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THEY ARE NOT AFRAID OF THE "BITE"

"The speech may sound somewhat unfavorable from the railroad point of view, but Wall Street believes that Secretary Taft's public bark does not necessarily portend a serious bite later on." --- From the Stock Market Report printed in the New York Journal of Commerce (rep.) Issue of July 28, 1908, page 3.

THE BUSINESS MAN AND THE MASSES

By William J. Bryan

To The Commoner: My attention has been called to a pamphlet, issued by the National Association of Manufacturers, and signed by James W. Van Cleave. It concluded with the following statement in black type:

"It is the duty of American business men, regardless of their party, to bury Bryan and Bryanism under such an avalanche of votes in 1908 that the work will not have to be done over again in 1912, or ever."

Mr. Van Cleave's pamphlet contains four pages of printed matter; beginning with an explanation as to why the National Manufacturers' Association did not go to Denver it is devoted almost entirely to a condemnation of the labor plank adopted at Denver. Mr. Van Cleave insists that he is not talking party politics, that he is not making an appeal "to either republicans or democrats as such," but that he is "talking as a business man to business men on a subject which has a vital concern for all of us."

Mr. Van Cleave's pamphlet raises two questions: First, is there anything in the labor plank of the democratic platform to which business men can justly take exception and, second, is the labor question so important to business men as to justify them in ignoring all other issues?

Before answering the first question, it may be well to ask: "Who are business men?" Mr. Van Cleave is the president of a society known as the National Association of Manufacturers. Manufacturers are not the only business men in the country, and yet Mr. Van Cleave's appeal is to "business men." Every man who is engaged in a work which is useful to society is a business man; every man who contributes by brain or muscle to the nation's wealth and the nation's progress is a business man. Can it be said that all who are engaged in any honorable and helpful work have a "vital concern" in the defeat of the democratic party?

But suppose we narrow the definition of business men to those who are engaged in production, distribution and transportation. Can it be said that the labor plank of the democratic platform is a menace to all these? Shall we so define the term "business men" that it will include only the employer of labor? Has the manufacturer an interest so distinct from those whom he employs, and through whose labor he produces, that he has a "vital concern" in opposing legislation beneficial to his employes? Are the interests of the merchant so distinct from the interests of the clerks whom he employs that the merchant has a "vital concern" in defeating legislation beneficial to his clerks and employes? And has the corporation which is engaged in transportation interests so distinct from the interests of those who carry on its work that it has a "vital concern" in opposing legislation asked by the employes?

Or does Mr. Van Cleave limit his definition to big manufacturers and big merchants and big railway corporations? It might be well for Mr. Van Cleave to furnish plans and specifications with his appeal so that the public will know exactly who are included in the phrase "business men." Surely not all of those who are pecuniarily interested in manufacturing, merchandising and railroading will

feel that they are called upon to enlist in a war against the laboring man.

But what is this labor plank which is of such "vital concern" to those for whom Mr. Van Cleave would speak? It asks that a labor department be created, with a cabinet officer at its head. Does this offend the business men? Are the wage-earners presumptuous or impudent in asking for recognition in the president's council chamber? Those known as wage-earners constitute a considerable percentage of the population; is it unreasonable that they should have a special champion in the cabinet, to represent them in the discussion of public questions? It was some time before a Department of agriculture was created; will anybody doubt that the creation of this department was wise? Will anybody dispute that this department has been of immense advantage to the farmers of the country? What reason have we to doubt that a department of labor would in like manner justify its creation? We have more lately created a department of commerce and labor, but the head of that department has represented commerce rather than labor.

The platform draws a distinction between associations of wage earners and producers, organized for the protection of wages and the improvement of labor conditions, and industrial corporations which act in restraint of trade. The difference between a labor organization and a trust is so apparent that no disinterested person will deny that they should be treated separately. To class the two kinds of organizations together, and deal with them under one law, is bound to do injustice to one or the other. Surely the business men can have no "vital concern" in including the labor organizations in the anti-trust laws.

The democratic platform also declares in favor of the eight-hour day on government work and the employers' liability act, but as these planks are also in the republican platform, they can not, of course, be offensive to Mr. Van Cleave.

The democratic platform also favors the passage of a measure which passed the United States senate in 1896, but which a republican congress has ever since refused to enact, providing for trial by jury in cases of indirect contempt. Can this raise a question of "vital concern" to business men? The business man has the right of trial by jury; every man charged with a crime has the right of trial by jury. What public interest is there that will suffer by the granting of this safeguard to wage earners? The right of trial by jury in cases of indirect contempt is no reflection upon the court. Is it a reflection upon the court if a party to the trial of a case at law asks for a jury? Is it a reflection upon a criminal judge that he must permit the accused to be tried before a jury of his peers? Where the contempt is not committed in the presence of the court, it must rest upon evidence. In such a case, the judge has no information except that which he secures from witnesses, and it is the special function of the jury to weigh evidence and to decide upon the credibility of witnesses. An attempt has been made to raise a false issue in regard to the courts and to make it appear that the demand for trial by jury is an assault upon the integrity of the