A BIT OF HISTORY

Now that the law has been enacted compelling publicity of campaign contributions before the election, the attention of Commoner readers is called to the fact that as early as June 28, 1907, more than a year before the national convention of 1908, Mr. Bryan made a speech in New York in which he urged that the publication should be before the election. The plan was suggested to him by Hon. J. E. Miller, of Lincoln, Neb., and was then presented by Mr. Bryan to those who were leading the publicity fight. The following extract will give the reasons then advanced by him:

The objection to the campaign funds that are contributed secretly, and spent secretly, is that they are contributed for a purpose that the public does not understand, and to carry out a policy against the public. That is the objection we have to campaign contributions contributed and expended secretly. This question would not arise but for the existence in this country of great corporations that have an interest in legislation. If we had no corporations the chances are that no individual would be personally and pecuniarily interested enough in legislation to contribute any large amount—that is, larger than his patriotic impulse would lead him to contribute. But when we have great corporations that not only receive their charters from the government, but even ask favors of the legislatures, or if they do not ask favors of the legislatures, ask immunity from the executive—because we have these great corporations, it has become the custom to run campaigns with funds supplied secretly and used secretly; after the election the people who subscribed the funds dominate the government and the people who do the voting are betrayed by those for whom they voted.

That is the situation, and before a remedy can be suggested the situation must be understood. Now, this evil has not been confined to one party. A very interesting bit of testimony was brought out in the investigation of the sugar trust.

Mr. Havemeyer testified that he had been in the habit of contributing to campaign funds, to one party in one state, to another party in another state, according to the political complexion of the state.

How are you going to stop it? In the first place, a law making it unlawful for a corporation to contribute to a campaign fund will go a good ways. But that is not sufficient. I would not be willing to stop at that—to merely prevent a corporation from contributing to campaign funds. If we had a law forbidding corporations to contribute to campaign funds you would find that there were no corporations that contributed, but that individuals did, who represented the corporations. And it is too difficult a task to show that the individual gets the money out of the corporation to make the contribution, for if a few men control the corporation the man at the head of it may pay the money out of his own pocket today and he may not be reimbursed for two or three or five years hence. If evasions of that kind are possible, the law is not sufficient.

What else is necessary? I believe there is one thing possible. That is that the large contributions, no matter from whom they come, shall be made known; for when we see the head of a trust, or other corporation interested in legislation, contributing a large sum of money we know that he is not doing it for himself, but that he is doing it for the corporation, or because of his interest therein, and that he expects to get back in legislation more than he contributed to the campaign fund.

If we are going to have publications, which I regard as necessary, then another question arises. When shall the publication be made? Now I want to present a thought on this phase of the subject. I believe that the publication should be made before the election, and I will tell you why. In a campaign the parties may deny that they are getting any money at all from corporations or from persons representing or acting for corporations or interested in corporations. I have known statements of that kind to be made when they were not founded on fact, and I am afraid we have not had such a regeneration of the individual that they might not be made in the future. And when the published statement is delayed until after the election what redress have the people? The sale has been made; the men have been elected. The people can not recall their votes. What can they do then? Wait until the next election. It would be claimed at the next election by the party guilty of the offense that the persons in charge of the last campaign were put out and an entirely new set pledged to reform put in and thus the people might be fooled again. And the party that can get into power usually has enough men to keep up the delusion. And, of course, after two or three campaigns they are changed and they come back and use the first set again, because by that time these are supposed to have a change of heart so that they would not again do wrong.

My faith in the doctrine that you can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time was a little shaken by an explanation I once heard, namely, that it is not necessary to fool all the people all the time. Fool some this year and some next, and some the next, and then the fourth year you can fool the first set again.

The only way I see out of it is to compel the publication before the election, and then when the people see where the campaign money is coming from they will have a right to form their opinion as to the reason for the contribution.

MR. TAFT'S IDEA OF HEAVEN

Press reports of the president's speech at Pocatello, Idaho, contain the following: "I love judges and I love courts. They are my ideals on earth that typify what we shall meet hereafter in Heaven under a just God."

In his first annual message to congress, December, 1909, Mr. Taft said: "The deplorable delays in the administration of civil and criminal law have received the attention of committees of the American Bar association. * * * I do not doubt for one moment that much of the lawless violence and cruelty exhibited in lynchings is directly due to the uncertainties and injustice growing out of the delays in trials, judgments and the executions thereof by our courts."

In his message of December, 1910, he said: "One great, crying need in the United States is the cheapening of the cost of litigation by simplifying judicial procedure and expediting final judgment. Under present conditions, the poor man is at a woeful disadvantage in a legal contest with a corporation or a rich opponent."

Much else in the same strain might be quoted from the president's utterances—suggesting, certainly, that his conceptions of heaven are deplorably inadequate.

Away back in 1895, Mr. Taft, then a judge of the United States circuit court, said:

"The opportunity freely and publicly to criticise judicial action is of vastly more importance to the body politic than the immunity of courts and judges from unjust aspersion and attack. * * * But non-professional criticism also is by no means without its uses, even if accompanied, as it often is, by direct attack upon the judicial fairness and motives of the occupants of the bench; for if the law is but the essence of common-sense the protests of many average men may evidence a defect in judicial conclusions, though based on the nicest legal reasoning and profoundest learning."—Saturday Evening Post.

"Religion is One Thing and Politics is Another, Mr. Scharf" So Say the Knights of Columbus

From the Washington (D. C.) Bulletin: "The determined fight made by Representative Ben Johnson, chairman of the house district committee, and William J. Dwyer, to oust Emil L. Scharf from membership in the Washington council of the Knights of Columbus in this city, has met with success. On trustworthy authority it is understood that the board of directors of that organization recently expelled Scharf from the order. The charge made by Representative Ben Johnson and substantiated by evidence adduced by Representative Cox, of Indiana, and Mr. Dwyer, that Scharf had been using the order and the church for political purposes, was amply proven. It was also alleged that Scharf, while in the employ of the national republican committee, had sought to alienate Catholic voters from Bryan to Taft during the last presidential campaign. The action of the Knights of Columbus is significant and will have a wholesome effect on the order in the future. It means that while individuals are members of the Catholic church and members of the Knights of Columbus the order will not tolerate the mixing of religion with politics. Religion is one thing and politics or economic questions is another. The two can not mix."

HOW THE TRUSTS DESTROY COMPETITORS

From the news columns of the New York World: Testimony in support of his allegations that the Standard Oil company put him out of business and otherwise injured him was given recently by John J. Moran in his suit to recover $31,000 from the trust, of which $25,000 is for loss of trade and $6,000 for commissions on the sale of Oil trust products. The trial is before Justice Brown and a jury in the supreme court.

Moran alleges that in 1901 he was a prosperous dealer in oils and painters' supplies in East Fifty-second street and that the Standard Oil company, recognizing the extent of his business, made overtures to him to handle its products.

He says he finally consented, but that the oils, putty and whiting supplied by the trust were so inferior that he received many complaints, his customers stating the goods were not of the same quality as previously supplied by him.

He showed the complaints to the Standard Oil officials and was promised that "everything would be made right," but complaints continued to come in, and he not only lost most of his trade, but had to make allowances to many customers to whom he had forwarded poor goods.

At last he accepted a situation with the trust as a salesman, but ninety days after he had entered its employment an excuse was found, he alleges, to discharge him.

The Standard Oil company made a counter claim against Moran for $15,000 for goods received by him for which it is alleged he did not pay.

"Tell us about some of the goods the Standard Oil company furnished you which were objected to?" asked Moran's counsel, Col. W. C. Beecher.

"Well," replied Moran, "they sent me some oil which was guaranteed to be pure linseed oil, but as far as I could ascertain it was either benzine or resin oil, or something of that kind. It wasn't linseed oil, anyhow."

"What did you do?"

"I made a complaint to Henry Mayles of the Standard Oil company, and said I had to refund money to some of my customers."

"What did Mr. Mayles say to you?"

"He said: 'Why didn't you destroy the evidence?' This was when I was sued by a customer for the value of the inferior goods."

"Did you ever say anything to Mr. James G. Newcombe about that incident?"

Mr. Newcombe, who is the superintendent of the paint branch of the trust's trade, and who has been in the employ of the trust for over forty years, and now enjoys a salary of $100,000 a year, had testified that Moran never talked with him about such matters, as he had too much to occupy him to listen to complaints, and left them to his subordinates.

"Yes," said Moran, "I did. I told him of all my troubles. I also reported everything to Mr. Gilmore."

J. Howard Kinch, who had sold goods for Moran, testified that the putty and other articles supplied by the Standard were not up to the mark.

Col. Beecher read several complaints from Moran's customers, in which they objected to the quality of the putty forwarded them, one of them saying it was the worst his firm had handled since 1859.

Moran was recalled and said he had made out schedules showing that in six months he had suffered a loss of $14,631 on account of his loss of trade and had submitted them to Mr. Newcombe, who had previously told him he would be recouped, but who when he saw the schedules said nothing.

"All the complaints I had from customers," he said, "were for goods furnished me by the Standard Oil company."

APPRECIATED IN IOWA

A. J. Anders, Oelwein, Iowa: It is very evident that the democratic party must be a progressive party. It is not by virtue of anything done by the reactionary element within the party, but in spite of all they have done to disrupt it, that the party is still militant. The success it has been able to achieve since 1894 is due largely to the courage and ability of W. J. Bryan. Democracy is the implacable foe of plutocracy whether sought to be hidden under the name of democracy as was done in 1904, or as it is boldly proclaimed by W. H. Taft in his veto of popular government in Arizona. It is not only necessary that the voter knows himself to be a democrat, but to know the man for whom he votes is also a democrat. The demoralizing defeats of the democratic party in 1894 and 1904 should not be repeated in 1912. Human rights and popular government have and ever have had the same foe to contend against. No man for any office within the gift of the people should receive a freeman's ballot unless it is definitely known just where the man for whom he casts his ballot stands on the great issues of the day. In order that the democratic party be not misled in the great battle coming on in 1912, between plutocracy and democracy, every reader of The Commoner should make an earnest effort to have his neighbors subscribe for The Commoner, no matter what his neighbors' politics may be. Enclosed find draft for $5.00, for which send The Commoner to each of the following named for two years.