

The Commoner.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN, EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR

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A Dictator

Representatives of special interests have met Mr. Bryan's plea that the democratic party remain democratic with the charge that he is a "dictator." This was the charge made against Mr. Bryan in the early part of 1904 when he urged democrats to turn deaf ear to the pleas of the reorganizers of that day. The following editorial is reproduced from The Commoner of February 19, 1904:

The reorganizers are with one voice accusing Mr. Bryan of trying to "dictate" to the democratic party. What has Mr. Bryan done to justify the charge? He has expressed it as his opinion that the Kansas City platform should be reaffirmed, and for this he is now being censured by the bolters and by those who are trying to put the bolters in control of the organization. If Mr. Bryan had declared himself in favor of abandoning the Kansas City platform would they have accused him of dictating? Not at all. He would have been praised by the gold organs and they would have abused any one who dissented from him. "Dictating," it would seem, is defined, not as the offering of suggestions, but as the offering of suggestions objectionable to the men and newspapers to whose opposition the party owes its recent defeats. Mr. Bryan has a right to agree with them, but no right, they think, to differ from them.

Mr. Cleveland has been offering advice; he has declared that the party ought to return to what he calls "sanity" and yet none of these organs have denounced Mr. Cleveland as a dictator. They have not even questioned the propriety of his expressing an opinion on party policy. The fact that Mr. Bryan has twice been the candidate of his party would, according to their logic, compel him to keep silent, while the fact that Mr. Cleveland has twice thrown his influence to the republican party gives him a right to speak. Even republican papers can seriously counsel the democratic party without arousing a protest from those editors who mask their plutocratic designs under a democratic name, but it is regarded as utterly reprehensible that a former candidate should confer with those who voted for him.

What is the explanation of this bitter and unreasonable criticism? Simply that the reorganizers are attempting to deceive the public and it makes them angry to have their plans exposed. Mr. Bryan has not sought to force his opinion on any one. He has expressed himself, as every citizen has a right to do, and he has no desire to influence his co-workers except insofar as his arguments are found to be sound. It is not Mr. Bryan that they have to meet, but

the honest convictions of the millions of democrats who have maintained their integrity in spite of threats and bribes. A little child can, by quoting the commandment, "Thou shalt not steal," throw a crowd of would-be burglars into confusion. They would fear not the child, but the doctrine he proclaims. And it would seem that Mr. Bryan's suggestion of an honest platform has brought similar consternation among the men who are plotting a betrayal of the people. If theirs was an open and an honest work they would not abuse Mr. Bryan—they would be content to announce their platform, give their reasons for it and appeal to the voters of the party, but instead of that, they fly into a passion and deny the right of any one to differ from them. They may as well know that their scheme will be opposed and that they will be compelled to come from under cover.

For seven years the corporation newspapers and the leaders of the reorganization movement have been working for the most part underground—they have lauded every tool of organized wealth and attempted to assassinate the character of every one who would not join them. They have made a constant assault on democratic principles and were expecting to complete their plans at St. Louis, but they now realize that they must face the indignation which their repeated perfidy has aroused.

Their chief argument is that they can point the way to victory and they have impressed a few who have forgotten the disastrous defeat of 1894 when the reorganizers last led and the rout of the Palmer and Buckner ticket which they supported. They have won over a few whose hunger for spoils is stronger than desire for reform, and promising a large corruption fund, they, of course, attract those who want to handle the money, but they have not reached the incorruptible mass that furnishes the votes. As the fight progresses it will become more and more apparent that it is a battle royal between the money power and the common people. The line will be drawn between those who want to make the party the defender of monopolies and those who desire to keep it the champion of popular rights. We lost some of our leaders in 1896—and some went over into the republican party. We shall lose some more this year, but we shall obtain recruits from among those who recognize the demoralization wrought by commercialism and desire the restoration of higher ideals. If to urge the democratic party to be true to its principles and honest in its methods is to subject Mr. Bryan to the charge of trying to dictate, he will bear the accusation with fortitude.

OKLAHOMA SETS AN EXAMPLE

Oklahoma sets an example to progressives. Mr. Harmon's supporters were active in their efforts to secure the state but Oklahoma is progressive and the fight finally narrowed down to Wilson and Clark, and their friends had the good sense to agree upon a decision of the delegation—half and half. Whenever either withdraws the whole delegation will go to the other. This was an admirable settlement of the controversy and may well serve as an example to other states. The contest between progressives should be an amicable one and it will very much strengthen our party's chances after the convention if the friends of Governor Wilson and Speaker Clark can so conduct their campaign as to unite their forces in states where the sentiment is evenly divided. Some months ago Mr. Bryan urged the progressives to get together in each state and support the progressive strongest in that state. The Oklahoma plan works toward the same end. No one but a progressive can lead the democratic party to victory and a progressive's chances will be improved by harmony among progressive aspirants.

THEY ELIMINATE EACH OTHER

Mr. Roosevelt says that Mr. Taft ought not to be president again and Mr. Taft thinks that Mr. Roosevelt ought not to be president again, and democrats believe that they are both right in this respect and will try to prevent either's re-election.

The Coffee Habit

In an editorial, of which it will not soon hear the last, The Outlook attempts to explain away the inconsistency between ex-President Roosevelt's declarations against a third term and his present willingness to accept a third term. It will be remembered that in 1904, after being assured of his election, Mr. Roosevelt issued the following statement:

"On the 4th of March next I shall have served three and a half years, and this three and a half years constitute my first term. The wise custom which limits the president to two terms regards the substance and not the form, and under no circumstances will I be a candidate for or accept another nomination."

Three days later Mr. Roosevelt said: "I have not changed, and shall not change, that decision thus announced."

The renunciation of the third term is now embarrassing and Mr. Roosevelt's spokesman, the Outlook, has undertaken to dissolve the inconsistency in coffee. It says:

"In Mr. Roosevelt's specific case it is sometimes said that his statement in 1904 and 1907 that he would not accept another nomination would make his acceptance of a nomination this year inconsistent. What Mr. Roosevelt said in 1904 and 1907 referred, of course, to a consecutive third term. Mr. Roosevelt believes, although we do not share his belief, that the settled policy of this country makes a third consecutive presidential term for any man impolitic, if not improper; but the Outlook has a better appreciation of his intelligence than to suppose that he had in 1904 or has now the slightest idea of defining a third term except in the way in which we have here defined it. The situation may perhaps be made clear by a homely illustration. When a man says at breakfast in the morning, 'No, thank you, I will not take any more coffee,' it does not mean that he will not take any more coffee tomorrow morning, or next week, or next month, or next year."

To call this piece of pettifoggish ingenious would dignify it. It is about as absurd an excuse as was ever advanced in defense of an inexcusable proposition, but the coffee illustration is the most exquisite part of this intellectual morsel.

Would it not be well for the Outlook to go a step further and tell us how many cups of coffee Mr. Roosevelt needs for his second meal. If a cup and seven-eighths (one term and three and one-half years) satisfied him for breakfast how many cups will he regard as sufficient for dinner? And is there a supper still ahead of him? If Mr. Roosevelt takes two more terms now he is not so old but that he might take another recess and then demand two more cups for supper. Possibly the Outlook may be able to reason out (to its own satisfaction) that the two term precedent only applies to the first meal and that one is free to drink coffee without limit—even to the extent of consuming the entire pot—at a subsequent meal. Since this great governmental question has been reduced to level of coffee drinking the Outlook ought to tell its readers to what extent the coffee habit has taken hold upon the ex-president. Is it possible that it has affected his nerves?

A GOOD MEASURE

The income tax measure and free sugar bill indorsed by the democratic caucus is good. It ought to pass not only the democratic house but it should pass the senate and receive the indorsement of the president. These measures taken together transfer some \$50,000,000 in taxes from consumption to income thus relieving the over-burdened masses.

TO ARIZONA AND NEW MEXICO

The income tax amendment to the federal constitution lacks a few of the needed thirty-six ratifications; can't you give it two? It will be a good beginning for new states.

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