

SOME LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE

C. A. D. Coleman, Peoria, Ill.—Now that the election is over we can see that the democrats have made some gains and that is somewhat encouraging to us. If we wish to make victory sure at the next elections we must begin earnestly and continually keep attention fixed on a few important facts.

One is that the republicans still cling to the tariff which does more than anything else to aid the trusts in their nefarious practices. They tax the people to pile up vast millions in order to loan to the banks without interest while others who wish to borrow any money must pay interest on this same money that has been unjustly taken from them by taxation. This tariff makes building material higher in price, so that our dwellings cost more than they ought, the railroads must pay more for the material they use in constructing their roads, so they must charge more for freight and passenger fares to remunerate them for their outlay. Merchants must pay higher prices for their material used in the construction of their store buildings, but they know where to go for their compensation. They can raise the price of their wares and that makes it all right. The manufacturer on account of the tariff must pay more for the machinery in his factory, but he only needs to put the price a little higher on his products and he is safe, but he generally puts it some higher than absolutely necessary to make good his loss. While he is getting the benefit of the tariff he may as well make it count on every side that he can. The farmer must pay more for his machinery and therefore he must have more for the products of his farm in order to keep his nose above water. Then who must foot the bill? Well, I should say the consumer must shoulder the burden, whether the consumer be the laboring man, the farmer, merchant, lawyer, doctor, preacher or artist. But whoever it be the fact remains that the common people pay more according to their ability to pay than anyone else. You may say that it helps those who are employed by the trusts. That may be true in a way, but a very small percentage of the people are employed by them, and even they must pay trust prices for what they should purchase.

Another question that should be kept uppermost and that is the railroads. We have been paying railroad companies for years a large amount of money to carry the mails, while the government builds its own cars. The government used to carry the mails on horseback, and in wagons, and went to some expense to make plank roads, and pike roads in order to make travel more convenient not only for the carrying of the mails, but for the general public. It seems strange to me that people will make such strong objections to the government building railroads. The government can just as well carry corn and cattle or any other merchandise as it can dig canals or build battleships. It is true they let the building of battleships out by contract, but I do not see that that is necessary. They possibly might own the railroads and have them run by contract and do better than they are doing at the present time.

Another thing that is to be looked after is the banking business. The bankers intend to try to pass a law allowing them to issue the money of the country. They wish to have the entire circulating medium to be of paper, the coin to be kept out of circulation; they have more reasons than one for this plan. One reason is that the banks have to ship a great deal of money from one part of the country to another, and it costs more for express charges for coin and especially for silver coin, than it does for paper, another is that where the government issues the money, if any should be lost or destroyed, the government is that much the gainer, but if the banks could issue the money, all that is lost or destroyed would be so much gain to the banks. Coin money lost would be no gain either to the banks or to the government.

Another reason the banks naturally want to issue the circulating medium is that they would then be in a position to increase or contract the currency almost, if not quite at will, which would make it possible to raise the interest rate to suit themselves. They give as a reason for an elastic currency, that at crop moving time more money is needed for that purpose. You can trust the banks, at all times and under all circumstances.

One thing more that should be done, in my estimation, is to either repeal the Australian ballot law or to do away with the primary laws. Some will not vote at the primaries as they do not wish to have it known to which party they belong. Then again one may not belong to any

political party; but it seems to me that no one should be deprived of his vote on that account, and he must have a party name before he can vote at the primaries.

I think every democrat from now until 1908 should use all his influence, let it be small or great, to get his neighbors interested in The Commoner to help along its good work, and especially to induce them at the next elections to cast every legal vote at all hazards as failure to do that has done more to defeat us than anything that I know of.

T. J. Madden, Kansas City.—It is high time to sound a note of warning against the growth of centralized power at Washington. The administration has openly and loudly declared against the right of the state to administer its local affairs in the matter of admitting an alien race into the public schools. Mr. Roosevelt has made the specific application of overgrown federalism and Mr. Root has declared it as a general principle of governmental policy. The rights of the sovereign states must give way to the imperial will of the general government. Not within the memory of a living man has such an assault been made upon municipal and individual liberty. The danger of this is not apparent to the average man who feels that the question of state rights was settled by the civil war and the people of the country should be aroused to the true danger of this imperialistic policy. It should be made known that it is not necessary to establish an empire in order to correct industrial abuses and that it is not necessary to make a military autocrat out of our president and blot out municipal rights in order to appease a foreign power and avoid a possible war. Monopoly on the one hand and socialism on the other seem to lend strength to this un-American doctrine. The misguided socialist may look upon it as a corrective for industrial wrongs but nothing could be more destructive of the end that socialism seeks to bring about. Plutocracy would like to seize upon the opportunity of placing all power at Washington for then it would be easily controlled. How eagerly the life insurance grafters took up with the idea of federal control of that business when the matter was up for consideration a year ago. The desire of plutocracy has always been to remove government as far from the people as possible. That is what gave us our senate elected by indirection; that is what gave us our electoral college; and the executive appointment of federal judges. Democracy stands for direct control by the people. It believes in the right of the state to administer its local affairs free from interference by outside authority; it believes in municipal rights and the independence of the individual. It believes in bringing the government nearer home. There is no more occasion for a strong central government now than there was in the infancy of our republic and Jefferson's arguments against Hamiltonianism are as applicable today as when they were first uttered by that great man. As for the president himself there is little to fear because he is animated by good motives but the danger consists in establishing the precedent. His attitude is due more to his impulsiveness and one-man-rule desire than to any fundamental principle. He likes to run things himself. It can not, therefore, be said that the attitude of the administration towards the centralizing of federal power is due to any principle, but the danger of the thing consists in establishing the principle by the president's sporadic act. The idea of a strong central government has always been kept alive in this country (and everywhere else for that matter) by the privilege seeking plutocracy. It has always been ready to declare for Hamilton. The monopolists cry out here and there against the president's declaration because they feel that the blow is aimed at them but these protests will soon subside into approving silence when they consider that the principle will mean more for them in the end and less for the people. Those who live by the spoliation of the public have always sought to augment and centralize governmental power. That is the only way they can control it. The retention of control by the people, the municipality or the state has always proved the undoing of grafters. Let government be under the hand and the eye of the people and few wrongs will be tolerated. Let us leave no control at Washington that can be exercised by local authority. What can be done directly let it not be done indirectly. What can be managed at home should not be sent far away from home to be managed

by agents and servants who are not under the eye of the governed. The privilege seeker wants the people to have as many agents and servants as possible and he wants duties passed from hand to hand for it is in these shifts that service is lost to the public. Home rule means simplicity, federalism means complexity and ultimate autocracy. The rights of the states are as sacred now as ever in the history of our country and they call aloud for defense and preservation against this unconstitutional usurpation. The general government is our servant and not our master. The constitution defines its duties and places limitations on its power and it must remain within those limits unless these United States become an empire instead of a republic. All men who believe in the efficacy of popular government should help stamp out this noxious growth of federalism and let inflated autocracy expire with Roosevelt's term.

A subscriber sends in the following suggestions: As we see that all corruption springs from the individual, we will put this foot note just before the signatures of the corporation managers: "This schedule of values stands as an option of sale."

Let me see if I can not make my ideas a little more clear by specializing: Suppose Mr. Herrin, chief counsel for the Southern Pacific was here and some one handed him one of these new assessment blanks. After glancing at it a moment he says: "Have we full power to fix our tax rate?"

Answer: "Yes."

Mr. Herrin: "May we assess our property as low as \$10,000 per mile?"

Answer: "Certainly, as low as one dollar per mile if you so wish."

Herrin: "Would not such valuation be raised?"

Answer: "There is no power vested in any one to raise your valuations. Your board has full power and final jurisdiction."

A smile of approval is on Mr. Herrin's face, but as he reads further it changes to a frown and he says: "This law would make us sell our road at the value we place upon it for tax purposes. As we are bonded and stocked for nearly eighty thousand dollars per mile, would it not be an outrage to make us pay taxes on that amount?"

Answer: "By so doing you would kill the valuation as you desire. If, however, you are paying dividends on eighty thousand dollars per mile, you certainly ought to pay taxes on that amount. If, on the other hand, you have watered your stock so as to create fictitious values that you may speculate with moneys intrusted to you by the public, justice demands that you squeeze the water out of your stocks and bonds."

Herrin: "Such a law would compel us to eat up our excess earnings, and keep down tax values by paying excessive salaries to our officials."

Answer: "By so doing you would kill the goose that laid the golden egg. When your operating sheet went to the public and the people learned what you did with your earnings they would take your property at your own under valuation. Thus would you lose the substance by grasping at the shadow."

THE SLEEPY SONG

As soon as the fire burns red and low,
And the house upstairs is still,
She sings me a queer little sleepy song
Of sheep that go over the hill.

The good little sheep run quick and soft,
Their colors are gray and white;
They follow their leader nose to tail,
For they must be home by night.

And one slips over, and one comes next,
And one runs after behind;
The gray one's nose at the white one's tail,
The top of the hill they find.

And when they get to the top of the hill
They quietly slip away,
But one runs over and one comes next—
Their colors are white and gray.

And over they go and over they go,
And over the top of the hill
The good little sheep run quick and soft,
And the house upstairs is still.

And one slips over and one comes next,
The good little, gray little sheep!
I watch how the fire burns red and low,
And she says that I fall asleep.

—Josephine Daskam in T. P.'s Weekly.