this is to be done, I would say:

By the adoption by the national democratic convention when it meets of a platform covering the recognized cardinal principles of the party, and leaving questions of differences of opinions among democrats to be settled within the party after it shall have gotten the control of the government, uniting the whole strength of the party for this purpose, and offering this inducement to the floating vote of the country and to dissatisfied republicans. This plan would open the whole field for political discussion; and it seems to me offers the only possible chance for the success

of the democratic party in the coming national election.

If we go into the contest with contesting factions in the party, defeat is inevitable; and the practices of Roosevelt, and the policies of the republican party will have four years more in which to become crystalized; and that would be the end of constitutional government, and the enthronement in its stead of a government of classes, money, corporations and trusts.

I believe as earnestly as you do in the great body of the doctrines you have been advocating, but I am not so afraid of the limited number of democrats who oppose those policies as to be afraid to go into a convention with them. Surely six million democrats need not be afraid of three hundred thousand. While three hundred thousand may not be able to elect a president, they with the influences they can command can surely defeat the election of any one on a platform antagonizing their views.

With me it is not a question of whether we can defeat and punish any faction in the democratic party; but whether we shall, by uniting all democrats secure an election which will restore the constitution, good government, and the best interests of the people of this great Republic.

You will understand that I do not write as an interested politician. My political race has been run. I am now eighty-five years of age. I have no political honors to expect or to desire. But I love my country and hope for a restoration of the constitution and for the peace, prosperity and equal rights of all.

Very respectfully,

JOHN H. REAGAN.

P. S. As your letter to me is in part on political questions, I hope it will not be displeasing to you for me to give it to the *Houston Post*.

### MR. BRYAN'S REPLY.

Lincoln, Neb., May 5, 1904.

Hon. John H. Reagan, Palestine, Texas.

My Dear Mr. Reagan: I am just in receipt of your favor of April 25th and hasten to reply. Your well-earned prominence in public life, your conspicuous service to your party and to your country, and the cordial goodwill which you have manifested toward me, all combine to give me an interest in what you say, and it would be a genuine pleasure to me if I could adopt the conclusion which you have reached. The fact that I differ from one whose sincerity I can not doubt and whose ripened wisdom gives value to his words, makes it incumbent upon me to present for your consideration the reasons which lead me to take the position that I do.

I fully agree with you as to the dangerous tendency of republican policies as exemplified in both the legislative and executive departments of the government, and I may add, as exemplified in the judicial department as well. I also agree with you that President Roosevelt represents those policies in their most aggravated form. His imperialistic ideas and his imperialistic methods, his refusal to enforce the law against men of great wealth who conspire against their country and its statutes, his subserviency to Wall street and his willingness to mortgage his administration to the great corporations in order to secure a second term—these ought to lead to his defeat in the coming election. I might add what you have omitted—namely, that to his other offences he has added a grave one in that he has done more to stir up antagonism between the white and black races than any or even all of the other presidents since the civil war.

I am sure you do not regard with more apprehension than I do the continuation of republican rule, or look with more longing to the re-establishment of the government upon con-

stitutional foundations. But how shall this be done? What course offers the most reasonable hope of success? If the party was harmonious and united in its general purpose, if those who call themselves democrats were one in aim and purpose, a general platform might be sufficient, providing of course the candidate was trustworthy. But we can not ignore existing conditions. In two national campaigns the party has tried to accomplish the very things that you commend, but its high purpose has been thwarted not so much by republicans as by men who have taken upon themselves the name of democracy without accepting its principles. The men who have twice defeated the democratic party by joining with the republicans are now seeking to demoralize the party from within. These are the men who threaten to continue their assaults upon the democratic party, and their support of the republican ticket, unless our party renounces its allegiance to the people and becomes the champion of organized wealth. The issue between democracy and plutocracy is clearly defined, and the democratic party must be on one side or the other—it can not occupy a neutral position or play fast and loose with the people.

You suggest that a platform be written covering the "recognized cardinal principles of the party and leaving questions of differences of opinion among democrats to be settled within the party after it shall have gotten control of the government." The trouble is that it is impossible to secure a statement of principles that is satisfactory. Because I recognize the force of this appeal to party pride and loyalty I have from time to time endeavored to secure from the leaders of the reorganizing movement some suggestion as to what they regard as cardinal democratic principles. Mr. Cleveland, who talks in a ponderous way about the party's return to "sanity," carefully avoids any statement of principles. The subsidized papers that have attempted to assassinate the political character of every loyal democrat, refuse to suggest a platform. We have had to wait for the conventions to be held, and these conventions when controlled by the reorganizers have thrown no more light upon the subject. You have read the New York platform and know that a republican could run upon it and after the election follow in the footsteps of President Roosevelt. In so far as it says anything at all, it defends rather than antagonizes the trusts. The platform adopted in Massachusetts is even less specific, and the New Jersey and Pennsylvania platforms are not much more clear. From the conduct of those who are in charge of the campaign of the reorganizers we must conclude that they either have no well defined political principles to present, or that they are afraid to let their views be known.

If we were sure of securing a candidate whose opinions were known to be right and whose record would be a guide to the voters, we might possibly get along without any platform at all—although that would be a confession of hopeless disagreement. But the most prominent candidate among the reorganizers is Judge Parker whose position on public questions is wholly unknown but whose attitude can be surmised from the company he keeps. Mr. Hill is the manager of the Parker boom, and August Belmont is its financial representative. When Mr. Hill was in the senate he opposed the income tax and went even farther in defending the insolent demands of Wall street than Mr. Cleveland did. Mr. Belmont is as noted for his apostasy from democratic principles as for his connection with the Rothschilds. The New York Parker club has published a list of the supporters of their candidate for the purpose of showing that he will be acceptable to the "conservatives," and August Belmont's name appears first in the list, with Mr. Hill's second. Mr. Benedict, who exerted such a