

# The Commoner

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## THE NEW ERA

With this issue, The Commoner enters upon its career as a monthly magazine and, as such, greets its readers. It is scarcely necessary to point out the difference between the political situation today and that which existed when The Commoner entered the journalistic field, in January, 1901. The party was then staggering under the second defeat administered to it under progressive leadership. The struggle for emancipation from the domination of privilege and favoritism began in 1896, and the deep interest manifested in that campaign will never be forgotten by those who participated in it. Between 1896 and 1900, a number of causes had contributed to an improvement in economic conditions and the republican party, seizing upon the cry, "Let well enough alone," warned the country against a return to the hard times from which it was beginning to emerge. The party in power was also aided by the fact that it had conducted a successful war for the liberation of Cuba, and it was at that time able to conceal from the public the imperialistic plans which its leaders had in mind. Under the circumstances, it was not strange that the democratic party should fail to secure control of the federal government—the surprise is that it suffered so little, as compared with its vote of 1896.

However, those who measure a party's merits by such temporary standards as immediate success, loudly proclaimed the necessity for a return to Wall street leadership. The Commoner was established to withstand the propaganda of "the interests" and to assist the rank and file of the party in holding the party organization true to the promises that had been made. How well this paper has justified its claims upon the confidence of the democratic voters—how truly it has kept the faith—must be left to the public to decide. It will not be denied that it has put forth an earnest endeavor; neither will its right

to rejoice be questioned. Few journals, if any, have ever had an opportunity, in the same length of time, to witness the triumph of so many of the policies supported by it.

A change has come in the political situation which justifies a change in the form of the paper. While the republicans were in power, The Commoner was one of the leaders in the journalistic army which attacked the policies of that party. It conceived it to be its duty to present arguments against those policies and to point the way to remedial legislation. The laws already passed, such as the amendment which puts the people in control of the United States senate, the amendment authorizing the collection of an income tax, the laws providing for publicity, before the election, as to campaign contributions, the laws extending the primary and popularizing the government—these and other laws along these lines assure to the people the enjoyment of many of the benefits for which The Commoner has labored; and, best of all, the democratic party has been called to supreme authority in the nation and to a much larger extent than usual in the states. The friends of democracy, therefore, instead of having to urge their opponents to recognize popular demands, are summoned to engage in constructive work—the application of democratic principles to the time in which we live.

As an incident to the democratic victory, I have been invited to become a member of the president's official family, and, as his representative in one of the departments of the government, am brought into contact with international problems. As a member of the cabinet, too, I enjoy the opportunity of participating in the discussion of such problems as the president sees fit to bring before that body. If I were compelled to choose between the service that I could render as a journalist and the service

which I can render as one of the president's advisers, I would feel justified in preferring the latter to the former, but as there is no necessary conflict between the two positions, I am glad to perform the duties attendant upon both.

As an exponent of the plans and purposes of the administration, The Commoner can accomplish even more as a monthly than it could as a weekly. Administrative and legislative plans develop gradually, and there is no need of haste in meeting the criticisms that may be directed against the program of the party now in authority. The Commoner will be able to present to its individual readers and through its multitude of exchanges, to a still larger audience the government's side of the questions under discussion.

My association with the president has increasingly confirmed my estimate of his singleness of purpose, of his broad intellectual grasp of the situation, and of the courage with which he grapples with public problems. My acquaintance with the members of the cabinet and with the work which they have thus far done, makes it a delight to interpret to the readers of the paper the efforts which they are putting forth in their several departments. In spite of the obstacles that a new administration has to meet, all these cabinet officers have been able to demonstrate their capacity for the work for which they have been chosen and to make material progress toward the improvement of the public service.

The Commoner invites a continuation of the support which has been so generously accorded it, and pledges itself anew to every movement that has for its object the making of this government more truly a government of the people, administered by the people for the protection of their rights and for the advancement of their welfare.

W. J. BRYAN.

## Outgrown Criticisms

One of the ancient kings is said to have written above his door, for his admonition in times of prosperity and for his comfort in times of adversity, "This, too, shall pass away."

It is a wise maxim and must often recur to those who espouse a righteous cause before that cause has become popular.

Criticism of those in public life is not only natural but necessary. It is natural because there is enough of partisanship in our politics to insure watchfulness, and those who desire to find fault cannot be expected to judge opponents justly at all times.

Criticism is necessary, too, for without it public men would become careless. Jefferson went so far as to say that without the restraining in-

fluence of public opinion, officials would become wolves.

Criticism, it may be added, is helpful when deserved and harmless when it is unmerited.

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Even malicious criticism, however annoying it may be at the time, does not permanently injure one in public life. The more malicious it is, the more quickly and the more earnestly do his friends come to his defense and, in the end, the reaction overcomes any temporary wrong done. The only thing to be decided is whether the position taken is right. If it is, time will vindicate it. If the position taken is wrong, criticism hastens its correction—and what well meaning man can object?

Encouragement may be found in recalling a few of the criticisms which have been outgrown within the last twenty years. Tariff reformers have been calling for a reduction of the tariff for more than thirty years. In the beginning, they were accused of trying to ruin American industries, and it was even intimated that they were acting in the interests of foreigners. Now tariff reduction is scheduled to arrive within a