

The Commoner.

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Five Hundred New Commoner Readers in One Bunch

E. H. Moore, a well known Iowa democrat, writes: "I want five hundred copies of The Commoner until the close of the campaign next November. Four years ago, as county chairman, I used five hundred copies of The Commoner. I found this a very effective help in my campaign of education and organization. There is nothing in the line of education equal to The Commoner with its sixteen pages of fine political matter each week going to the average voter, who is open to conviction. This campaign of education, together with other lines of organization, changed that county from a thousand republican majority in the years of 1896, 1900 and 1904, to a democratic majority in 1908."

A REMARKABLE DOCUMENT

President Taft's speech of acceptance will, for several reasons, stand out in political history as a very remarkable public utterance. To begin with, he accepts Senator Root's guarantee of regularity without a smile and even adds his indorsement of the proceedings which resulted in his nomination. "This occasion," he says, "is appropriate for the expression of profound gratitude at the victory for the right which was won at Chicago. By that victory, the republican party was saved for future usefulness."

What an astounding indifference to the intelligence of the public! How completely has his conscience been seared, not to be sensitive in regard to the methods employed at Chicago! Both he and Senator Root know that he was not the choice of a majority of the republican voters; they know that the president's administration was repudiated by those who elected him. They know that a hold-over committee deliberately and contemptuously disregarded the voters of the party and changed the character of the convention by the seating of Taft delegates. Hold-over committeemen who had been repudiated in their states knowingly, even exultingly, thwarted the expressed will of the republican voters of their respective states in order to give an apparent indorsement to the administration—and President Taft is willing to accept this shadow as if it were substantial. The president knows that the republican committeemen from a number of southern states represent mythical constituencies and yet he accepts, with expressions of gratitude, a nomination that was only possible because southern republicans had many times as much influence in the convention in proportion to their numbers, as northern republicans had. And he accepts the nomination without any suggestions as to improvement in method. He neither indorses the Baltimore plan of having committeemen begin to serve as soon as elected—thus having a new committee organize a new convention—nor does he outline any plan for protecting the republican party from the scandal brought upon its conventions by its patronage-controlled delegates from the southern states.

The next thing in the president's speech that attracts attention is the marked contrast between his point of view today and his point of view four years ago. In 1908, he was condemning the malefactors of great wealth and crying out against dishonest methods in business. He held himself out as a reformer and appealed to the progressive sentiment of the country. Now he is horrified at the "demagogue," the "muck-raker" and the political disturber. He says, "In the work of rousing the people to the danger that threatened our civilization from the abuses of concentrated wealth and the power it was likely to exercise, the public imagination was wrought upon and a reign of sensational journalism and unjust and unprincipled muck-raking has followed, in which much injustice has been done to honest men. Demagogues have seized the opportunity to further inflame the public mind and have sought to turn the peculiar conditions to their advantage." He contends that, "It is far better to await the diminution of this evil by natural causes than to attempt what would soon take on the aspect of confiscation or to abolish the principles or institution of private property and to change to socialism."

What a difference in the tone of the two

speeches! Four years ago, he was alarmed for fear the country was going to suffer at the hands of the predatory interests; now, every exploiter is pleasing, and only the reformer is vile. His speech of four years ago must have been delivered during a mental aberration. Surgeons tell us that a man's eccentricities are sometimes due to a pressure on the brain at some point; is it possible that Doctors Root, Penrose and Barnes have restored his mind to normal action by removing the Roosevelt pressure?

Mr. Taft is so solicitous about the people—who have failed "to devote as much time as is necessary to political duties" that he is afraid to burden them with responsibilities three times greater than "the people have been willing to assume." He is afraid that to concede the reforms demanded will result in new duties that "will tire them (the people) into such an indifference as still further to remand control of public affairs to a minority." To find an argument as absurd as the above, one must go back several centuries and consult the reasons that kings gave for not admitting the people to participation in government, and then to add insult to injury, he has the audacity to present the aristocratic argument that it is bread, not votes, that the people need; work, not constitutional amendments; money to pay house rent, not referendums; clothing, not recalls; employment, not initiatives! Modern literature presents no parallel to this ignorance of, or indifference to, the growth of popular government.

In referring to reforms that have come under his administration, he confines himself to a few and these are not the most important. Why does he ignore the popular election of United States senators? It is the greatest reform in methods of government that has come since the adoption of our constitution; why does he overlook it? Is it because it came without his aid?

Why does he fail to mention the income tax amendment to the constitution? He urged it in a message; but he did it in order to defeat a statutory income tax, and he has never said a word since then to encourage its ratification by the states. He even appointed Governor Hughes to the supreme bench after the latter had sent a message to the New York legislature opposing the ratification of the income tax amendment.

Why is he silent on the publicity law, passed in the interest of pure politics? Was it because the publicity before the election, provided for in the law which he was compelled to sign, rebuked his utterances of 1908 when he insisted that contribution should not be made public until after the election?

Here are three great reforms that have come during his administration and yet he can not claim credit for any of them, although, but for his reason for recommending it, he might claim some credit for the income tax amendment.

He defends the Payne-Aldrich bill, and says, "It has vindicated itself." He praises the supreme court decision writing the word "unreasonable" into the anti-trust law—a decision which made every trust magnate rejoice; he eulogizes the dissolution (falsely, so called)—of the oil and tobacco trusts—a dissolution that leaves the trusts undisturbed and has already increased the value of their stock; and he advocates federal incorporation of big business—the one thing that the trusts still need to complete

their control of the industries of the country. What a program at a time like this when three-fourths of the voters of the country are up in arms against the plunderbund!

Not content with an indorsement of everything reactionary that Wall street has had the courage to suggest, he threatens panic if anything is done to disturb those who fatten on governmental favoritism and legislative privilege. He even appeals to democrats to join him "in an earnest effort to avert the political and economic revolution and business paralysis which republican defeat will bring about."

The president's defense of his refusal to intervene in Mexico is the best thing in his speech but his reference to China gives weight to the rumor that recognition of the Republic of China is being withheld as a means of forcing upon China the acceptance of an American loan. He says, on this subject, "we have lent our good offices in the negotiation of a loan essential to the continuance of the republic and which we hope that China will accept, etc." If this is an admission that his administration is attempting to compel China to borrow from our financiers as a condition precedent to the recognition of the republic, he confesses to an inexcusable degradation of the department of state.

Democrats will resent the president's action in associating them, for denunciatory purposes, with the progressive republicans. In replying to "the former republicans"—as he calls them in one place, and to "those who have left the republican party," as he calls them in another place in his speech—he replies to democrats also and accuses both groups of "going in a direction they do not definitely know, toward an end they can not definitely describe, with but one chief and clear object, and that is of acquiring power for their party by popular support through a promise of a change for the better."

This is a very unfair statement of the democratic position in view of the fact that the democratic platform is the only one that is a specific in pointing out abuses and in proposing remedies, and in view of the further fact that the democratic party has shown its fidelity to the people by its willingness to suffer defeat in its advocacy of the reforms which are now being accepted by the entire country.

The president pays himself a high compliment when he offers himself to the voters as the only exponent of constitutional government. He avers that the democratic party, as well as the Roosevelt party, is not to be trusted to preserve the constitution—and he declares that this is to him "the supreme issue." "The republican party," he declares, "is the nucleus of that public opinion which favors constant progress and development along safe and sane lines and under the constitution as we have had it for more than one hundred years, etc."

Here, then, is the paramount issue. Shall the constitution be preserved, by President Taft, with such aid as he can secure from Root, Penrose, Barnes, Lorimer, and the other self-appointed custodians of constitutional government, or shall our organic law be given over into the hands of those who favor the election of senators by the people, an income tax amendment, a single term for the president, and other changes of this character which have for their object the divorcing of the government from the favor-seeking, privilege-hunting class? If this is to be the supreme issue the democrats are ready to call the battle on!