

WORK OF DEMOCRATIC EDITORS

The work of the democratic press is beginning to tell in favor of the primary pledge organization. The democratic editors are very generally lending a hand, and as a result The Commoner is receiving primary pledges from all sections of the country.

The Democratic Standard, published at Ashabula, Ohio, says: No political party can get next to the people and command the support of the people without placing a strong guard at the primaries. Here is where the minority rules and controls a political party. The primary campaign inaugurated by Mr. Bryan will be endorsed by all who believe in democratic principles. Let every democrat attend the primaries and the result will be a strong, united and victorious democratic party. Sign the primary pledge at once.

The Minneapolis Journal, referring to the primary pledge says: "It is high time that Mr. Bryan was sounding a rallying cry, if anything tangible is to be saved to democracy in the west out of the wreck of the last election. Last fall a majority of the democrats who had followed Bryan in states like Minnesota, Iowa and the Dakotas, voted for Roosevelt, believing that he came nearer representing democratic principles than their own nominee. That wholesale desertion loosened their allegiance to democracy. The men who voted for Roosevelt by that act cast themselves adrift from party moorings. They are apt to land almost anywhere next year. Such a rallying effort as Mr. Bryan is making seems imperative. No democratic candidate for president ever approached the vote Bryan received in Minnesota in 1896 and 1900. Grover Cleveland was given 104,385 votes in 1888 and 100,920 in 1902. The Bryan wave reached its high point in 1896 when 130,735 votes were cast for him in Minnesota. Before the next presidential election a constitutional amendment barred those who only held first papers from voting, and in 1900 the vote decreased, Bryan dropping to 112,901. Parker's vote in Minnesota last fall was 55,187—less than half of Bryan's lowest vote. Of the total loss of 57,000, about 30,000 went to swell the Roosevelt vote and 8,000 returned to Debs and socialism. Another 2,000 returned to populism and voted for Tom Watson. The other 17,000 evidently stayed at home and solved their perplexity by not voting at all. The Parker voters, probably the majority of them, voted the ticket under protest, and the Parker element of the party in Minnesota is a poor nucleus to build from. The best politics for democracy is evidently to follow the Bryan standard again. Those who sign the Bryan pledge will not go into the republican primaries next summer, as many of them did last year. The habit of voting in republican primaries is likely to make a man a republican in time, and Mr. Bryan has started none too soon to become a fisher of men once more."

John V. Shepler, editor of the Pawnee (Okla.) Courier-Dispatch, in a letter to The Commoner writes: "My paper has been and is carrying The Commoner's primary outline and feel that it is the very thing to awaken interest, in the line of real democracy."

Homer Sheridan, city editor of the Mt. Clemens (Michigan) Leader, writes: "Enclosed please find my pledge as a renewal of my promise to stick to the faith of my fathers. A southerner born and reared, I was probably a democrat 'because Daddy was,' but despite a dozen years of active newspaper work in the north—Ohio, Indiana and Michigan—I am a better democrat than ever, because I know why. No more compromises, nothing but straightforward democracy, that must be our aim. Yours for it."

The Star, published at San Francisco and edited by James H. Barry, referring to primary elections in general says: "The political bosses have prostituted our primary elections to the basest uses. The first consideration with them is the control of the 'machine,' the last consideration is the welfare of San Francisco. If the people want good government, they must give more attention to the primaries. It is not enough to vote for delegates; they should also select the delegates for whom they vote. Conventions of honest, intelligent men can not be obtained in any other way, and without such con-

ventions it doesn't matter much how you vote on election day. Whichever side wins, the people will lose."

The Washington, Ind., Democrat, edited by S. B. Boyd, says: "The primary pledge plan inaugurated by Mr. Bryan by which every democrat pledges himself to attend his party's primaries in campaigns ought to appeal to the democrats of this county. If every democrat takes an honest and unbiased part in the party's primaries with the sole purpose of doing the best possible for, not only the party, but the country as well, the democrats will carry this county."

The Algona, Iowa, Courier, edited by Hinchon & Finnell, says: "Mr. Bryan urges all democrats who favor retrenchment and reform to commence now to organize for 1908. The advice is good and should be heeded. He argues that if the republican party does not carry out in substantial form the policies advocated by President Roosevelt, Governor Cummins, Governor LaFollette, ex-Governor Van Sant and others, there will certainly be a defection from the republican party, and then the democratic party should be in position to carry out those needed reforms in the interests of the people. His reasoning seems good. But aside from the expectation of any considerable defection from the republican party, it is the duty of democrats to awaken and organize anyhow. There never was a time when the rights of the people were so menaced or actually subverted by trusts and all protected interests as at the present time. If Roosevelt and the few republican reformers who have had the courage to speak out fail, the only hope of the people is the democratic party. Then that party should gird its loins and be prepared for the next great battle. There may be democrats who are loath to join in the plan of organization suggested by Mr. Bryan lest it might be the means of reinstating him as the leader of the party, but the Courier is not one of them. It has always regarded Mr. Bryan as a great, an honest and a good man. It felt that he was mistaken in 1900 when he forced upon the party a rejected and a then impracticable issue, the free coinage of silver, and it opposed that policy at that time. But it never doubted Mr. Bryan's honesty and it would be happy to follow him again as a party leader. He issued a pledge that he would like to have all democrats sign and forward to The Commoner office at Lincoln, Neb., and we sign it without hesitation. It is not a pledge to support Mr. Bryan but simply a pledge to aid in revitalizing the democratic party. We would advise every democrat to sign it."

The Penn's Grove (New Jersey) Record, edited by William A. Summerill, says: Mr. Bryan's plan for election of delegates from which the future organization of the party will be made, which plan is outlined below, is timely and the most feasible plan to reunite the party. Both factions have been knocked down and both must submit to honest primaries, and conventions, because the party can never win with such conventions and nominations as were made last year. Mutual concessions and confidential cooperation on true democratic principles are the only things which will win in the future.

In a letter addressed to the editor of the Penn's Grove Record, J. Walter Pancoast, says: In the issue of The Commoner of March 17, Mr. Bryan published an editorial with the caption "Back to the People." I hope you can find space for that editorial in the same issue in which you print this letter.

I have looked for comment and indorsement of that editorial in the organ of the democratic party of the county. If any has been made I have not seen it. It is believed that the national platform and candidate coincided much nearer to the real sentiment of those now in control than did the platform of 1896 and 1900.

Therefore, I made this appeal through the Journal, whose editor stood then and stands now in a position not only unequivocal, but cordial towards both the party platforms and its virile candidate in those years.

That the last democratic national convention was packed to secure Parker's nomination and the platform which should be acceptable to plutocracy of the nation, and to relegate to the rear the issues of 1896 and 1900, and those similar,

is known to every one well informed as to what occurred in the state conventions, which elected delegates thereto.

In Illinois, the leader of the machine called one of his henchmen to the chair. This man appointed the various committees and declared every motion carried in the interest of the ring without calling for the negative. He refused every motion for roll call, except that for governor, and only then because the desired candidate would not accept without it. An overwhelming protest against such high handed work, was presented to the national convention, but that body possibly because too many of them knew they held their own seats through means equally indefensible, refused to correct the fraud, or to denounce its perpetrators. The Chicago labor men said then and there, that that decision meant that Illinois would go republican by an overwhelming majority. They were true prophets.

Men who attended the convention at Trenton to elect delegates to St. Louis, remember how in county after county, delegates elected by regular primaries largely attended, were ousted and others seated in their places, who derived their credentials from a few partisans standing outside the place of the regular meeting. It was even attempted to enforce the unit rule in the Salem county delegation, thus permitting a bare majority, a majority including I do not know how many proxies, to dominate and control the whole delegation. But the courageous and vigorously expressed opposition of Mr. George W. Hewitt, and of a delegate from one of the Pittsgrove's, the democracy of neither of whom could be questioned, warned those urging it to desist. The contestants which such action sent to St. Louis from New Jersey, of course, were not seated.

As in Illinois and New Jersey, so in other states that it could be believed that a platform formulated and a candidate nominated by delegates thus secured could be respectively endorsed and elected, except by fraud and the grossest bribery, is beyond credence. The defeat was disastrous, humiliating and overwhelming. The way to win political battles is to advocate the true interest of the masses.

Therefore, the plain people will ultimately recognize their rights and to voice in legislation is their just demands. No one can so well speak for themselves. If a man is a genuine democrat, he will urge and foster the expression of the people's will, and it is the supreme excellence of this plan of Mr. Bryan's, that it seems just that result; regardless whether or not such results coincides with his own views. No man who believes in democratic government can give a valid reason for opposing the plan. It has been endorsed by many leading men in the party. It will promote harmony. It will hasten success if the party shall deserve success.

I suggest the Record print the pledge, and acknowledge the receipt of those returned signed, and subsequently forward them to The Commoner. W. J. Bryan is without doubt an honest, able and eloquent statesman, thoroughly devoted to the interest of the common people, but he can not, single handed, win a victory for democratic principles. He must have help. Will the democrats of Salem county, who in two campaigns followed his banner with ardent enthusiasm, give it? I enclose my pledge. Hopefully yours.

The Graham Guardian, published at Safford, Arizona, reproduces the primary pledge form, and quotes approvingly from an editorial that appeared in the Joplin (Missouri) Globe, which editorial is as follows:

"In all his recent speeches of a political character Mr. Bryan has emphasized the necessity of returning the democratic party to the control of the people. Mr. Bryan's paper, The Commoner, is conducting what may be called a 'primary pledge' campaign. The primary pledge is a promise on the part of every democrat subscribing to it to participate in every party primary between now and the next presidential campaign, and by his vote and voice register the individual expression of the principles he wants his party to advocate. The response which the Commoner's canvass has elicited is very gratifying, showing conclusively that democrats are taking a lively interest in the campaign to be fought in 1908. That such an interest should exist at this early date is very significant. The Globe interprets it to mean that the rank and file of the party don't intend to witness another humiliating fiasco such as occurred at St. Louis last July."