

# SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF 1908

Walter G. Stewart, Reading, Pa.—Many voters persuaded themselves that they could get the benefit of a substantial amount of Bryanite democracy through Rooseveltian republicanism, without incurring the desperate hostility of powerful interests (which they feared to do) or discrediting Roosevelt's efforts (which seemed unfair). Cowardly avoidance of threatened punishment, excused by vain hopes of Rooseveltian remedies—this, broadly, explains the lost battle of 1908. The war must go on until conditions compel democratic republicans and democratic democrats to unite on a fundamental issue such as the initiative and referendum, perhaps.

James Bassel, Weston, W. Va.—One—Party gained 208 over vote of 1904 in this county. Opposition majority cut 100, from 508 in 1904 to 408 this time. Two—Party divided, I fear, east from west, like whigs in 1852, north and south. Three—Hard to contend against a combine of money and ignorance; only hope appears to be in a break in the dominant party. As to best course to pursue, can't say, but looks as if the sheep and the goats had best some way or somehow separate. Plutocracy will now strive to control the democratic organization, as it did from 1876 to 1896. Election result recalls Hamilton, Carlyle, Macaulay and Schiller ("30 years war in Europe seventeenth century," speaking of Henry IV, founder of the Bourbon dynasty in France, page 62 or 68) doubting the intelligence of the people. Schiller mentions "barbarism, superstition, and rapacity of men, that must be provided for in the measures of a statesman—Wisdom alone will not go."

B. F. Irish, Blandinsville, Ill.—I have taken some pains to find the reason and the five democrats who voted for Taft and the ten democrats who voted for the prohibition candidates and the republicans who promised to vote for you and did not all give the same reason, viz, that the election of Bryan would be a blow to the business prosperity of the country which you could not prevent, as all the wealth of big republicans could be locked up or removed from the country. God help us. Go to the United States senate and do all you can to prevent the calamity which follows corruption.

J. W. McClure, Seclalia, Mo.—Complying with your request to give cause for defeat of the democracy in the recent election, would answer but one thing, and that was the fear of business depression, such as the country experienced under the last democratic administration at Washington. A great many thousand people (enough to have elected Mr. Bryan) wanted to vote for him, but were deterred by the thought of a recurrence of hard times, such as they had under Cleveland's last administration. This they were made to believe by the big interests which are ruling this country, and will until a revolution.

J. P. Bradway, Warsaw, Ind.—The democratic party made gains in our state and county, but fell behind on the national ticket. The loss to the national ticket seems to have been in precincts where there was a goodly number of laborers and Catholics. In my precinct there were three Catholics all democrats, and there were just three more votes for Mr. Taft this year than for Mr. Roosevelt four years ago. I find the same condition exists in other counties. In Catholic communities Mr. Taft made his largest gains. I believe through here the Catholics voted for Mr. Taft, regardless of their political faith. I have faith in the democratic party that it will eventually gain control of the federal government, and fought out on the principles adopted in the Denver platform and so nobly defended by one of the truest and noblest champions for the masses and the common people this world has ever seen.

M. J. Fruchs, Pittsburg, Pa.—It happened, because from the dawn of history to the present day, men did not, and do not think for themselves. In olden times, it was a corrupt clergy which, by threats and entreaties, gained their masters' ends. By awakening and nursing suicidal passions in the hearts of the masses, it succeeded to distract their minds from any effectual endeavor, to find out for themselves, the real cause of their misery. By such means, prolonged a system of tyranny, slavery, graft, exploitation and darkness. It took the world several thousand years to open its eyes, and rid itself of such nefarious influence. Today corrupt press-hirelings of an industrial, commercial, and political piracy, is continuing the work of the

## THE SCOPE OF THE INQUIRY

In its issue of November 13, The Commoner invited contributions to a symposium, having for its purpose an inquiry into the causes of the results of the 1908 election. The Commoner asked the co-operation of its readers in every section of the country, submitting these questions:

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?

The second installment of this symposium is printed in this issue. It should be understood that the publication of any particular opinion does not mean that The Commoner endorses that opinion. In order that the inquiry shall be thorough it will be necessary that wide scope be given the contributors to this symposium, and these opinions are to be printed with the names of the writers.

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.

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

clergy of the dark ages, and while it may not use the same methods, it serves the same purpose, and attains the same ends. Someone named the press the fourth power in a state. That may have been at one time. The press today is the first and only power in a republic. More powerful in effectiveness, and far reaching in influence than anything ever adopted in the past by demagogues or tyrants for the purpose of subjecting the people. Numberless generations of men in the past allowed themselves to be robbed and lashed. They hated their persecutors, but were defenseless. Yet, accumulated hate, resulted in the final overthrow of the system. Today free men are robbed and starved. They possess a powerful weapon—their ballot, but they do not know their persecutors, they do not hate them. They are educated to love them, and be grateful for their existence. Daily the voter reads a lesson in his favorite paper—the paper he befriended; he grows to see things, and believe in the actual outcome of problems as advocated by that paper. When hunting work, when going or coming from work, he reads the same paper, studies the same lesson, and on election day he votes, as it directed. Can anyone wonder how it happened when ninety per cent of the country, daily and periodic press, did have nothing to say about reforms, or platforms, but just the perspective of getting and keeping, or the dreadful alternative of losing the country's meal ticket? What democracy should do? Why; keep on fighting, of course. Keep on adopting measures for insuring the people's liberties, and material welfare. Identify itself with the people's needs and become the people's party. Use every material and moral effort to organize and strengthen a press which would represent a new and truer democracy, and make the same accessible to the majority of voters. A majority in the circulation of one party's papers, means a majority for that party on election day.

Matt F. Lathers, Beloit, Wis.—You have made the grandest fight ever made by any one for any cause. You ask for reasons why you

were defeated. In my opinion the principal reasons were short-sightedness of thousands of American voters who we supposed were better supplied with brains; treachery in our own party and last, but not least, nearly all the newspapers and money were on the other side. I believe that four years more of the "Roosevelt dynasty" will be enough argument for the farmers and shop men. Two years more of "Cannon" will make a large democratic majority in the house. You will be elected in 1912 by the largest vote ever given any president.

R. M. Carpenter, Klester, Minn.—In Fairbault county, this state, at the recent election, the democratic party showed a gain of more than 100 per cent and in the precinct of Klester the gain was more than 400 per cent. This gain was due to the fact that the democratic platform was more acceptable to the people and the reforms it promised were more applicable to the condition and needs of the country. The course for reformers to adopt is to spread true democratic doctrine, as set forth in the platform of 1908, and await the certain failure of the incoming republican administration to fulfill the promises it made in its platform, particularly as relates to a revision of the tariff. The democratic party is founded on permanent principles, the carrying out of which means the greatest good and greatest freedom for the masses from the encroachments of entrenched wealth, and it will again be victorious, for "freedom's battle once begun, bequeathed from bleeding sire to son, though baffled oft is ever won."

A. J. Anders, Oelwein, Iowa.—I answer the questions as follows: Two—Partisan prejudice, intimidation, treachery, ignorant fear of a change, and activity of federal officeholders. Three—Fight the battle out on lines of 1908. Four—Yes. The democratic party must gain control and a change be effected, or our liberty will be lost and life without liberty is not worth living.

M. B. Chase, Marion, Ohio.—My precinct and county made democratic gains at the last election attributable to the good work of The Commoner, and the thorough work done in 1896. Many things and reasons made up the defeat of Mr. Bryan and the democratic party. First, the metropolitan papers of the country, republican and some democratic were against the new democracy. Second, President Roosevelt violating, in my opinion, both the letter and spirit of civil service reform directly and indirectly, ordered the officeholders of his administration, under the pay of the government, from their posts of duty thereunder into the field to fight the battle for the tariff and the trusts, and they went forth and waged political war against us, while we paid half of their salary to run the work of the government; and in this connection the trusts furnished not less than \$3,000,000 to carry on the campaign. Third, The manufacturers, principally of the east, fearing loss of profits vouchsafed to them by the trust party, and too greedy to divide any benefits which the tariff might bring them, with their poor employees, threatened that their mills and workshops would shut down or run depending upon which was elected, Mr. Bryan or Mr. Tariff Taft. Supporting this, at nearly every republican headquarters, was billboarded, "If Mr. Bryan is elected instant and continued depression in business, will result." False and fraudulent statement. Fourth, Early in the campaign in Ohio republicans started and clandestinely kept up the cry of "Taft and Harmon," for the purpose of defeating Mr. Bryan, as later in New York came the cry of "Taft and Chanler." Fifth, The railroads with their moneyed influence were against us, both in the east and in the west and northwest. Sixth, The labor vote of the country was divided by conditions not under the control of the democracy. Seventh, There had been, during the time of the governorship of Mr. Taft in the Philippines, a preparation by him for the presidency, in favoring and ingratiating himself into the confidence of the people who represented a large number of voters in the United States, a great many of whom I can but believe therefore stood by Mr. Taft and while they were mostly of democratic tendencies, were not altogether so. This vote I would estimate at not much less than 750,000. Eighth, I believe that Mr. Taft's charge upon the "solid south," influenced a great many votes in the middle (eastern) states. The industrial element in the south,