

# The Commoner.

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## 671 New Commoner Readers from One Community—A Fine Tribute to The Commoner as Political Literature

E. R. Moore, Editor "The Journal," Anamosa, Iowa—Enclosed find list of 671 subscribers. Please send The Commoner to these parties until after the election. I would like to have the paper started to them this week. Four years ago, during the national campaign, I sent 500 copies of The Commoner to the voters of Jones county. There is nothing equal to it as a campaign document in the way of educating voters who are open to conviction. It is way ahead of the campaign literature sent out indiscriminately. Sixteen pages each week of such good political matter going into the hands of thoughtful readers is bound to have beneficial results. This campaign of education four years ago brought great results in Jones county. If every county in Iowa followed the same plan of education and backed it up with the proper organization to get out the vote election day, Iowa would be carried overwhelmingly for Wilson. As a member of the democratic state committee, I shall use my best endeavor to get other counties to adopt the plan.

## PRESIDENT TAFT'S VETOES

President Taft has used the veto power with a freedom that has seldom been known. The veto is in itself a mild reflection upon representative government—a relic of monarchical unwillingness to recognize the capacity of the people for self government. Kings when they could no longer resist the demand of the people for a voice in their own government, yielded grudgingly and, yielding, sought to bolster up their declining power by reserving a veto. This reserve power of veto, however, is used with decreasing frequency in monarchical countries. It is only on rare occasions that a king of the present day would dare to interpose a veto to anything that the people really desired. Even the veto preserved to colonial governors over a subject people is more nominal than real, and is only employed on extraordinary occasions and is ever the source of discontent. In the establishment of our government, we went a step farther and qualified the veto of the executive. It is not final or conclusive. It merely delays action, compels reconsideration and sometimes requires the concurrence of a large percentage of the legislative body. It usually requires two thirds of both houses to override the executive veto—that is the rule in the federal government and in most of the states, although in some of the states a bare majority is sufficient.

Most of our presidents have recognized that the veto power is intended for exceptional cases only and have used it sparingly and only when convinced that the measure vetoed violated some constitutional provision. President Taft, however, has deemed it his duty to put his judgment against the judgment of congress wher-

ever he and congress did not agree, and that, too, when the senate being republican, no measure of a purely partisan nature could reach him. To make the case against his vetoes even stronger it may be added that several of them have blocked legislation since it has become apparent that his administration is unsatisfactory to the whole of the democratic party and to more than half of the republican party.

One of his early vetoes was the one which he used to delay Arizona's entrance into the sisterhood of states. The people of that territory had by an overwhelming majority indorsed a constitution, written by their representatives, containing a provision for the recall of officials, including judges. President Taft is very much opposed to the recall of judges, so much so that he would not permit Arizona to come into the union with that provision in its constitution. To meet his objection a bill was drawn requiring the people of Arizona to vote on this specific proposition thus giving them the right to accept it or reject it on its merits. Every state in the union has the right to do this; it can frame its constitution to suit itself, and amend it as it likes, providing, of course, that its provisions do not violate the federal constitution. Oregon had already adopted the same provision that Arizona had and California has since adopted that provision. The supreme court has, since Mr. Taft's veto was written, refused to consider objections to the initiative and referendum adopted in several states, thus confirming the right of the states to act independently on such subjects. But the president, knowing that Arizona not only could restore the recall provision as soon as it became a state but would do it, went to the extent of vetoing the bill that had passed the senate and the house by an almost unanimous vote and forced the introduction of another bill requiring the elimination of the recall provision as a condition precedent to admission. It is probably the first instance in which a president put his personal opinion upon an immaterial question—for his veto, while delaying, could not prevent the restoration of the recall provision—against the opinion of both houses and against the wishes of the people of a territory about to become a state. Such an act upon the part of a king would be likely to result in the withdrawal of the veto power, and President Taft's use of the veto has stimulated more discussion than we have had heretofore as to the wisdom of permitting an executive veto.

The president also vetoed a bill abolishing the interstate commerce court—an act for which no reasonable excuse can be given. We have an interstate commerce commission and we have a supreme court to which litigants can appeal. It was thought worth while to establish a special court for cases growing out of interstate commerce but the court, either because of its per-

sonnel or for some other reason, has proven a great disappointment and congress reflects an overwhelming public sentiment in demanding its abolition. The president, however, sets his judgment against this demand and the court must remain until its opponents can secure a two-thirds majority in both houses or until another executive enters the White House.

The president also used the veto to prevent the establishment of a fixed term for persons in the civil service. While, as the head of the administration and the one in charge of the work done by the civil service force, he can present a stronger claim to a hearing in matters relating to government employes, still the representatives of the people in congress are the ones who must finally determine whether the official term of government employes should be definite or indefinite in duration and the president might have trusted the people to correct the mistake through their representatives if a change in the tenure was found to be a mistake.

The president's tariff vetoes, however, will cause more widespread criticism than the others because they affect immediately a larger number and that effect can be more easily estimated in dollars. He has seen fit to take the side of the tax eater against the tax payer; he has laid forcible hands on congress and restrained it from rescuing the people from grievous and long-borne burdens.

He began his campaign for the presidential nomination by proclaiming himself a tariff reformer. While adhering to the protective principle, he admitted the necessity for a revision of the tariff in the interest of consumers—using the word revision before it had been made farcical by the interpretation given to it by his friends and supporters. In the campaign of 1908, his platform boldly demanded revision and hedged the word about with other words that could not but convey the impression that the revision was to be downward. The party promised "unequivocally" to call a special session "immediately." If the party intended an increase in the tariff or an immaterial reduction why would it be in such haste for a special session? And why would it have fortified its promise with the word "unequivocally?" No fair-minded man could read the platform pledge without recognizing in it a pledge of reduction—at least a pledge that was meant to be so accepted whether intended to be kept or not. Mr. Taft evidently knew of the insincerity back of the platform pledge for he studiously avoided an interpretation of that pledge. When asked whether the revision was to be up or down, he said that some of the schedules ought to be lowered and some raised, and, when still further pressed for an answer, he said that the revision would PROBABLY be downward. When congress met, the beneficiaries of the tariff pro-

### CONTENTS

PRESIDENT TAFT'S VETOES

THE END OF AN ERA

ROOSEVELT'S MISREPRESENTATIONS

THAT "STEP TOWARD SOCIALISM"

THE LETTERS THAT STARTED THE

TROUBLE

THE MOTHER OF TRUSTS

CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS AND

NEW CLUBS

SUGGESTIONS FOR CLUB ORGANI-

ZATIONS

"IT IS TO THE DEMOCRATS IN CONGRESS THAT WE MUST LOOK FOR ANY EARLY FINANCIAL LEGISLATION"

HOME DEPARTMENT

NEWS OF THE WEEK

WASHINGTON NEWS