

# The Commoner.

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## Money in Politics

The sad fate of Congressman Sibley, of Pennsylvania, ought to prove a warning and a lesson. Sibley is a lovable fellow personally, and entered politics with high ideals, but his association with predatory interests had the same influence on him that it has had on many other able and well meaning men, and he ends his political career, if not his life, by a withdrawal from the congressional race after he had won the nomination. Whether he is guilty of an actual violation of the law is a question to be decided by the courts, but enough is admitted to convict him before the bar of public conscience. He claims that more than half of the \$42,000 spent to secure the nomination was spent by his secretaries without his knowledge—but the twenty thousand which was spent with his knowledge and approval is a great deal more than can be justified. A congressman draws \$7,500 per year—\$15,000 during his term; to spend \$20,000 to secure a nomination is without possible excuse. And it is just as bad if the money is furnished by others—worse, in fact, because the candidate is put under obligation to those who furnished the money.

The expenditure of a large sum of money to secure a nomination is even more reprehensible than the expenditure of a large sum to secure an election. A party nominee might feel it a party duty to spend money to defeat an opponent of his party and friends might contribute liberally to secure the triumph of party principle, but to spend large sums to win a party nomination over another member of the party injures the party as well as corrupts politics.

While the rule may have exceptions still it is safe to assume that the expenditure of any considerable sum to secure a nomination is proof that the aspirant's ambition is an unworthy one. If he expects to make the money back out of the office his purpose is corrupt; if he is simply willing to spend the money to secure the honor, he is unworthy of the honor for he puts his own interests above the party's welfare. If the money, instead of being his own is supplied by friends, it is safe to assume that the "friends" expect to get it back. The "friends" who have been putting up the campaign funds during recent years are the ones who have been using the government as a private asset in business.

The law ought to fix the maximum that can be spent by a candidate, or in his interest, and until we have such a law public opinion ought to create a standard. Among democrats, at least, it ought to be accepted as a rule that a candidate for a nomination forfeits his right to his party's support when he begins to spend

money lavishly, or to permit it to be spent in his interest.

Let the claims of each candidate be fairly presented and then let the honor go to the one chosen by an uncorrupted constituency.

### HOKE SMITH FOR PRESIDENT

The Georgia convention, in ratifying the nomination of Ex-Governor Hoke Smith, who recently won the gubernatorial nomination at the primary, suggested him for the presidency. And why not? In 1900 and 1908, whenever Mr. Bryan's nomination was suggested the corporation papers of the east insisted that the nomination ought to go to the south. Why not give the south a chance now? Hoke Smith is from the south. He is a big man, too. He was in the cabinet; he has been governor and will be governor again. Why do the corporation papers not boom Smith? Why? Well, just read the following from his speech at the convention and you will see. He said:

"The great corporations in Georgia must keep out of politics. They must not be allowed by hired political agents to dominate or control legislation or administration."

That seals his doom, so far as the corporation papers are concerned, but it ought to strengthen him with the people. And the gold democrats. Why don't they fly to the support of Smith? He was a gold man. He was not "tainted with free silver." Why don't they start a boom for him? Because he made the fatal mistake of voting for Mr. Bryan. That ended it with them; he forfeited his claim to statesmanship.

But Hoke Smith's boom has been launched by his own state and we shall see whether it was a southern man the corporation papers wanted, or simply a representative of the corporations living in the south.

### THE NEW NATIONALISM

Mr. Roosevelt's political creed, as announced at Osawatimie and other places in the west, has been styled "the new nationalism." We must await a more specific definition of it before we can judge of its newness or of its value. Some have construed his remarks on national control of corporations to mean that he intends to renew his recommendation of federal incorporation of railroads and other large business concerns. If so, he will take a step backward instead of forward.

Federal incorporation is not in the interest of the people but in the interest of the predatory corporations. Federal incorporation is not necessary to the most strict federal supervision. The purpose of federal incorporation is to relieve the corporations from the annoyance of state control; that is the only purpose it can serve. Progressive republicans should beware of this effort to remove corporations farther than they now are from the people.

National incorporation is not only unnecessary, but vicious. "National remedies," in the language of the democratic platform, "should be added to, not substituted for, state remedies."

### LAFOLLETTE'S VICTORY

Senator LaFollette's victory is a deserved compliment to a republican who is a real progressive. It is too bad Mr. Roosevelt has no part in the rejoicing. He might easily have said a few words in his behalf or written him a letter or something. LaFollette deserved something better from one who aspires to be the leader of the progressives. Standpatter Burkett, of Nebraska, came in for an endorsement, but the chief of the insurgents—the one who has insurged longer, harder, in more different directions and on more subjects than any one else, how does it happen that he was ignored?

### TRY NEW YORK

If Mr. Roosevelt wants to create a sensation let him have the Kansas republican platform adopted in New York.

## Roosevelt, Progressive

The question is settled at last; he is a progressive. No doubt about it; he must now take his place with the "demagogues," the "dangerous" and the "undesirable."

His Ossawatimie speech will become historic as his declaration of independence; he has cut loose from the forces that elected him vice president and afterwards elected him president. The story of his conversion from a conservative to a radical has not yet been told—it will be awaited with interest. It was probably not sudden—it was more likely the result of personal contact with the sordid influences which have dominated the republican party for years and which have at times obtained control of the democratic organization.

Possibly Mr. Taft put on the finishing touches when, after being nominated and elected by Mr. Roosevelt's influence, he surrounded himself with a corporation cabinet. The ex-president may have decided that the predatory interests were a menace to the country if they could wean his old friend and legatee away from him. But, however the change was brought about, it is here and the country must reckon with it.

Mr. Roosevelt is in the fight, and from now on for two years, at least, no one can tell what a day may bring forth. If he decides to be a candidate himself he will weaken his influence, for he will have to meet the charge of trying to overturn a precedent of a century's standing—a precedent which he has himself endorsed. If, on the other hand, he gives his support to one of the insurgents he may be able to control the next republican national convention and shape the policy of his party. If he fails to secure the nomination of a progressive in 1912 the standpatter who defeats his candidate will himself be defeated, and by 1916 the way will be clear in the republican convention for a progressive platform.

We shall see what we shall see.

### ROOSEVELT AND LORIMER

Some may be inclined to question the good taste of Mr. Roosevelt's refusal to dine with Senator Lorimer at the Hamilton club banquet. Mr. Roosevelt's action was indeed extraordinary, but it is probable that the American people will overlook the question of taste in recognition of the distinct public service Mr. Roosevelt rendered when he gave emphasis to the fact that men who profit politically through bribery are not fit for the society of honest men. It is quite true that Senator Lorimer has not been convicted of actually paying bribes, but the evidence that some one purchased votes for him is so complete that, regardless of the verdicts of juries, the public mind is convinced.

### EVEN IN ALASKA

Even the Alaskans are insurging. Judge James Wickersham who, during the recent session of congress attracted considerable attention by reason of verbal assaults upon men standing high in the councils of the Taft administration, has been re-elected as Alaska's delegate to congress. His opponent was Edward Orr, recognized as an administration candidate and having the backing of the Guggenheim syndicate. Judge Wickersham is a natural-born insurgent, and it goes without saying that upon his return to Washington he will make generous contribution to the gayety of nations.

### GOOD FOR MICHIGAN

Congratulations to the republicans of Michigan on having defeated Senator Burrows for re-nomination. Mr. Burrows has been a faithful senator—but he has been faithful to the special interests. He is not a man of great ability, but from his meagre stock he gave unsparingly to the trusts and to all forms of special interests that sought to dominate legislation. Michigan has given one of the best among the many good "signs of the day."

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