

THE WORK OF DEMOCRATIC EDITORS

Democratic newspapers throughout the United States are very generally co-operating with The Commoner in the primary pledge plan.

Frank A. Ells, editor of the Charlotte, Mich., Leader, writing under date of May 26, says: "If I could see my way clear to identify my paper with yours in stimulating primary pledges, without stimulating the idea of what is known as 'government ownership' I would be very glad to do it. I can not believe with The Commoner in the latter plan of administering government any more than in permitting the trusts to administer it. If the power of our government is not sufficient to control, then it is poor indeed. But I have not lost faith in either government or democracy. I do not want to see either reaching for ownership any more than is absolutely essential for preservation."

If Mr. Ells has "not lost faith in democracy" then, however much he may differ with The Commoner on some questions, he should be willing to co-operate in the effort to persuade every member of the party to attend the primaries. Those who sign the primary pledge are not committed to any particular question. A democrat merely pledges himself to attend all the primaries of his party to be held between now and the next democratic national convention unless unavoidably prevented, and to use his influence to secure a clear, honest and straightforward declaration of the party's position on every question upon which the voters of the party desire to speak. Although Mr. Ells can not entirely agree with The Commoner, he can certainly lend a hand in the effort to secure a full attendance at the party's primaries. It is to be hoped that The Commoner will soon have the privilege of announcing that Mr. Ells has reconsidered and that his newspaper is working in behalf of the primary pledge plan.

John Carpenter, editor of the Clinton, New Jersey Democrat, writing under date of May 27, says: "You have already had my cordial expression of approval of your plan of primary election redemption and reform in my editorial comments many weeks ago and the repeated publication of the form of pledge, appealing for signatures. I need only add that the whole party should thank you for your work. I heartily wish your primary election plan to succeed in its grand purpose, for with the party ruled by its people, they will soon regain rule of the land and it will mean a real and not a mere nominal democratic republic."

H. A. Whipple, editor Waterloo, Wis., Democrat, writing under date of May 27, says: "I have been much interested from the beginning in this experiment at organization, and believe it is a wise move. Kindly send me a supply of the blanks, say 100, and I will have some of them signed. I shall print the pledge with brief comment in my next issue."

The Grant County, Okla., News published at Pond Creek, and edited by W. A. Delzell, says: "Copies of the Bryan pledge can be obtained at the News office without charge. The pledge merely binds the signers to take an interest in party affairs before the primaries and to do his best to see that good men are selected as delegates to the party conventions. If political conventions are ruled by honest men the affairs of state will of necessity be in safe hands. The place to do the work is at the primaries. Call at the News office and get a bunch of these pledges, have your friends sign them and forward them to The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb."

Charles J. Colden, editor of the Nodaway Forum, published at Maryville, Mo., writing under date of May 26, says: "I am urging the readers of my paper to sign the primary pledge. I am in hearty sympathy with the movement. Mr. Bryan is correct; democracy must root itself in the hearts of the people. Reform must begin in the primary."

The Radical, published at Carlinville, Ill., carries this motto: "Democracy is something more than a name. It is the backbone and groundwork of human liberty." Writing under date of May 23, Perry D. Plain, editor of the Radical, says:

"Your idea about the primary pledge is very popular. There seems to be desire to make the party democratic enough to attract all who are at heart democrats. The rank and file of the people realize that it is time to make a concerted movement to overthrow the power of the trusts and

municipal and railroad corporations so that the common people can have 'a square deal.' The people are becoming aroused at the effrontery of the plutocrats and think it time for the people to make a riddance of the common, every-day political thugs. The conditions in this state are such that the people are going to act independent of the party unless the democratic party becomes democratic. Why should we keep a class of men who are at heart political thugs in office when they are always betraying the people? Is there any reason why we have to stand that, which to all men who love decency and honor, is corrupt? While I am for concerted action, yet, I am not in favor of even giving one of those who stood by Hopkins, even honorable mention. The time is here when men love their citizenship more than they do their party name. The people are getting tired of voting the label.

"The primary election law makes it impossible for an independent move to be made. There are many who will not go into the democratic primaries, because the law makes illegal for a citizen who votes in a primary to sign a petition for an independent candidate. That one thing will defeat many of the members of this last assembly, for the people are getting enough of traitorism and will see that those who are responsible for such conditions, will be left at home.

"I think the time is here for us to hold men and not parties responsible for bad laws. For when we hold parties responsible, we are at the mercy of those whose political ideals are vitiated by love of power. And we should look at it that the people make good laws and make bad laws; and if we make bad laws we should see to it that we unmake them. For the time is here for us to preserve our government and not to build up a party spoils system."

Fred M. Huddleston, editor of the Custer County News, published at Arapahoe, Okla., writes asking for a supply of primary pledge blanks and promises cordial co-operation.

The Mountaineer, published by Prickett & Walters at Ripley, W. Va., is urging its readers to fall in line with the primary pledge plan. Writing under date of May 29, Messrs. Prickett & Walters say: "Mr. Crow and others are making an effort to get 1,000 pledges to the plan from this county."

The Ripley Journal, published at Osgood, Ind., and edited by C. M. Shockley, reproduces the primary pledge plan and urges its readers to take hold of The Commoner's tow line.

The Missouri Telegraph published at Fulton, Mo., reproduces the primary pledge and says: "The Telegraph will do its part in aiding every movement that has for its object the ascertainment of the will of the people and the scrupulous enforcement of that will. This paper will also furnish all the information that it can upon the questions which are before the public to the end that its readers may be prepared to render the maximum of assistance to every worthy cause. At the top of this column is a pledge prepared by Mr. Bryan, in simple and straight-forward wording. Neither democrat nor republican need hesitate to take that kind of pledge. It means much in politics. If it was generally observed by the members of both parties there will be less to complain of. In Mr. Bryan's scheme, it merely recognizes the right of the democratic voters to control the policy of their party, and to determine its position upon public questions. In its broader sense it aims at honesty and sincerity in politics; and certainly the democratic party must stand for such honest sincerity if it hopes to appeal successfully to the country. It is a proposition that should appeal to all who believe in the rule of the people—to all who are willing that the majority shall govern in party management and in the nation—and certainly no real democrat or real republican can oppose the principle of rule of the majority. The Telegraph will be pleased to publish letters from the voters of Callaway county and elsewhere upon this question."

H. A. Kane, editor of the Franklin Gazette, published at Malone, N. Y., writing under date of May 26, says: "I believe the Franklin Gazette was the first democratic weekly in this part of New York state to give endorsement to the primary pledge movement. We are heartily in favor of it. I have filled out and signed enclosed pledge, but I can say that I have not missed attending a

democratic primary in Malone in the past sixteen years and shall try and be on hand when the next is called."

An editorial from the Franklin Gazette follows: "Wm. J. Bryan has begun, through The Commoner, a work which must, if it proves as successful as its inception would indicate, result in permanent good to the democratic party. He asks every democrat to pledge himself to attend all the primaries of the party to be held between now and the next democratic national convention, unless unavoidably prevented, and to use his influence to secure a clear, unequivocal and straightforward declaration of the party's position upon questions upon which the voters of the party desire to speak.

"In advocating this action Mr. Bryan says: 'This plan does not involve the writing of a platform in advance of the primaries; it does not rest upon the paramount importance of any one issue. It recognizes the right of the democratic voters to control the policy of the democratic party, and to determine its position upon public questions. It also recognizes the importance of honesty and sincerity in politics.'

"For years the Gazette has unflinchingly urged the democrats of Franklin county to attend the primaries of the party when regularly called, believing that the interest thus shown in formulating the policy and giving direction to the desires of individual members of the party organization would result in party efficiency, and in keeping alive and potent the principles upon which the democratic party rests and upon which its very existence depends. Attendance at primaries also materially assists those charged with the duties of organizing campaign work to perfect an efficient and aggressive working organization and stimulates interest in public questions with which party platforms are concerned. Our efforts in this direction have not always been successful, and it has frequently been the case that at times of importance to democracy hardly sufficient democrats have attended the primaries to transact the barely necessary details of selecting delegates and in some towns even this work has been neglected. The result has been invariably injurious to the party and local campaigns have lacked the vigor and success which might have resulted had every democrat performed his first duty by attending the primaries and followed this action by earnest and enthusiastic work for his party and its candidates. In a locality like Franklin county, where the opposing party has a large majority, the maintenance of an effective democratic organization is difficult enough at the best, but it is doubly difficult where democrats have fallen into the habit of neglecting to attend primaries and allowing a few of their party associates to bear all the burdens of party work. We therefore give our willing assistance to Mr. Bryan's effort to awaken democrats to the importance of performing their first and initial duty as such, and print below a copy of the pledge to attend primaries, which he suggests and desires to collect and tabulate by election districts, counties, congressional districts and states. Any Franklin county democrat who desires to sign this pledge can fill out the blank, cut it from this column and forward it to this office, or if he prefers, can send the blank direct to Mr. Bryan, directed to The Commoner, Lincoln, Neb. Those sent to this office will be duly forwarded to the same destination."

The Bellaire, Ohio, Democrat, edited by G. W. Shields urges its readers to sign the primary pledge. Paragraphs from the editorial page of the Bellaire Democrat follow:

"Mr. Bryan's primary pledge, while not new in principle, is having an immense following, and is as essential from a republican as a democratic standpoint. The pledge blanks, which can be had from The Commoner office, will more emphatically bring to mind the primary, which is too often held without three-fourths of the voters giving it a thought, though they will hustle themselves half crazy over the general election, which is merely confirming the selection made in the primary. Whether the pledge is signed or not, the efforts that will result in democratic success must begin in the local voting precinct."

"The plan of Mr. Bryan, through The Commoner, to get all members of the party possible to sign a pledge to attend the primaries, is having not only a direct, but indirect influence. There are enough good people in the party to control the selection of candidates, if they attend, and if signs don't fall there will be enough support given them when nominated to elect both governor and legislature if only the best men get on the ticket."