

The Commoner.

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Located at Last

The Houston (Texas) Post is at last located on the matter of platforms. It dodges the first part of Mr. Bryan's plank on the subject of platforms. It insists that a platform is not a pledge given by the candidate to the voters, but a pledge given by his party to the voters. This is a quibble. A party does not act except through delegates or through officials. When a candidate is selected he becomes a representative of the party, and as he is the one who, if elected, is to act for the party, the platform is his pledge as well as his party's pledge, whether it is written by himself with the consent of the convention, or written by the convention for him. The important part of the Post editorial, therefore, is as follows: "We can heartily agree with that clause of Mr. Bryan's platform plank which says, 'and when ratified at the polls becomes a contract between an official and his constituents.'" After heartily agreeing with this clause of the platform proposed by Mr. Bryan the Post adds: "Now what is Mr. Bryan's grievance against Senator Bailey's votes against free raw materials? The Denver platform was not ratified at the polls and when it failed, individual democrats, whether in public or private life, were free to contend for policies which they deemed to best represent the principles of democracy and promote the public welfare. Senator Bailey, freed from any obligation in the premises, took a strong stand against the policy of free raw materials, against which the democracy of Texas was expressly committed."

The Post's position will be entitled to the premium stall if an exhibit is ever made of freak logic. The idea that a national defeat of a platform absolves those democrats who are elected on the platform would not occur to a man unless he were in desperate straits. The argument is not as substantial as the straw at which the drowning man is supposed to grasp. Texas endorsed the Denver platform by a deliberate act of her last convention, and Texas went democratic by a big majority, as did a number of states and a great many congressional districts. What difference did it make to the democrats of Texas if Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, Ohio and many other states rejected the platform? It represented the sentiment of the people of Texas, and the sentiment of the districts that went democratic, and certainly it was a pledge between the democrats elected and their constituents for it was "ratified at the polls" so far as these democrats were concerned.

If the Denver platform ceased to be binding upon democratic congressmen and democratic senators merely because the republican platform was endorsed at the national election will the Post claim that the democratic congressmen are bound by the republican platform? If not, its position must be that all republican officials are

bound by the republican national platform because it was ratified at a national election, and that the democratic national platform, being rejected at a national election, is not binding in any way. Does a democratic representative cease to represent his constituency merely because people in another district or another state do not accept his platform? Is a Texas congressman or a Texas senator free to vote with the republicans merely because the platform upon which he was elected did not receive a national endorsement? The endorsement of a democratic platform by the people of a district is just as binding upon the official as is the endorsement of the official himself. He can not honorably accept the election and yet repudiate the platform which was endorsed by the same vote.

"Strange what a tangled web" the democrat weaves when he starts out to find reasons for endorsing special interests.

LIQUOR QUESTION AT WASHINGTON

The federal congress must sooner or later take notice of the activity of the liquor interests and their attempt to control the action of the federal government. They have entered national politics, and will pollute everything that they touch until they are driven out. We have already seen democratic congressmen dragged into the republican camp by these interests, when a fight was being made over the rules of the house, for there is no question of the activity of the liquor interests in supporting Cannonism. Federal licenses are now issued to those who desire to sell liquor in territory in which local licenses are denied, and the brewers and distillers are still using interstate commerce to nullify the laws of the various states. Surely there can be no excuse for the issue of federal licenses to liquor dealers in territory where the local authorities have prohibited the sale of liquor. The charge for a federal license is \$25 per year, and when a federal license is issued upon the payment of this sum the federal government either obtains the money without consideration or it enters into partnership with the violator of the law.

Three objections have been made to the proposition that the federal government should refuse to issue licenses in dry territory, namely, First, that taxes should be uniform and that the government can not, therefore, collect a license tax in one community and refuse to collect such tax in another; Second, that the federal government could not prosecute a person for selling without license if it refused to issue a license; and third, that the issue of a federal license is useful in that it enables the local authorities to ascertain from the record who are engaged in the traffic. These three objections might be met by a law reducing the license to \$1, and providing that notice of the issue of such license be posted immediately in the postoffice in the town in which the licensee resides and requiring publication of notice in a local newspaper. The \$1 would not more than cover the cost of issuing and recording the license and posting the notice, and such a law would take the government out of partnership with the law breakers.

By what logic can one justify the action of the federal government in permitting interstate commerce to be used to nullify state regulation of the liquor traffic? If a state can be trusted to protect property and to prescribe rules for the descent of estates, can it not be entrusted with the power to regulate the sale and use of liquor? If the state can be entrusted with the enactment and enforcement of criminal laws, even to the exacting of the death penalty, can it not be entrusted with the power to control the liquor traffic?

It can, of course, be taken for granted that the liquor interests will oppose any legislation which has for its object the protection of society from the evils of intemperance, and they will, as they have in the past, threaten any party which refuses to bow down to the god which they have set up, but the democratic party can better afford to invite their opposition than grovel in the dust to secure their approval.

Who Will Object?

Mr. Henry Watterson returns from a long rest in Europe in a very bad frame of mind. In an ill-tempered editorial printed in the Louisville Courier-Journal Mr. Watterson gives character to the fake printed in a newspaper dispatch to the effect that Mr. Bryan intends to make an effort to push prohibition as a national issue.

William Marion Reedy, the talented editor of the St. Louis Mirror, referring to the same false report, prints this editorial:

"If I were a brewer I would say this is a good omen, having in mind Mr. Bryan's confirmed habit as a loser. Prohibition is a silly issue, for one good and sufficient reason: it isn't necessary. The liquor evil is being knocked out in the natural course of economic and social development. The struggle for existence is doing the trick without the aid of fanatic laws. In fact, such laws retard the progress of temperance. But then it may be that Mr. Bryan is not correctly reported. If so be that he is correctly reported, why then Mr. Bryan is simply the victim of recurrence of his mania for continuous novelty in paramount issues."

The San Antonio (Texas) Express says: "Mr. Bryan of Nebraska is credited with the desire to make prohibition of the liquor traffic the paramount issue in the democratic national campaign."

For the benefit of Mr. Watterson, to whom ill-natured conduct is peculiarly unbecoming and of the other editors quoted, it may be said that Mr. Bryan does not expect to see prohibition a paramount issue in national politics. If that ever comes it is not likely to be in Mr. Bryan's day.

Mr. Bryan may, however, be truthfully credited with a desire to assist in securing, for the several states, absolute and exclusive control over the liquor traffic—including control over all shipments of liquor as soon as the liquor enters the state. It will be interesting to see how some democratic editors will explain their opposition to the good old democratic doctrine that the state ought to be allowed to attend to its own business.

WHAT ABOUT PUBLICITY?

A Washington dispatch carried by the Associated Press says: "A gag order affecting the furnishing of information to any committee of the house or senate or any member of congress except as authorized by the head of the department in which such official serves, has been promulgated by the president. The order just made public is directed at bureau officers or division chiefs and officers of the army, navy and marine corps stationed in Washington. In explanation of the order it was stated at the executive offices that it had for its object the centralization of authority in the heads of departments."

Here is another of the famous "Roosevelt policies" gone glimmering. What about "publicity, publicity, publicity" of which we heard so much during the Roosevelt administration—heard so much and saw so little?

THE BANK MONOPOLY WINS

The press dispatches state that while President Taft will recommend the postal savings bank congress will not push the plan until next year. The postal savings bank will stand aside and give the central bank the right of way. As Wall Street is back of the central bank and opposes the postal bank it would seem that the Wall Street crowd makes a double killing. And still there are republicans who can not see that the party is in the clutches of the predatory interests.

REACTIONARY

The republican party, as at present organized, is no place for a progressive. It is reactionary and getting more so. Plutocracy is in control.

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