

The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

Vol. 4, No. 37.

Lincoln, Nebraska, September 30, 1904.

Whole Number 193

IT IS NOT A DIGNIFIED DEFENSE

The more one studies Mr. Roosevelt's letter of acceptance, the more one is convinced that that letter will not raise the republican candidate in the public estimation. It is not a strong and dignified defense of his party's position on public questions, but a dodging, evasive and pettifogging plea. It is the artful argument of a cunning advocate, not a candid statement of the issues.

His attack upon the democratic position on the money question is strategic, but not effective. The money question is not in the campaign and his attempt to scare gold standard advocates into supporting him will scare as many republicans away from him as it will draw or hold democrats to him. He tries to make capital of the fact that the democrats, after denouncing the gold standard in 1896 and in 1900, now ignore the question. The silver democrats who regret the failure of their party to reaffirm its position on the money question will not be drawn to Mr. Roosevelt by his zeal to prove himself an ultra champion of gold, and the gold democrats will not forget that Mr. Roosevelt supported his party as enthusiastically in 1892 when it declared against the gold standard and in 1896 when it favored international bimetallism as he does today when his platform openly pledges itself to the yellow metal. Neither can they be blind to the fact that Mr. Roosevelt is discreetly silent about legislation on other phases of the money question.

The president's attitude on the tariff question closes the door of hope against those republicans who desire tariff reform. He makes it clear that he is willing to allow the manufacturers a free hand in making the tariff schedule in their own interest and he supports his position by the threadbare arguments that have ceased to have weight even with well informed republicans. Instead of questioning the sincerity of his opponents he ought to have removed the suspicion resting upon himself by showing when and why he changed his opinion on the tariff question.

His discussion of the trust question plainly exhibits his lack of frankness in dealing with the public. He attempts to take both sides of the trust question. He seeks to cajole the masses by pointing to the sporadic and spasmodic suits brought against two or three of the trusts when it is apparent to all that he has made a compact with the trust magnates whereby they purchase immunity by supporting him. His talk of enforcement of the law sounds like hollow mockery when contrasted with his steadfast refusal to employ the criminal clause of the Sherman law. The arrest of any one of the hundreds of trust magnates would go farther toward destroying the trusts than all that he has said or done. His failure to enforce the law against monopolists not only disappoints those who suffer from trust exactions but it alarms those who realize how the seeds of anarchy are sown by those who, when entrusted with authority, use it to punish petty criminals, and to shield big ones.

His treatment of the labor question is equally unsatisfactory. The laboring men are demanding and are justly entitled to, certain remedial legislation, but instead of considering these questions

upon their merits he presents the protective tariff as a panacea for all ills and this tariff is given, not to the laboring man but to the employer. It would not, as a rule, be safe for a father to leave his fortune to one child with instructions to make a fair division with the other children. The son in such a case would be likely to keep the lion's share, notwithstanding the ties of blood, and yet the republican party continues to pour the benefits of protection into the pockets of the manufacturers without giving to the wage-earners any means of securing their share.

The union is the only instrument that the laborer has for enforcing a division of the fund given to the employer in trust and now the employers have organized to destroy the union.

What about arbitration? The republicans have been in complete possession of the federal government for the past eight years and yet they have not provided a permanent board for the adjustment of disputes between labor and capital. The employe must still resort to the strike if he and his employer can not agree.

What about government by injunction? Eight years ago the senate passed a bill providing relief, but the corporations discovered its purpose and have since that time prevented its passage.

The president's attitude ought to be satisfactory to the corporations but laboring men can find nothing in it to commend. On the contrary the men who toil must see in the president's advocacy of an army more than twice as large as we had eight years ago a menace to them. To say that our army is not large enough to endanger the whole population is no argument. Why should we tax ourselves to support a larger army than we actually need? Twenty-five thousand soldiers were enough in 1896; what, except a republican administration, has occurred since to make sixty thousand necessary now? Is the vaunted prosperity so difficult to see that it must be pointed out with bayonets? If our imperial policy makes the army necessary what commercial advantage do we secure that will off-set the additional expense?

In discussing the subject the president evades the principle involved. He scrambles duty and destiny and dollars together as if he was not sure of either if examined on its own merits. He boasts of liberty given to the Filipinos as if liberty were a commodity which we were generously bestowing upon them as a favor. His language is not essentially different from that employed by George III when boasting of his generous treatment of the American colonies. It would be a reflection upon his intelligence to assume that he does not know that a colonial policy is antagonistic to our principles of government—his own utterances in former years furnish conclusive proof of this. Why then does he not meet the question boldly? Why does he hesitate to state his party's position with the reasons for it? To say that we can not tell yet what we should promise the Filipinos is like saying that the finder of a pocketbook can not tell whether to return it to the owner until he counts the money and ascertains whether the owner is likely to make a wise use of it. He quotes copiously from Judge Parker's speech of acceptance

but there is one portion of the speech to which he was careful not to refer, namely, the pledge not to be a candidate for a second term. There is a wide-spread suspicion that the president expects to be a candidate again in 1908 and he might have followed Judge Parker's example and announced his purpose, but he may be as much opposed to giving such a promise to the public as he is to promising independence to the Filipinos.

The president's letter contains no promise of reform; he boasts of what the administration has done as freely as if he were not himself the Alpha and the Omega of the administration and appeals to those only who are entirely satisfied with existing conditions. Those who want the tariff high and are friendly to private monopolies; those who sympathize with capital in all its demands and want to turn the laborers over to the war department; those who prefer the spirit of war to the spirit of peace and colonialism to constitutional government; those who are willing to blindly trust the republican party without pledge or promise—such will be pleased with the letter, but thoughtful and patriotic citizens who look ahead and see the plutocratic tendency of all republican policies will find nothing reassuring in this latest emanation from the chief of the republican hosts.

The Colorado Situation

The political and industrial situation in Colorado at the present time is attracting much more than the average amount of attention, and is in direct contrast to the situation in a majority of the states. The supporters of Governor Peabody claim to be the friends of law and order and assert that they are only doing what is necessary to suppress lawlessness. The Denver News, in a strong editorial, points out that instead of supporting law and promoting order they favor a continuance of the present situation which is really a reign of lawlessness.

Under Governor Peabody constitutional rights have been ignored and the militia turned over to private corporations to enforce their decrees against their employes. Men have been arrested without charges being filed against them and held in prison at the caprice of the governor and his military subordinates. Men have been taken from their homes and deported without trial and the writs of civil courts have been ignored. The people in whose interests Governor Peabody has made himself a czar are allowed to organize vigilance committees, condemn men as disturbers of the peace and execute their decrees without any regard for the processes of the law. Claiming to protect property the exponents of Peabodyism have disregarded the property rights as well as the natural and civil rights of laboring men and have been more harsh and arbitrary in dealing with labor, both union and non-union, than they ever accused the union men of being toward men outside of their organization. Having re-nominated Peabody the republicans ask for an endorsement of the governor's administration.

The democrats condemn the official lawlessness that has characterized Governor Peabody's ad-