

# "MY CONCEPTION OF THE PRESIDENCY"

By William J. Bryan

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The president's power for good or for harm is often overestimated. Our government is a government of checks and balances; power is distributed among different departments, and each official works in co-operation with others. In the making of laws, for instance, the president joins with the senate and the house; he may recommend, but he is powerless to legislate, except as a majority of the senate and the house concur with him. The senate and the house are also independent of each other, each having a veto over the other; and the president has a veto over both; except that the senate and house can, by two-thirds vote, override the president's veto. The influence of the president over legislation is, therefore limited; he shares responsibility with a large number of the people's representatives.

Even in the enforcement of law he is hedged about by restrictions. He acts through an attorney general (whose appointment must be approved by the senate), and offenders against the law must be prosecuted in the courts, so that here again the responsibility is divided. In the making of important appointments, too, he must consult the senate, and is, of necessity, compelled to exercise care and discretion. The most important requisite in a president, as in other officials, is that his sympathy shall be with the whole people, rather than with any fraction of the population. He is constantly called upon to act in the capacity of a judge—deciding between the importunities of those who seek favors and the rights and interests of the public. Unless his sympathies are right, the few are sure to have an advantage over the many, for the masses have no one to present their claims. They act only at elections; and must trust to their representatives to protect them from all their foes.

Second, the president must have a knowledge of public questions and the ability to discern between the true and the false; he must be able to analyze conditions and to detect the sophistries that are always employed by those who seek unfair advantages.

He must possess the moral courage to stand against the influences that are brought to bear in favor of special interests. In fact, the quality of moral courage is as essential in a public official as either right sympathies or a trained mind.

A president must have counselors, and, to make wise use of counselors, he must be open to convictions. The president is committed by his platform to certain policies, and the platform is binding; he is also committed to certain principles of government, and these he is in duty bound to apply in all matters that come before him. But there is a wide zone in which he must act upon his own judgment, and here he ought to have the aid of intelligent, conscientious, and faithful advisers. The law provides these, to a certain extent, in giving him a cabinet, and the vice president ought to be made a member of the cabinet ex officio, in order, first, that the president may have the benefit of his wisdom and knowledge of affairs and, second, that the vice president may be better prepared to take up the work of the president in case of a vacancy in the presidential office. There ought to be cordial relations also between the president and those who occupy positions of influence in the co-ordinate branches of the government, for our government is not a one-man government, but a government in which the chosen representatives of the people labor together to give expression to the will of the voters.

But the presidency is the highest position in the world, and its occupant is an important factor in all national matters. If he is a devout believer in our theory of government, recognizes the constitutional distribution of powers, trusts thoroughly in the people and fully sympathizes with them in their aspirations and hopes, he has an opportunity to do a splendid work; he occupies a vantage ground from which he can exert a wholesome influence in favor of each forward movement.

The responsibilities of the office are so great that the occupant ought to be relieved of every personal ambition, save the ambition to prove worthy of the confidence of his countrymen; for this reason, he ought to enter the position without thought or prospect of a second term.

While the burdens of such an office are heavy, and while the labors of the office are exacting and exhausting, the field of service is large, and measuring greatness by service, a president, by consecrating himself to the public weal, can make himself secure in the affections of his fellow citizens while he lives, and create for himself a permanent place in his nation's history.

W. J. BRYAN.

## NO LAW FOR MONOPOLISTS

Expressing the opinion that the Grosscup decision in the Standard Oil case will be "generally accepted as responsive to the facts," the New York Mail says: "The fine was a factor and no small one in the progressive uncertainty in the American business world that culminated in the crash of last October."

How did it all happen? With what reason may it be said that the fact that a notorious offender against the law is called to account produces business disaster among a free and progressive people?

If this is true why undertake to enforce law.

## BUT THEY FORGOT IT

The New York Tribune says: "Mr. Bryan is not fortunate in his efforts to create political capital out of the reasonable popular desire for publicity in respect to campaign receipts and expenditures. A few weeks ago, while both the nominees were still in the position of candidates for the nomination, Mr. Bryan, in what he conceived to be a master stroke of adroitness, invited Mr. Taft to express an opinion as to the propriety of shedding full light on the funds employed in a contest for the presidency, their sources, amounts and distribution. Thereupon Mr. Taft, who had hesitated to assume an authority not yet bestowed upon him, caused the fact to be made known that he had already declared in writing for complete publicity, which left Mr. Bryan in a somewhat less comfortable position than he had supposed himself to be assured of when he addressed his complacent suggestion to the prospective republican candidate."

But several important facts are to be remembered in this connection. Chairman Burrows forgot to tell the convention about the "publicity letter" he received from Mr. Taft.

The republican congress forgot to pass a law providing for publicity.

The republican national convention, which

nominated Mr. Taft, defeated, by a vote of 880 nays to 94 yeas, the LaFollette plank providing for publicity.

And the best the republican party is willing to do on this line is the promise that "AFTER the election" republican managers will take the people into their confidence.



## TRIAL BY JURY, TOO!

Referring to the decision of the United States court of appeals in overturning Judge Landis' fine of the Standard Oil company, the Chicago Record-Herald says:

"The members of the court scathingly arraigned Judge Landis, by inference, as denying the right of trial by jury to the defendant corporation, of attempting to visit punishment upon a corporation which had not even been indicted and of setting his personality and beliefs above the law."

Many republican papers heartily approve the decision. Some of them are indignant that Judge Landis "by inference" denied to the Standard Oil company "the right of trial by jury," but they condemn the efforts of democrats who insist that the right of trial by jury be accorded to individuals in indirect contempt cases.

## WHAT ABOUT SHERMAN?

We are told by the Chicago Record-Herald that: "The Kansas City Star" argues that it would be a good thing if a democratic congress were elected to serve with Taft as president. It says that the country knows full well that if Taft were elected and Cannon remained in the speaker's chair the boss of the house would obstruct progressive policies under the new administration just as he did in the last session of congress. The dominant party is under suspicion because of the reactionary strength in that session and in the republican convention." And what would James S. Sherman—now

and for years Cannon's right hand man in the house—be doing in the presidency of the senate? Is it not reasonable to believe that Mr. Sherman would do a little obstructing on his own account when it came to "progressive policies?" Assuredly the republican leader is hard put for a persuasive plea to the rank and file of his party.

## TREASON!

We would not for the world engage in criticism of the court. But surely there can be no harm in reproducing a republican editorial (for whoever knew a republican editorial to be out of accord with the accepted rules of polite society?) The New York Press, a republican paper, referring to the Grosscup decision, says:

"The judgment of the court of appeals, which calls for careful scrutiny and cool reading, can not alter the public conviction that the offenders behind the Standard Oil corporation in its rebate crimes deserve to be in the penitentiary and will be sent there when the law is enforced by those who take oaths to administer it."

## MAY NOT BE DECISIVE

Eugene W. Leake, a member of congress from New Jersey, has won more or less fame by announcing that he will not support the democratic ticket. But democratic grief because of this leak is, at least, softened by the reports that many of the New Jersey democrats who refused to support Mr. Bryan in 1896 and 1900, are now working earnestly and unitedly for democratic victory. The True American, published at Trenton, N. J., a democratic newspaper which once bolted Mr. Bryan, announces that it will support him this year. So, after all, the departure of the young congressman from New Jersey may not necessarily determine the result.