

SOLVING THE MYSTERY OF 1908

H. R. Hall, Sandoval, Ill.—“What course shall reformers adopt for the future?” Continue to advocate reforms as they appear to be needed. “Can the democratic party hope ever to gain control of the federal government?” Yes, for truth and righteous cause will win in time. It will be better to vote a righteous cause and lose than to vote for an unrighteous cause and gain the election. To cast a satisfactory vote is a pleasure.

G. J. Richmond, Minden, Neb.—In answer to questions, would say: First, No, a material gain. Second, The republicans lost by reason of a secondary importance of issues generally. Mainly guarantee of deposits. Third, Improve their organization and get control of more metropolitan newspapers. Fourth, Yes. We believe Taft is not equal to the occasion.

F. Sharp, Ripley, Okla.—The democratic party did make losses in this county. The influences that caused it were the increased negro vote and coercion. This is a cotton county and a few days before election the report was circulated among the farmers that if Taft was elected the price of cotton would advance and if not the price would decline and I think there were some that believed it and for that reason voted for Taft. Also the loan companies reported they would have no money to loan for nine months in case of Bryan's election and that scared a few and the threat of a panic was worked night and day. The hard times talk was all the argument used in this county by the republicans. Ask any of them the reason why they couldn't support Bryan, and it was the same old story, “the fear of a panic.” The result of November 3 was laying the foundation for a monarchy.

A. J. Hunter, Paris, Ill.—First, The whole force of the federal government was transformed into a political machine, the president at its head while the people's treasury was paying the salaries. Second, The civil service law was repudiated by the president and his cabinet, 250,000 officeholders was turned loose upon the country, and worked every township in the United States for Mr. Taft and the other republican candidates, while their time was being paid out of the people's treasury. Third, As usual, a catalogue of false prophecies, deceptions and falsehood, was formulated by the bosses, as a guide for the press and the speaker, to the end that perfect consistency might obtain in deceiving the voters; that Bryan was a menace to the farmer and the laboring man, that if elected he would create a panic, and hard times, and it would be dangerous for him to have the power to appoint the judges of the federal courts. Fourth, The trusts and monopolies threatened their men in the factories that if Bryan was elected they would have to close their mills, cut wages in the shops and in the mines. These threats caused tens of thousands of poor laboring men to choose between impoverished homes, or surrender their sovereign rights to the boss, and vote for Mr. Taft. The farmer was told that the high price of corn and live stock was all due to the republican party, and thousands of farmers believed the story. In addition to this cruel intimidation and false statements—the bosses and the republican committees, had all the money that they could use to purchase the floater, corrupt the ballot and publish and distribute tons of false and pernicious literature. Under the leadership of Mr. Bryan, the democratic party made a clean, honest fight to defeat the “standpat” machine, and the trusts, and give back once more the control of the government to the people. And lost. Mr. Taft fought to continue the control of the government in hands of the trusts and monopolies. He did that and won. And now we know to a certainty that the government will continue to be administered by the privileged class for the next four years in the interest of the money power, the trusts, the grafters and the republican party. We also know that political power acquired by coercion, fraud and tainted money can not endure, and that political rights are not the property of the boss or employer. These facts should intensify the determination of all patriotic citizens to continue the fight until predatory wealth shall release its grasp upon the throats of the people and popular government shall once more be restored.

J. D. Olds, Rice Lake, Wis.—How did it happen? This question is of great importance to the great mass of bread winning people who have now become dependent upon the rich em-

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 fourth 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.

ployer for a job by which they may earn enough to feed and clothe themselves and family. This class is always in great fear that they may lose their job, and these rich employers and office-seekers and officeholders have all learned that fear is one of the most demoralizing and uncontrollable powers that has ever cursed a people and it has come to that condition of demoralization among the officeholders and seekers and autocratic rich who are in the g. o. p largely. They have used that demoralizing power to arouse that fear among the poor workingmen by threats of a loss of work or of some terrible calamity if they vote for any change or reform. Thus it is safe to say that many thousands and probably millions voted against their own conscience rather than take the chance of starving themselves and family, knowing full well that these men had the power to do all the desperate work that their demoralized condition would prompt them to promise. Centralized wealth, power and corruption has, during all time, worked hand in hand against any moral uplift or liberty or justice to the great mass of bread winning slaves of the world. “What course shall reformers adopt for the future?” Every reformer, regardless of any and all political parties, work without ceasing for a law, national and state, that will make it a criminal offense to intimidate, coerce or make any threat of calamity or loss if such person or party does or does not win, the penalty prison for life whether rich or poor. Can the democratic party ever hope to gain control of the federal government? Yes. Perseverance in a just cause will certainly win some time. It might be well to call a union conference and invite every political party to send delegates and try to unite all reformers upon one platform to be known as the union democrat reform party platform.

W. A. Burdette, Ona, W. Va.—First, The democratic party made material gains in my county (Cabell) and precinct. The gains were due to the accepted soundness of democratic policies, to discontent with republican misrule in the state and nation, to the partial suppression of the usual election frauds. Second, For the future I recommend that reformers continue the fight of the past until the people are fully educated to our policies; that all frauds in the election just passed be vigorously prosecuted, and, where necessary, that more rigid election laws be passed, so as to insure honest elections in the future. Third, Probably the democratic party can hope to gain control of the federal government in time, but it will require a hard struggle—most likely a revolution—to wrest it from the control of the favored interests. Fourth, “How did it happen?” Can't say positively, but let me suggest a lookout along the following lines: High handed illegal registration, which aided illegal voting; the accustomed coercion and increased bribes, while the panic and starvation rendered those means unusually effective; improper counting of a few ballots in each precinct having a republican majority of election commissioners. Each vote thus taken from the democrats and given to the republicans made a difference of two. To my certain knowledge, several were certainly thus counted in my own precinct. At that ratio the democrats

should have had 300 more votes in our county, and 17,000 more in this state, while the republicans should have had correspondingly less. That would have rendered our partial victory in the county a complete victory, and it would have placed our state handsomely in the democratic ranks. Similar errors elsewhere—seemingly small—may have defeated the national ticket.

Henry A. Parsons, Kansas City, Kan.—What is the reason they lost in 1908? I think the main reason for the vote against our national ticket in 1908 is that the voters were misled by erroneous and deceptive statements of the opposition press and literature and by most of the stump speakers and workers of our opponents. Our opponents labored industriously to make the voters believe that hard times would certainly follow the election of Mr. Bryan to the presidency, that industries would close, business would languish, laborers would lose their jobs and a general panicky feeling would take possession of the country and last for years. These things were told and repeated morning, noon and night for months and the people were misled in all or nearly all the doubtful states. Our opponents had most of the newspapers and money and could reach the voters more effectively than we could. They knew the people had been misled as to the cause of the panic of 1893 and that a similar result would follow the election of Mr. Bryan in 1908. The thing for reformers to do is to hold the fort and fight on. We must have more newspapers. We should have school house societies where the vital issues should be discussed year in and year out. The democratic party can again control the federal government. Stick to the democratic party. The people have faith in Mr. Bryan. His campaign this year was matchless in the political history of the world.

Edward C. Graves, Vermont, Ill.—The defeat of the democratic party in my opinion is due, as it has been in the last three campaigns to the corrupt use of money and the ignorance of the laboring classes, including many farmers. Many do not read nor care to understand the reforms which would be to their special interest and also to the interest of all. They are ready to believe anything printed or said against such reforms. And with ninety per cent of the newspapers working in the interest of trusts and monopolies it is not to be wondered at after all. If there is hope for the people, or the democratic party it will be on the same honest basis and under such leadership as Mr. Bryan has shown in our past campaigns, and not by retreating from what we understand to be right. I believe labor and capital will clash before the people will wake up and vote to their interests. But we hope that such will not be necessary. Let us try to organize and educate the voters and hope that the time will soon come when the right and not might will prevail.

R. C. Gregory, Farmers Station, Ohio.—The course for reformers to adopt is to organize into a society to disseminate democratic doctrines. Each member should pay regular dues. The society should be represented in every school district, where especially in the country, the whole neighborhood will become interested in the discussion and debate. Nothing but an organized fight can ever overcome democratic enemies. In regard to the last question, the democratic party can never hope to gain control of the government until it has an organization comparable to the republican organization.

J. Granville Heaps, Streett, Md.—Two, Drive every man out of the democratic party who is in it “for revenue only,” and let the honest citizens control the organization, not professional politicians. Three, Yes after this present system has sucked the life blood from the nation. Possibly never until force is used. The press is leaning solidly plutocratic. The New York World is playing a game of bluff and is as rotten as the times. If they and their kind had made the fight in the doubtful states that the Record did in Pennsylvania and Mr. Watterson did in Kentucky, there would have been another song to sing, and they could enlarge their Bryan map. The country press is doing great work in this county, and if it could be done all over the nation as well, we would be in fair shape by 1912.

Henry Ware Allen, Wichita, Kan.—Taft received the majority vote because of an unintelligent dread of change produced by the overwhelming power of the press, which by editorial