

The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

VOL. 9, NO. 7

Lincoln, Nebraska, February 26, 1909

Whole Number 423

MR. BRYAN BEFORE THE NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE

In accordance with an invitation formerly extended to him several weeks ago Mr. Bryan addressed a joint session of the legislature at Lincoln, February 17. In the beginning Mr. Bryan said that in speaking to the legislature he wanted no more weight to attach to his words than they deserved according to their argument. He hoped no one would say he attempted to dictate to the legislature. It was a reflection on that body to have any insinuation that any man could dictate to it. The Lincoln (Neb.) Journal gives the following as the substance of Mr. Bryan's remarks:

"The representative stands to act for those who elect him. There are two theories of his function, the one that he is selected to think for his constituents and to act as he sees fit, and the other that the constituents think for themselves and send the representative to the legislature to act for them. The latter is essentially democratic, taking the word in its broader sense. That is why we have a roll-call. It is that the people at home may know how each one of you vote on measures and to gauge the attitude of their representative by his stand on measures which they as constituents have already thought out for themselves. Every representative should act in the daylight, that all men may know what he does officially. There is such a thing as embezzlement of power. I hope the time will come when men may be whipped into prison for a betrayal of power, for having used the delegated trust for private gain.

"My views on this matter I expressed last fall in my notification speech and with your permission I will read a few lines from it: 'And I may add a platform is binding as to what it omits as well as to what it contains. According to the democratic idea the people think for themselves and select officials to carry out their wishes. The voters are the sovereigns and officials are the servants employed for a fixed time and at a stated salary to do what the sovereigns want done, and to do it in the way the sovereigns want it done. Platforms are entirely in harmony with this democratic idea. A platform announces the party's position on the questions which are at issue and the official is not at liberty to use the authority vested in him to urge personal views which have not been submitted to the voters for their approval. If one is nominated on a platform which is not satisfactory to him, he must, if candid, either decline the nomination, or in accepting it, propose an amended platform in lieu of the one adopted by the convention.'

"I would have felt myself bound by every pledge of the party platform if I had been elected and would not have felt myself at liberty to have proposed important legislation that was

not mentioned in the platform on which I made the race. Representatives have a more complicated situation to face. Many of them have run not wholly on the state platform, but also on local platforms, which they have promulgated and on which largely they have been elected. Every man who was elected on a known issue, be that issue state or local, ought to vote as he promised or resign and go home. If there were in the party platform a plank of which I did not approve I would urge its fulfillment with as much zeal as if I did approve it, because my confidence in the right of the majority to rule is greater than my confidence in my own judgment. The democrats have a party reason for carrying out the party pledges. The republicans may feel justified in making political capital out of any failures of the democrats to fulfill their promises."

Some things not in the platform justify attention and careful consideration of their merits, continued the speaker. He spoke of the bill which appropriated funds for the erection of a monument to Abraham Lincoln and while he would say nothing as to the amount he hoped the legislature would see fit to deal liberally by it. Lincoln had founded a party but he is now too big to be claimed by any party, he is indeed too big to be claimed by any nation. He belongs to the world.

Second, Mr. Bryan hoped the legislature would be generous with the Historical Society building, and would follow the lead of other states in creating a place to shelter the history of the commonwealth as it develops.

Third, a bill on which he could not speak so freely, but in the advantages of which he had absolute confidence, the initiative and referendum. He believed in the right of the people to initiate laws and to sit in judgment on them when originated by the legislature. If this law could be put in force by statute he would not favor it until it had become a plank in some party platform. But the bill in question merely provides for the submission of the question to the people.

Fourth, the school of citizenship. Mr. Bryan said that since his name had been connected with the bill he felt that he should explain his connection with it. He had had a conversation with the chancellor and the chancellor had brought the matter of such a school to the attention of the board of regents. Then with their approval Mr. Bryan had mentioned it to some members of the legislature. The bill, however, merely endorses the plan already adopted by the regents and only groups the courses into a school. Mr. Bryan said that he thought colleges neglect training in this respect, and the bill is intended to further the study of the duties of citizenship.

Fifth, the Carnegie pension fund for college professors. Mr. Bryan declared that the need for better pay for teachers in the public schools and colleges did not warrant the state in humiliating itself by asking as mendicants that some rich man should help the state bear a burden it is the duty of its citizens to assume. The source from which such aid might come had much to do with its acceptance, he thought, and in the present case put it beyond the reason for acceptance. "This Carnegie fund," said Mr. Bryan, "is the most insidious poison that now threatens our nation. It will do more harm to us than all the efforts of the millionaires. If the trust principle is correct the work of consolidation will go on and on until all industry is centered in the hands of a few men, who will dole out to the people their daily pittance of bread. The steel trust now is the mightiest of all these factors. So strong was it that it forced the president of the United States to give his consent to its absorbing against the law one of its competitors. And at its head is Andrew Carnegie, the man who would pension our teachers. Its earnings last year were \$150,000,000, and enough was extorted from our state to pay all the salaries of all the teachers of our universities and colleges. Shall we say, then, that

he may have the privilege of stopping the mouths of our professors and warping their teachings in consequence of what he gives them from month to month? I do not ask you to let me influence you. If my argument is sound take it, for the reasoning of the voter is as sound and the question will not be settled now. If in after years it is found that the acceptance of this gift has caused the warping of teachings in our institutions of learning, the voter will take the first opportunity to frown on the party that allowed it."

Sixth, the Oregon plan of election of United States senators by direct vote of the people. Mr. Bryan spoke well of the proposition, saying it was the best scheme that had been figured out until the United States senate sees fit to step aside and let the will of the people rule in this regard. It was not a partisan question, for a few years ago the republican legislature had adopted a resolution approving the popular election of senators by a vote of 85 to 5.

Seventh, the publication of campaign contributions before election. Mr. Bryan touched on this, one of the most popular planks in the democratic platform last fall. He hoped the bill in this state would become a law. And he hoped the state would go further and put a law on the statute books which would limit the expenditures of candidates for office so that the man who can afford to spend \$100,000 for his office will be on the same footing as the man who can spend but \$5,000.

Eighth, physical valuation of railroads. This was one of the state platform pledges of the democrats. Mr. Bryan declared that it was not a hardship on the railroads. It prevented the demagogues from making capital out of conditions which really do not exist. Publicity would prevent it. It would allow railroads to appear before the legislature like honest men telling their case to the committees instead of as formerly trying to control the members by peculiar methods of their own.

Ninth, and last, the guaranty of bank deposits. Mr. Bryan was glad to see that an agreement had been reached on this important measure. He believed the bill as drawn would insure the absolute protection of the depositor, and would work no hardship on the bank. He then went into the merits of the question and argued as during the campaign on its justice to the small depositor as well as is now given to those who deposit large amounts.

DON'T FORGET THE PEOPLE

In an address delivered at Hattiesburg, Miss., Mr. Taft, referring to the Panama canal, said: "I am going to push that work, and I am going to stand behind the men who are doing it."

That is all very well; but don't forget, Mr. Taft, to stand behind the people who are paying for that work. Don't forget that their interests are paramount to all others.

A PRAYER FOR PEACE

Let there be light, Lord of Hosts!
Let there be wisdom on the earth!
Let broad humanity have birth!
Let there be deeds, instead of boasts!

Within our passioned hearts instill
The calm that endeth strife;
Make us Thy ministers of Life;
Purge us from lusts that curse and kill!

Give us the peace of vision clear
To see our brothers' good our own,
To joy and suffer not alone;
The love that casteth out all fear!

Let woe and waste of warfare cease,
That useful labor yet may build
Its homes with love and laughter filled!
God, give Thy wayward children peace!
—William Merrell Vories, in the Advocate
of Peace (Boston).
Hachiman, Omi, Japan.

CONTENTS

MR. BRYAN BEFORE THE NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE
A PRAYER FOR PEACE
THE PRESIDENT'S LIBEL SUIT
A HUGE BRIBE
MR. ROCKEFELLER'S "MEAN TRICK"
A TRIBUTE TO THE COMMONER
HUMAN BEINGS SOLD AT AUCTION
THAT FISH PROBLEM
EDUCATIONAL SERIES—COMMISSION FORM OF CITY GOVERNMENT
LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE
COMMENT ON CURRENT TOPICS
HOME DEPARTMENT
WHETHER COMMON OR NOT
NEWS OF THE WEEK