

The Commoner.

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VOL. 12, NO. 11,

Lincoln, Nebraska, March 22, 1912

Whole Number 583

Mr. Bryan Before the Constitutional Convention

Mr. Bryan spoke before the Ohio constitutional convention at Columbus, Tuesday, March 12th. The Columbus Citizen prints the following report:

Facing an audience that was made up of hundreds of his loyal followers, William Jennings Bryan, three-time democratic candidate for president, Tuesday was greeted with real enthusiasm when he spoke on the subject, "The People's Law," before the Ohio constitutional convention.

The demonstration which greeted his appearance at the capitol was remarkable for its spontaneity and duration. A large crowd welcomed him with cheers when he entered the rotunda. This greeting was taken up in greater volume by a crowd that filled every available space in the convention hall.

President Bigelow used a brief scriptural quotation in introducing the Nebraskan: "There were leaders in Israel who led, praise the Lord." Permit me to introduce a leader who has led."

Cheering, which lasted for several minutes, followed as Bryan rose to speak. The delegates and their guests stood up and cheered. The many women in the audience were equally as demonstrative as the men and discarded the feminine handkerchief waving for the masculine hand-clapping, in which many a pair of gloves was split.

Practically all the state officials were in the audience and the galleries held many delegations, some of which traveled over 100 miles from the rural counties, where Bryan has always been popular in his advocacy of progressive measures.

The Nebraskan's voice was a trifle husky as he started to speak, but this gradually wore off and the familiar resonant voice reached to all parts of the hall. He read his speech.

Mr. Bryan's views on the initiative and referendum were received with enthusiasm by a convention that is pledged to that reform. His declaration that opponents of the initiative and referendum try to kill its effectiveness by advocating high percentages which would make it unworkable was followed by the statement that eight per cent petitions for the initiative of desired laws, 12 per cent for constitutional amendments were not unreasonably low, and that five per cent petitions were high enough for the referendum.

The crowd appeared to like Mr. Bryan's views on the recall of all officers, including the judiciary. There were rounds of applause when he declared: "It is not necessary to reply to the argument that the recall would make cowards of judges; the judge who would be swerved by fear of a recall would not be fit for the place anyhow."

When Bryan counselled the delegates to use both care and courage in handling the corporation question, the audience exhibited a keen interest and interrupted the speaker with applause when he said: "A corporation has no soul and cares nothing about the hereafter." Again, when he said, "A monopoly is indefensible and intolerable," the crowd cheered at length.

The climax of applause came when he insisted on the necessity of bank guarantees, although expressing preference for no particular system. "It is cowardly," he said, "for the government to require security for the deposit of public money, but leave the private depositor to the risk of loss. The banker who requires a farmer to get another farmer to go security for his loan, can not complain if the farmer requires him to get another bank to go security for his deposit."

The Commoner's views on the new workingmen's compensation act and the nine-hour workday for women law met with the approval of the audience.

"If legislation is needed to protect adult men,

it is certainly necessary to protect women and children," declared Bryan.

Applause greeted Bryan's plea for publicity in public affairs. "In this connection," he said, "I believe that every newspaper should be made to print the name of its owner, or owners, and of every creditor whose interest is large enough to influence its policy."

Immediately after Bryan concluded his address the crowd, which exceeded in numbers the one Roosevelt attracted to the capitol, surged forward and he held a reception lasting for a half hour. Nearly every man who shook his hand made some reference to his past campaigns and the possibility of his candidacy in the near future. To all of these Bryan smiled good naturedly, but the only comment he made was when Judge Smith of Geauga county remarked:

"I have voted against you all my life, but I would be glad to vote for you now."

"I appreciate your sentiment, but hardly think it would justify me in running again," was Bryan's answer.

"You are just as good a democrat as ever," remarked Delegate Stokes.

"Well, I don't think I will back-slide," Bryan replied.

National Committeeman Harvey Garber was in the line. "Hello, Harvey," exclaimed the Nebraskan, as Garber reached his side. The national committeeman whispered into Bryan's ear. "Come up to the hotel at 2:30," was the invitation extended to Garber.

Colonel Bryan was compelled to deliver a second speech on the steps leading from the hall into the rotunda in the state house, where a large overflow crowd which was unable to get into the convention hall awaited him.

"Everything I have said will be printed and you will have the same opportunity to read it as others," said Bryan. "I am interested in everything that tends to make good government."

"I have watched the work of the convention of this great commonwealth—great not only because of the numerous presidents it has produced, great not only because of its large population and valuable farms and cities, but great because of the intelligence of its people—with a great deal of interest."

"I am sure that when the delegates complete their work it will be abreast with the times and be progressive. I am equally sure that the work will be ratified by the people and that they will point to it with pride."

"It is pleasing to note what a spirit of confidence Ohio imposes in its people and the spirit with which the delegates to this great convention are performing their work. It is no spirit of mortification to them to recognize that they are the servants and that you, the people, are the masters."

Colonel Bryan's brief remarks were greeted with wild applause. At their conclusion the people made a path for Bryan to leave through.

Bryan was taken direct to the Hartman hotel, where he met a number of the leaders of the Jefferson club and arranged for a change in the date of his appearance here at the Jefferson banquet to April 15 instead of the 13th, as originally planned.

AN EDITORIAL WELCOME

The Columbus (Ohio) Citizen printed the following editorial: William Jennings Bryan, who addressed the constitutional convention today, occupies a unique position.

Although not a president, ex-president, United States senator or governor, he has a larger personal following than any of the wearers of those distinguished titles who preceded him on the Con-Con platform.

William Jennings Bryan is a man in whose courage, honesty of purpose, incorruptibility and patriotism the common people have confidence. There may be question as to the wisdom of his position on certain issues and he does bear the

stigma of repeated defeats, but he is best known to be of and for the people, and his defeats are without dishonor. The great Nebraskan has the esteem and respect of the masses, earned through manly, open fights for what he believed to be right, even when the fight was against his own party, and not one act in all his active career has cast the slightest suspicion on his loyalty to the people and hostility to those who oppress and loot the people. Like Henry George, William Jennings Bryan is "For Men," and while he may not be the general actually on the battlefield placing the men and the guns, he still is "For Men," and the people know it.

It is to such a man that the country may well turn for advice at this time when the very life of democracy is dying out, when the people are ready to resort to a capital operation to save that life; when that very principle of self-government which Mr. Bryan has loved and labored for is making its stand against a monied oligarchy.

Mr. Bryan must know what is going on. He must see that with Taft or Roosevelt on one of the tickets, Big Business is trying to shape the democracy for another dose of the same policy. He must see the reason for solidification of reactionary democrats and republicans and mongrel Hearstites at Washington on a Champ Clark, who feels "safe and sane" in not letting the people know where he stands on initiative, referendum and other hot issues of the hour.

Mr. Bryan, who IS the man for leader of the democracy in these trying times?

We believe that you can answer this to the satisfaction of the people. We believe that William Jennings Bryan is bigger than anything that personally affects William Jennings Bryan alone, and that he can answer this question as a respected leader of men and as an unselfish lover of the cause of men.

MR. BRYAN'S SPEECH—"THE PEOPLE'S LAW"

Mr. Bryan's address to the Ohio constitutional convention was as follows:

Mr. President and Gentlemen of the Constitutional Convention: I am sensible of the great honor you do me in inviting me to address you. You are entrusted with a work of great importance, the preparation of a constitution which may without impropriety be termed: "The People's Law." Other matters they give into the hands of representatives chosen to legislate on general subjects and they permit the representatives to act according to their judgment, but in the case of a constitution, they select agents for a particular purpose—agents chosen with more than usual care—agents in whom they repose the highest confidence—and then, so delicate is the task and so binding is the instrument prepared, that they insist upon its submission to the sovereign voters for ratification before it is invested with the sanctity of the law. I know not how to manifest my appreciation of the privilege that you extend to me of advising in this capacity, except to submit for your consideration some suggestions which may be helpful to you in the discharge of the solemn duty imposed upon you by the people of the state of Ohio.

CONSTITUTIONS

The preparation of the constitution of a great state is a serious undertaking and those who are engaged in it bear a grave responsibility. The burden has been lightened as, with the advance of years, it has been made easier to amend constitutions. The written constitution has become an American institution, and its hold upon the people is not likely to be shaken; its claim to confidence is jeopardized, however, when one generation attempts to fetter the freedom of succeeding generations by provisions that prevent a majority from amending their constitution.

Our federal constitution illustrates the limit to which a constitution may go in restraining