

The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER.

Vol. 4, No. 43.

Lincoln, Nebraska, November 11, 1904.

Whole Number 199

Democracy vs. Plutocracy ==The Election's Lesson

The democratic party has met with an overwhelming defeat in the national election. As yet the returns are not sufficiently complete to permit analysis, and it is impossible to say whether the result is due to an actual increase in the number of republican votes or to a falling off in the democratic vote. This phase of the subject will be dealt with next week when the returns are all in. The questions for consideration at this time are, what lesson does the election teach? and, what of the future? The defeat of Judge Parker should not be considered a personal one. He did as well as he could under the circumstances; he was the victim of unfavorable conditions and of a mistaken party policy. He grew in popularity as the campaign progressed, and expressed himself more and more strongly upon the trust question but could not overcome the heavy odds against him. The so-called conservative democrats charged the defeats of 1896 and 1900 to the party's position on the money question and insisted that a victory could be won by dropping the coinage question entirely. The convention accepted this theory, and the platform made no reference to the money question, but Judge Parker felt that it was his duty to announce his personal adherence to the gold standard. His gold telegram, as it was called, while embarrassing to the democrats of the west and south, was applauded by the eastern press. He had the cordial endorsement of Mr. Cleveland, who certified that the party had returned to "safety and sanity;" he had the support of the democratic papers which bolted in 1896, and he also had the aid of nearly all of those who were prominent in the campaigns of 1896 and 1900, and yet his defeat is apparently greater than the party suffered in either of those years.

It is unquestionable also that Judge Parker's defeat was not local but general—the returns from the eastern states being as disappointing as the returns from the west. The reorganizers were in complete control of the party; they planned the campaign and carried it on according to their own views, and the verdict against their plan is a unanimous one. Surely silver can not be blamed for this defeat, for the campaign was run on a gold basis; neither can the defeat be charged to emphatic condemnation of the trusts, for the trusts were not assailed as vigorously this year as they were four years ago. It is evident that the campaign did not turn upon the question of imperialism, and it is not fair to consider the result as a personal victory for the president, although his administration was the subject of criticism. The result was due to the fact that the democratic party attempted to be conservative in the presence of conditions which demand radical remedies. It sounded a partial retreat when it should have ordered a charge all along the line. In 1896 the line was drawn, for the first time during the present generation, between plutocracy

and democracy, and the party's stand on the side of democracy alienated a large number of plutocratic democrats who, in the nature of things, can not be expected to return, and it drew to itself a large number of earnest advocates of reform whose attachment to these reforms is much stronger than attachment to any party name. The republican party occupied the conservative position. That is, it defends those who, having secured unfair advantages through class legislation, insist that they shall not be disturbed no matter how oppressive their exactions may become. The democratic party can not hope to compete successfully with the republican party for this support. To win the support of the plutocratic element of the country the party would have to become more plutocratic than the republican party and it could not do this without losing several times as many voters as that course would win. The democratic party has nothing to gain by catering to organized and predatory wealth. It must not only do without such support but it can strengthen itself by inviting the open and emphatic opposition of these elements. The campaign just closed shows that it is as inexpedient from the standpoint of policy as it is wrong from the standpoint of principle to attempt any conciliation of the industrial and financial despots who are gradually getting control of all the avenues of wealth. The democratic party, if it hopes to win success, must take the side of the plain, common people. The Commoner has for two years pointed out the futility of any attempt to compromise with wrong or to patch up a peace with the great corporations which are now exploiting the public, but the southern democrats were so alarmed by the race issue that they listened, rather reluctantly, to the promises of success held out by those who had contributed to the defeat of the party in the two preceding campaigns. The experiment has been a costly one, and it is not likely to be repeated during the present generation. The eastern democrats were also deceived. They were led to believe that the magnates and monopolists who coerced the voters in 1896 and supplied an enormous campaign fund in both 1896 and 1900 would help the democratic party if our party would only be less radical. The corporation press aided in this deception, and even the republican papers professed an unselfish desire to help build up the democratic party. The election has opened the eyes of the hundreds of thousands of honest and well-meaning democrats who a few months ago favored the reorganization of the party. These men now see that they must either go into the republican party or join with the democrats of the west and south in making the democratic party a positive, aggressive and progressive reform organization. There is no middle ground.

Mr. Bryan did what he could to prevent the

reorganization of the democratic party; when he failed in this he did what he could to aid Parker and Davis in order to secure such reforms—and there were some vital ones—promised by their election. Now that the campaign is over he will both through The Commoner and by personal effort assist those who desire to put the democratic army once more upon a fighting basis; he will assist in organizing for the campaign of 1908. It does not matter so much who the nominee may be. During the next three years circumstances may bring into the arena some man especially fitted to carry the standard. It will be time enough to discuss a candidate when we are near enough to the campaign to measure the relative availability of those worthy to be considered, but we ought to begin now to lay our plans for the next national campaign and to form the line of battle.

The party must continue to protest against a large army and against a large navy, and to stand for the independence of the Filipinos, for imperialism adds the menace of militarism to the corrupting influence of commercialism, and yet experience shows that however righteous the party's position on this subject, the issue does not arouse the people as they are aroused by a question which touches them immediately and individually. The injustice done to the Filipinos is not resented as it should be or as we resent a wrong to ourselves, and the costliness of imperialism is hidden by the statistics and by our indirect system of taxation. While the party must maintain its position on this subject, it can not present this as the only issue.

The party must also maintain its position on the tariff question. No answer has been made to the democratic indictment against the high tariff, and yet, here too, the burden of the tariff system is concealed by the method in which the tax is collected. It can not be made the sole issue in a campaign.

The party must renew its demand for an income tax, to be secured through a constitutional amendment, in order that wealth may be made to pay its share of the expenses of the government. Today we are collecting practically all of our federal revenue from taxes upon consumption, and these bear heaviest upon the poor and light upon the rich.

The party must maintain its position in favor of bimetallism. It can not surrender its demand for the use of both gold and silver as the standard money of the country, but the question must remain in abeyance until conditions so change as to bring the public again face to face with falling prices and a rising dollar. This, therefore, can not be made the controlling issue of the contest upon which we are entering.

The trust question presents the most acute phase of the contest between democracy and plutocracy, so far as economic issues are concerned. The president virtually admits that the trusts contributed to his campaign fund, but he denies that

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