

The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

VOL. 7. No. 23.

Lincoln, Nebraska, June 21, 1907.

Whole Number 335.

CONTENTS

THE OKLAHOMA CONSTITUTION
MR. BRYAN AND THE TARIFF
JOHN T. MORGAN
"BEFORE RICHMOND"
THAT TARIFF COMMISSION
"TAFT QUITS FIGHTING FORAKER"
A CANDID BANKER
OREGON'S GREAT PROGRESS
THE LUKEWARMS AND THE KINGS
LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE
WASHINGTON LETTER
PARAGRAPHIC PUNCHES
COMMENT ON CURRENT TOPICS
HOME DEPARTMENT
WHETHER COMMON OR NOT
NEWS OF THE WEEK

MR. BRYAN AND THE TARIFF

The Houston, Texas, Post takes Mr. Bryan to task for an interview which gave to the tariff question less emphasis than the editor of the Post thought that question deserved. Mr. Bryan was quoted as saying that other questions are more important at present than the tariff question. What Mr. Bryan said was that the trust question, the tariff question and the railroad question were all parts of the larger question which presented the issue between a government administered for the benefit of the few and a government administered for the benefit of the whole people. The newspaper representative who reported the interview asked Mr. Bryan if he considered the tariff question the paramount issue. He replied no, that the three questions were parts of one issue. The reporter, as is sometimes the case, wrote the interview up in his own language and conveyed a false impression. Mr. Bryan has not attempted to fix the relative importance of these issues, believing as he has said several times that they are really phases of the greater issue presented between plutocracy and democracy.

The Post ought not to be so quick to assume as correct an interview to which it takes exceptions. It is bad enough to have the republican papers jumping at conclusions and giving circulation to criticisms. The Post, being democratic, ought to treat democrats as friends and not be too ready to suspect them of error. If the editor of the Post has followed Mr. Bryan's speeches, he ought to know that Mr. Bryan has emphasized the tariff question, and he ought not to be accused of lack of interest in the subject.

A GOOD SUGGESTION

Mr. Frank S. Gardner, secretary of the New York board of trade and transportation, has brought to the president's attention a suggestion which is worthy of consideration. This is a plan suggested by a Commoner reader more than a year ago and is to the effect that a cut rate intentionally given shall thenceforth be the established rate unless the court, upon appeal, shall declare the same to be unreasonably low. In other words, a railroad, by cutting a rate, shall raise a presumption against itself as to the reasonableness of the rate and be put upon the defensive. While the proposed measure will be unnecessary if the present laws really stop rebates and cut rates, no harm could come from the passage of such a law. It might help to prevent the violation of the present law as it would add a very effective penalty to the one already prescribed. However much the railroads may protest against the lowering of a rate when the lowering is done by the interstate commerce commission, it can not very well deny the reasonableness of a rate which it voluntarily puts into operation for the benefit of one of its shippers.



BUT THE BIG ONES GET AWAY

THE OKLAHOMA CONSTITUTION

The Commoner has already called attention to the Oklahoma constitution and has ventured to suggest that it is the best constitution that there is in the United States today. Its superiority consists in the fact that its framers took advantage of the experience of other states. The New York Tribune referred to the delegates to Oklahoma's constitutional convention as cornfield lawyers, but it is interesting to note how carefully these cornfield lawyers have been looking into other constitutions. Oklahoma's constitution was written from the standpoint of the people. It brings the government close to the people and keeps the government in the hands of the people. The republicans will have difficulty in convincing the people of Oklahoma that they can not be trusted with the management of their own affairs.

A few references to the provisions of the Oklahoma constitution will show how carefully it has been written:

Section 4 of the bill of rights provides that no civil or military power shall interfere to prevent the free exercise of the right of suffrage by those entitled to it.

Section 10 of the bill of rights provides that the writ of habeas corpus shall never be suspended.

Section 19 protects the right of trial by jury but permits a reduction of the jury to six men in county courts and in courts not of record. In civil cases and in criminal cases less than felonies, three-fourths of the whole number of the jurors concurring, shall have power to render a verdict. The provision for the three-fourths verdict in civil cases is important and is a step in advance.

Section 28 provides that the records, books

and files of all corporations shall be at all times liable and subject to the full visitatorial and inquisitorial powers of the state.

Section 31 provides that the right of the state to engage in any occupation or business for public purpose shall not be denied or prohibited, except that it shall not engage in the business of agriculture except for educational, scientific, penal or charitable purposes.

The advantages of the initiative and referendum are secured to the people so that they can control their representatives and make such changes as they shall deem best in their constitution and laws.

A department of labor is created, and the legislature is empowered to create a board of arbitration and conciliation.

In jury trials the verdict shall be general and while the court may, in its discretion, direct special findings, the judge shall not be required by law to direct the jury to make special findings.

The railroads are declared to be public highways and are subjected to strict control, and a corporation commission exercises supervision over quasi corporations created by the state.

The law is strict in regard to the creation of private corporations. No watered stock is allowed, campaign contributions are prohibited, and corporations are not allowed to own or control stock in competitive corporations. The license granted to mining or public service corporations shall contain a stipulation that such corporations will submit any difference it may have with employes with reference to labor to arbitration as provided by law. Corporations must file with the corporation commission a list of their stockholders, officers, directors, etc. No foreign corporation is permitted to carry on