

Editorials by Commoner Readers

Samuel Johnstone, San Francisco, Calif.—Current Topics of December 1 shows how the beef lords were fined for fencing and using 212,000 acres of our public lands for ten or more years—\$600 and six hours in the custody of the United States marshal, and no costs of suits,—some thousands of dollars, which are always paid by the guilty, while a poor devil, for stealing a few chickens, would be locked up from three to six months at least. Let me ask: In proportion to these cases, what would the fine be for the Standard Oil company, when it owns in the same way all the United States? This is a broader farce than Garfield's beef trust report, and such seed will eventually bring a worse crop than the czar has on his hands to harvest. I quote the following from the San Francisco Star: "It is authoritatively announced in the press that the United Railways Investment company, the holding company of the United railroads, is to pay a deferred dividend on the preferred stock of the former company of six per cent. This sum is to be paid out of the proceeds of a bond issue of \$900,000. The announcement does not state whether these bonds are to be issued by the United Railroads of California or the New Jersey holding company. This is an outrageous proceeding, and should be given immediate attention by the proper authorities. Do the people of San Francisco realize what this company proposes to do? Borrow money—issue bonds to pay dividends on watered stocks. We can not believe that such action is legal, and we hope that steps will be taken to prevent it." This tells only part of the story of a thieving street railroad company who consolidated the street roads of San Francisco, save two, one of which is soon to be rebuilt by the city. These roads cost to build under six million dollars, and they have been watered to equal eighty millions, and this holding company is to enable this band of thieves to take the surplus earnings of the Philadelphia, Pa., roads (owned by this band) over, or in excess of the amount they are allowed by their charter to collect and pay the interest on this water, so they can market (unload) their securities, that are really a second mortgage, upon the small investors of the United States, and are busy doing so, by paying a big commission to brokers, etc. One such company out here has been paying 30 and 40 per cent to sell out in that way. This is a sample of "high finance" of the New York Life Insurance company and others style, and should be illustrated by Tom Lawson. The way to remedy this evil is simple and plainly shown in the United

A Sign

of poor blood circulation is shortness of breath after walking, going up stairs, sweeping, singing, excitement, anger, fright, etc. Poor blood circulation means a sick heart, and a sick heart is a result of weak and impoverished nerves.

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REV. W. A. ROBINS, Port Elgin, Ont.

States supreme court decision of Smyth v. Ames, October, 1897, page 466, from which I quote: "The public can not properly be subjected to unreasonable rates in order simply that stockholders may earn dividends * * * If a corporation can not maintain such a highway and earn dividends for stockholders it is a misfortune for it and them which the constitution does not require to be remedied by imposing unjust burdens upon the public. We hold, however, that the basis of all calculation as to the reasonableness of rates to be charged by a corporation maintaining a highway under legislative sanctions must be the fair value of the property being used by it for the convenience of the public. And in order to ascertain that value, the original cost of construction, the amount expended in permanent improvements * * * and the sum required to meet operating expenses, are all matters for consideration, and are to be given such weight as may be just and right in each case. What the company is entitled to ask is a fair return upon the value of that which it employs for the public convenience. On the other hand, what the public is entitled to demand is that no more be exacted from it for the use of a public highway than the services rendered by it are reasonably worth. "But the rights of the public would be ignored if rates for the transportation of persons or property on a railroad are exacted without a reference to the fair value of the property used for the public or the fair value of the services rendered, but in order simply that the corporation may meet operating expenses, pay the interest on its obligations and declare dividends to stockholders. If a railroad company has bonded its property for an amount that exceeds its fair value, or if its capitalization is largely fictitious, it may not impose upon the public the burden of such increased rates as may be required for the purpose of realizing profits upon such excessive valuation or fictitious capitalization." Let the American people wake up; no longer sleep on their rights, and set bounds to the present centralization of capital, or serfdom, as in Russia, is in sight.

C. H. Weiss, Wentworth, S. D.—In reference to the president's remarks regarding coal and oil deposits I hand you herewith printed copies of House and Senate resolutions No. 9957 and No. 7901, respectively, of the fiftieth congress, dated May 14, 1888, and June 23, 1888. Being the instigator of this bill, which was framed by Congressman Smith of Milwaukee, I am sorry, more so today than eighteen years ago, that it did not become a law, and sincerely hope that Mr. Roosevelt's recommendation will accomplish, in what Mr. Smith failed. How much would this bill, had it become a law in 1888, have saved to the constituents of those who killed it in committee on public lands? I hope that the honorable members of the present congress and its committee, before which such a bill may come, are made of better flesh and blood than those of the committee of public lands of the fiftieth congress, who voted it to its death.

W. E. Phipps, Medford, Ore.—I have been a subscriber and a close reader of your paper since it was first started, and have, from time to time, sent in quite a number of subscriptions thereto. I want to express my especial appreciation of Mr. Metcalfe's article in the number of May 18 entitled, "Ben Daniels at 'The Door of Hope.'" The people will read such interesting articles as this, and, in consequence, must make a mental

comparison between the petit criminals who are convicted and the great criminals who have been immune from the law. I have shown this article to a number of my friends, and I would thank you to mail me four or five copies of this number of The Commoner for distribution.

N. P. J., Davenport, Iowa.—What do you think about the enclosed editorial from the Washington Post, entitled, "Why parade that hoodoo?" If one had not read the article in The Commoner one would be led to believe that the whole editorial of two and one-half of its wide columns were wholly devoted to the free silver question, whereas, only nine lines of these wide columns touched upon this matter. Taken all in all the criticism is insincere, and its writer betrays that he is no such a friend to democracy, although he tries to pose as such."

"A Commoner reader," Kingfisher, Okla.—The packing houses say they kill and put on the market for use nothing but wholesome, well and healthy animals. Will you please investigate and publish, for general information, what becomes of the diseased cattle and hogs that everyone knows goes to the markets, also what becomes of those that are crippled and killed in transit?"

(The various publications made with respect to this subject, appear to cover the bill quite fully. The Commoner.)

J. W. Shea, Syracuse, N. Y.—Your article on the "Chicago platform" was good. The fact that the president and those in the senate who were friendly to the railroad rate bill approved for about a month the interference by injunction or otherwise therewith by the courts, made it clear that the courts are not above the suspicions of persons in high places, where they are, no doubt, the best known. If this condition of things was argued in 1896 by the advocates of the Chicago platform, what a howl would go up from Wall street? The people are getting wise, even though late. It is perhaps in time.

James E. Bebb, Lake City, Ark.—As my subscription for The Commoner has expired I will send you \$1.00 to renew it. I see a letter from a Commoner reader referring to the effort to enlarge the Commoner's circulation. I highly approve of this, for whenever I can speak a good word for The Commoner, I always do so. I was interested in the suggestion made by G. W. T. Conrath Bowling Green, Ohio, as a plan of creating a fund to place one or more Commoner's in every barber shop where they would allow it. I have been thinking something along that line myself. I tried to get a democratic campaign committee in Oklahoma to adopt that plan when I lived there. A great deal of money collected for campaign funds is wasted. I suggest that campaign committees appropriate, say \$3.00 in every voting precinct, for five yearly subscriptions, in order that The Commoner may be sent to five republicans. I think the money could not be spent to better advantage."

Charles Devine, Philadelphia, Pa.—I am deeply interested in Mr. Bryan and I hope he and his wife and family are enjoying what they went abroad to see—God's creation and the abode of man. I see by his letters that he fully enjoys the vastness of the Creator's works and what the Creator has prepared for His creatures. He has made plenty of provision for all mankind, but we have got the selfish man who cares not for his fellow being, not even his maker, and his idea is that everything was made for him. But I can see that in the future the day is near when in this country we will put

down those hateful beings and establish a country of righteousness. I could name you a Columbus of this new era, and all the good people admire him, and he is the one who is destined to give us a regenerated country. We have to be careful how this is to be done. Sometimes great men have to act as Jacob did to his brother Esau. I would not encourage it, but I see the good we have received through Jacob's seed. We have received the Immaculate Mother who gave us the Saviour of the world. So God must have approved of Jacob cheating his brother. Our president, Mr. Roosevelt, is a Jacob. He kept quiet until he got the people's blessing and then he came out and declared he would not be a candidate for the presidency again. He directly went back on the people who put him there and his actions now show that he is not the man that the trusts thought he was. Now he is acting for all the people, he is letting the cat out of the bag and when the cat is entirely out won't the people have their eyes opened? I have a man that stops with me sometimes and the poor man cannot see through the window. I often pity him. We have had plenty of blind men who could see but did not want to have their eyes opened, but the light will be so strong that they will have to see. Mr. Roosevelt is doing what the democratic party

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