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Men and Measures

Some of the presidential candidates are seeking to make themselves solid with Wall street by fierce denunciations of the initiative and referendum. They assume that an attempt will be made to indorse these reforms in the next democratic national platform and are virtuously protesting in advance. There is no likelihood of any attempt being made to secure an indorsement of the initiative and referendum in the national platform of 1912, but the discussion of the issue will serve a useful purpose. A candidate's position on these subjects—if he understands them—indicates his position on other questions. A great deal depends on the candidate's position on fundamental propositions; if he trusts the people he can be trusted—if he does not trust the people he can not be trusted.

Wall street is now weighing the claims of aspirants and it can be expected to smile on candidates in proportion as they speak with contempt of the masses. One candidate has made a high bid for Wall street favor by declaring that "The masses are more likely to select an honest man than an honest measure." This is the very essence of aristocracy; it is the undemocratic doctrine that the people have not sense enough to decide questions but must content themselves with selecting superior men to think for them. Jefferson said that "the principles of right and wrong are easily discerned and require not the aid of many counselors." The people can be trusted to decide questions—if not why do we have platforms?

Issues are more easily understood than men—and, then, issues do not change after the election, as men sometimes do. When the masses are fooled it is by men more often than by issues. In the long run, men, when understood, are strong or weak, according to the measures they support—proving that the people can be relied upon to select honest measures.

RATIFY THE PEACE TREATY

Public sentiment in America is plainly in favor of the ratification of the peace treaty. It may be easier to ratify the peace treaty without change although it would be better if the appointment of a commission of inquiry were compulsory instead of subject to the request of one of the parties.

America has the opportunity of taking the lead in this world-wide peace movement and the people's representatives in the senate should not fail to seize the opportunity.

"THE INTERESTS" IN 1904

Judge Parker is right in saying, as he did a few days ago, that "there never was a time

THE COMMONER WISHES
A MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND
A HAPPY NEW YEAR
TO EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE
AND FOREVER

when the money powers even seriously thought of giving their support to the democratic ticket," but those who were in control of the St. Louis convention in 1904, thought or pretended to think that our party would receive Wall street support. It was a great disappointment to the professional "distributors" when it was learned that Wall street had decided not to contribute. Wall street played a very smooth game on the party that year and is trying the same game this year. Wall street is PROMISING all kinds of support if the party will be "sensible and sane," but Wall street has no more idea of supporting the party this year than it had in 1904. It is trying to nominate the candidate but if it succeeds it will help to elect the republican candidate. Democratic hope lies entirely in an appeal to the progressive sentiment of the country—hence the criminal folly of nominating a "conservative."

GOOD FOR ARIZONA

The democrats won a sweeping victory in Arizona at the first election of that new state. George W. P. Hunt, democrat, was elected governor and the elections to the senate of Henry F. Ashurst and Mark A. Smith is assured. Carl Hayden of Phoenix was elected to congress. The recall provision of the constitution was, of course, defeated or eliminated in obedience to Mr. Taft's orders. Mr. J. B. Birdno, chairman of the democratic state committee, has issued this statement:

"The people of Arizona simply refused to indorse Taft's dictation as to what kind of a constitution Arizona should have, and while they voted to eliminate the recall from the constitution, as they were obliged to do in order to gain statehood, they showed at the same time that the recall would be placed back in the constitution as soon as it possibly could be done."

George W. P. Hunt, the first governor-elect of Arizona, issued a statement in which he declared the victory of the democratic ticket in the election was a triumph for both progressive democrats and progressive republicans. To carry out these progressive principles, says the statement, "both in letter and spirit, shall be the essential part of my duty as chief executive and in that duty I shall not be derelict."

ABOLISHING THE SECRET CAUCUS

Democratic members who are willing to abolish the secret caucus should not forget that they must make of that particular reform work a finished task. The important thing in the open caucus is to have a record vote on all questions discussed and that vote should be made public in order that a member's constituents may know exactly how their representative voted upon public measures.

There ought to be no half way business about the attitude of democrats toward this secret caucus. The secret caucus is thoroughly undemocratic. It should never have been adopted by representatives of the democratic party and now that it is to be abolished the work should be done in such an effective way that the people would have no reason to doubt the willingness on the part of the party's representatives for publicity with respect to all their acts.

WHY NOT?

Why not give Americans a chance to buy ships in the world's markets and thus increase the merchant marine?

A True Meaning

When, in his annual message, Mr. Taft said that the criminal clause of the Sherman anti-trust law had not been emasculated, The Commoner asked: "If that is true then why has Mr. Taft neglected to cause the arrest of John D. Rockefeller and other Standard Oil leaders, together with the Tobacco trust magnates, under the criminal clause of the Sherman anti-trust law?"

Referring to this question the Lincoln (Neb.) Journal says that Mr. Taft had already answered that question in his message when he said:

"Criminal prosecutions have been brought and a number are pending, but juries have felt averse to convicting for jail sentences, and judges have been most reluctant to impose such sentences on men of respectable standing in society whose offense has been merely statutory. As the true meaning of such offenses becomes clear, criminal action will be more successful."

But the Beef trust magnates evidently did not look at it in that way. They have not the same confidence in the "averseness" of juries to convicting for jail sentences men who conspire against the people's necessities. For years and years the members of the Beef trust have fought against going to trial—being unwilling to display in the "averseness" of juries that sublime confidence Mr. Taft has shown. At one time when the authorities had the members of the Beef trust face to face with the jury it was seen that someone had taken the precaution to give them an "immunity bath" thus saving them from the necessity of trusting a jury.

Mr. Taft does not speak with authority upon this point, for the only practical testimony we have upon the subject is in the case of the members of the Beef trust and that is all against Mr. Taft's contention.

He has a chance, however, to put his claim to the test in a case which he says has been upheld by the highest court in the land. If the criminal clause of the Sherman anti-trust law was not emasculated in the Oil and Tobacco trust cases let Mr. Taft cause the arrest and prosecution of John D. Rockefeller and the leaders of the Tobacco trust.

Mr. Taft need not worry about the "true meaning" of offenses against the anti-trust law being "clear" so far as the people are concerned. When an English statesman, discussing with Benjamin Franklin the propriety of taxation, asked that great American "who are the best judges as to the propriety of this taxation?" Franklin replied, "Those who feel are best able to judge."

The consumers of this country well understand the "true meaning" of the offenses against the anti-trust law. Those offenses have their basis in greed and they mean that the men guilty of them are willing to take advantage of a monopoly upon the things the people must have in order to pile oppressions upon the backs of the people. The "true meaning" is that these men, having made liberal contributions to the campaign funds of the dominant party expect that party's official representatives to interpret the law in the monopoly's favor and to refrain from using the law's machine to the detriment of the special interests that would prey upon the public welfare.

And the people understand, too, the "true meaning" of the republican party's indisposition to protect them from the trust system. A party whose platform and candidates and campaign funds are provided by the trust system can not be expected to do anything to protect the people from that system.

PUT IT TO THE TEST

The Richmond Times-Dispatch says "the effectiveness of the Sherman law in the Tobacco trust and Standard Oil trust cases is demonstrated." Then why is the president unwilling to put it to the test by causing criminal prosecution of the Oil and Tobacco magnates.

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