

# The Commoner.

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## SOLVING THE "MYSTERY OF 1908"

It is easy enough to give the question, "How did it happen?" an offhand answer. Possibly even after the most careful inquiry the answer will be, in a degree, speculative.

In the light of the situation, as seen prior to election day by the campaign managers of both parties, "How did it happen?" is a problem worth solving. The Commoner purposes to undertake along practical lines the solution of this problem.

It is all very well for victorious campaign managers and their lieutenants to beat the tom tom and claim all credit for their superior generalship; it is all very well for political writers to indulge in the proud boast, "I told you so," but it is the simple truth that neither political managers or writers, neither candidates or counsellors foresaw the result of the presidential campaign as it was written in the returns of November 3. In support of this statement we need but recall the fact that in 1908, for the first time in history, the republican candidate for the presidency engaged in an extended stumping tour throughout the country. Political correspondents, anxious to maintain the role of prophets, hesitated to make predictions;

while in one paragraph they held out hope to the dominant party in another paragraph they described conditions to be such as to preclude the dominant party from winning. Straw votes, in former campaigns so generally encouraging to the republican party, were, in this campaign, uniformly indicative of democratic victory. While it is true that many republican newspapers printed tables showing that their candidate would receive a large majority in the electoral college, most of these newspapers took the pains to insist that they were not engaged in making predictions.

How, then, did it happen that the result was so wholly at variance with the hopes of one party, with the fears of the other and with the general opinion among men accustomed to the study of political conditions and public sentiment?

That is the question which The Commoner hopes to solve. The inquiry The Commoner will make is not prompted by idle curiosity but in order that men who regard citizenship as a trust may be able to discharge their duty with intelligent concern for the future.

To this end The Commoner asks co-operation of its readers in every section of the country.

"Did the democratic party make losses in your county and precinct?"

"If so, to what influence were such losses due?"

"What course shall reformers adopt for the future?"

"Can the democratic party hope ever to gain control of the federal government?"

These are the questions which The Commoner submits for the candid consideration of its readers.

For the preparation of this symposium The Commoner must lay down certain unalterable rules:

First, replies must be brief and to the point. Second, the writing must be plain.

Third, the tone must be respectful, the language non-libelous and free from epithet—although the widest possible latitude will be given for the description of the conditions that contributed to the result and the expression of opinion as to the future course of reformers.

The name of the contributor will be used, except where the use of the name is forbidden.

The Commoner will continue this symposium from week to week, covering sufficient time and space in which to clear up "The Mystery of 1908."

## A BATTLE LOST--A WAR BUT BEGUN

To the Readers of The Commoner:

The election of 1908 is over and the returns disclose a signal victory for our opponents, but the principles for which our party stands, the policies for which our party contends—these are not dead. A good proposition is not made bad by rejection at the polls; a needed reform is not made unnecessary by an adverse vote. The legislation asked for by the democratic party in its last national platform was not of a temporary character—it was legislation which will be of permanent advantage when it is secured.

Does anyone believe that the American people will permanently permit secrecy as to campaign contributions? Does anyone believe that the American people will permanently permit the will of the voters to be thwarted, as it is now, by the election of senators through legislatures? Does anyone believe that the trusts will be permitted to permanently exploit the masses? Does anyone believe that the consumer will permanently permit the tariff to be written by the beneficiaries of that tariff? Does anyone believe that the public will permanently tolerate estrangement between labor and capital? Does anyone believe that the fifteen millions of depositors will forever permit their savings to be jeopardized as at present? Does anyone believe that the extravagance of the government will go on forever unchecked? Does anyone believe that our republic will permanently consent to a colonial policy with its humiliations and finan-

cial burdens? There must be a party representing the people's protest against wrong in high places, against corruption in politics and against the oppression of the struggling masses; and the democratic party must continue its fight or dissolve. It could not exist as a plutocratic party.

During the last twelve years the democratic party has accomplished more out of power than the republican party has accomplished in office, and this is a sufficient reward for those who fight for a righteous cause. It would have been pleasant to have been able to reward worthy democrats with official positions, but the most worthy of the democrats are not looking for official positions, they are looking for good government, and they labor unselfishly for the promotion of good government. They will neither be discouraged nor dismayed by defeat. They can not cease to be interested in the government, for indifference would only invite worse abuses than those from which we now suffer. The fight must be continued because a good government is the richest legacy that a parent can leave to a child.

As for myself, let no one worry about my future. The holding of office is a mere incident in the life of those who are devoted to reforms. The reform is the essential thing. If one can advance reforms by holding office, then the holding of office is justifiable; if one can best advance reforms as a private citizen, then the holding of office is undesirable. The world owes

me nothing; I have been abundantly compensated for what I have been able to do. My life will not be long enough to repay the people for their support, and for the confidence which they have expressed. My gratitude to those with whom I have labored surpasses language and the days of the future will be devoted to work in the interest of the people as I understand that interest, and in behalf of those reforms which seem to me to be the best. I invite the co-operation of those who approve, and I shall not be deterred by the criticism of those who disapprove. With an abiding faith in the triumph of the truth and an unfaltering confidence in the righteousness of our cause, I speak this word of encouragement to those who call themselves friends. I shall keep step with them and march on. The measure of our work can not be taken in a day. If we are right, as I believe we are, it will vindicate us; if we contribute, as I believe we are contributing, to a cause that is founded in justice, our efforts will weigh in the final victory.

"Yea, though thou lie upon the dust,  
When they who helped thee flee in fear,  
Die full of hope and manly trust,  
Like those who fell in battle here.

Another hand thy sword shall wield,  
Another hand the standard wave,  
Till from the trumpets mouth is pealed,  
The blast of triumph o'er thy grave."