

## The Railway Magnates' Plan

The student of current events should take note of the fact that a return to private operation of railroads would be followed by a renewed effort to rob the states of all authority over the railroads and to concentrate all supervision in Washington. The scheme was proposed by the republicans in 1916. Mr. Hughes' platform boldly declared in favor of the plan and even went so far as to demand a constitutional amendment authorizing it if necessary. Following is the railroad plank of the 1916 republican platform:

"Interstate and intrastate transportation have become so interwoven that the attempt to apply two and often several sets of laws to its regulation has produced conflicts of authority, embarrassment in operation and inconvenience and expense to the public.

"The entire transportation system of the country has become essentially national. We, therefore, favor such action by legislation or, if necessary, through an amendment to the constitution of the United States as will result in placing it under complete federal control."

Unfortunately, the democratic national convention did not make it an issue and, after the election, hearings were begun at Washington at which the railroad attorneys presented pleas in favor of exclusive federal control. Our entrance into the war suspended the effort and then, as a war measure, the government took over the roads.

Now the President calls upon the congress to decide the course to be pursued. If the advocates of private ownership prevail, it will not be the old private ownership with the state exercising supervision over traffic within their borders but a new centralized system which will make efficient regulation impossible. Will the people be aroused in time or will they allow the railway magnates to secure this enormous advantage?

Solomon must have had a similar situation in mind when he said: "The wise man foreseeth the evil and hideth himself but the foolish pass on and are punished." W. J. BRYAN.

### A REBUKE TO WET LEADERSHIP

In 1917 the democratic party of Nebraska elected twenty-two of the thirty-three members of the state senate. In the 1919 session there will be but three democratic senators in the membership of that body. Only two were members of the last senate. The other was a progressive democratic leader in the house for several sessions. In the 1917 session sixteen of the democrats combined with two republicans to refuse to pass a prohibition law that could be enforced, until the force of public sentiment drove enough of them to the support of the house bill to give the state a bone dry statute. At the extra session in 1918 the same group refused even to consider ratification of the national prohibition amendment. Mr. Bryan issued a call to the dry voters of the state just before election urging the defeat of every man, regardless of party, who had thus outraged public decent sentiment in the state. The dry voters responded nobly. The result shows what can be done when men who believe in the same things in government vote together to secure them.

### WELCOME, MR. FORD

The Commoner extends to Mr. Henry Ford a cordial welcome on the field of journalism. He is wise and making his paper a weekly instead of daily. The weekly can be national—a daily spreads its money for news, and news is old in twelve hours.

If Prussianism is really overthrown in Germany why introduce into the United States universal military training, the cornerstone of Prussianism?

If the President's presence at the peace table secures a better treaty even the most partisan republicans may in time become reconciled to the trip.

If they will call the next one a Celebration Loan there should be no doubt of the ability of the government to have it oversubscribed in the first week.

### A SUGGESTION FOR CHRISTMAS

You will like this idea because it is different. Are you not perplexed what to give that friend for Christmas. Sometimes we give the same old "round and round" of beautiful little presents until they lose their beauty and distinctiveness as Christmas gifts. We suggest a Christmas present that is not only different, distinctive and almost universally appreciated, but will be a constant reminder of your good wishes every month in the coming year. Our suggestion is that you pay for a yearly subscription to The Commoner to be sent to your friend—just say it is a Christmas present and we will write your friend for you to that effect. Act quick—the time is short.

### A CANADIAN'S VERSION

Mr. Ben H. Spence, Secretary of the Ontario branch of the Dominion Alliance, speaking at the Anti-Saloon League Conference, Columbus, O., November 20, 1918, said:

"The last time I had the pleasure of being on the platform with Hon. William Jennings Bryan and Prof. Excell was a memorable occasion. It was in Massey Hall, Toronto, at the time of our last Annual Provincial Prohibition Convention.

"A small coterie of disorderly young fellows disturbed the meeting. The newspapers gave the matter considerable prominence at the time but some of them omitted to state that Mr. Bryan addressed the convention in the afternoon and spoke to a crowded mass meeting in the Metropolitan church, the largest church in the city, the same evening.

"In Massey Hall it was only a few men, probably not more than fifty or sixty, who were incited by the liquor interests, who disturbed the meeting. The papers also failed to give prominence to the fact that the same element that created the disturbance in Massey Hall on the Thursday night marched up University Avenue and hooted and hissed the premier of our province, Sir Wm. Hearst, on the following Saturday afternoon. Their disorder in Massey Hall was in the name of patriotism. Their demonstration in Queen's Park was in the name of personal liberty. They wanted the sale of beer permitted.

"The quality of their love of liberty was shown by the disturbance and interference with free speech in Massey Hall. The quality of their patriotism was strikingly shown in one of the banners they carried on Saturday afternoon which read 'No beer, no boats.'

"Toronto was honored by Mr. Bryan's visit at that time. His courage and courtesy under exceptionally trying circumstances commanded our respect and during his visit he rendered magnificent service to the prohibition cause."

### THE BREWERY PROPAGANDA

Some very interesting disclosures have been made before the congressional committee that has been investigating the efforts of the brewers to secure publicity in behalf of their campaign for prohibition of everything except beer and light wines. The brewers bought newspapers and also paid expert professional writers who had the entree of the big magazines to prepare articles showing that the consumption of these liquors constituted real temperance. If anybody ever had any doubts about the justice of the sentence of banishment pronounced on booze by the people of this country, the brewers have swept them all away.

### DECLARE WAR ON SENIORITY SYSTEM

The progressive republican senators have declared war upon the seniority system which, when applied to the senate after March 4th, would place well known friends of the people—that is to say, of some people—in control of the most important committees. They say they will not support an organization of the senate that will put these objectionables into the seats of power. Here's a rebellion intended to make the senate safe for democracy. It ought to be supported by every citizen interested in the government remaining in the hands of the people.

## A Split in Sight

What a gay time the republicans had at the last election! It was a sort of masquerade ball affair where all danced but no one knew whom he had for a partner. They spent a merry evening together, the music was rag-time and shouts of laughter rang through the hall. And then (when the votes were all in the ballot box) the time came to remove the mask—and behold! Senator Johnson was swinging Uncle Joe Cannon, Senator Poindexter had Congressman Fordham on his arm and Medill McCormick was dancing with Boles Penrose. It was an awful mixup. Everybody was mad and McCormick rushed down to the Tribune office and wrote the following editorial under the caption "Fight it Out Now":

"While it is desirable that there should be harmony in the republican organization at this time, to purchase it at the price of domination by the bourbon leaders would be fatal mistake.

"The reorganization of both houses must express the progressive spirit of the party and not the prejudices of the tory minority. The seniority rule is the citadel of bourbonism in the republican party as well as in the democratic. We have been attacking the present administration because it is largely controlled in both legislative and executive branches by democratic bourbonism, which happens to be of one section, the south. But the bourbonism of the east, the bourbonism of any section or either party is the enemy.

"The republican party cannot survive a recrudescence of standpatism. No republican of any open-mindedness or any sense of the spirit of the party or of the times doubts that for a moment. The lesson of 1912 applies today in full force. Western republicanism, without which the party can never win, will not follow bourbon leadership now any more than it would then. Western republicanism is going forward, not back. True to the essential principles of the party, it will not submit to their abuse by the bourbon bosses of any section. It proposes to have a part in the solution of the problems of our day and to apply its principles broadly to that solution. It has no use for the ostrich tactics of standpatism.

"The Tribune hopes the leaders of progressive republicanism will make a fight on the seniority rule at once, and accept no compromise. We shall be defeated in 1920 by the Democrats if the party is not organized to express the spirit and conviction of the mass of the party. The quicker this fight is won the better for the party. It is a fight for party life, nothing less."

And now they glare at each other as they pass and a hair-pulling match is staged for the first republican caucus.

The President ought to call congress in special session early in March and let the fun begin. There is an irrepressible conflict between the progressive republicans and the standpatters—it will open when the congress convenes and continue until the republican party is split wide open again. The leaders are reactionary—the masses are progressive.

It is a sure enough fight—a fight to the death. In the meantime, the democratic party, now wholly progressive, will proceed with its program of constructive legislation and appeal to the conscience and judgment of the country.

W. J. BRYAN.

### GUARANTEE OF NATIONAL BANK DEPOSITS

On another page will be found an able presentation of a plan for the federal guarantee of deposits in national banks by Comptroller of the Currency John Skelton Williams. The extension of the benefits of the guarantee laws to national banks, as now enjoyed by the state banks in several states, is one of the needed reforms of the day and would greatly add to the strength of the national banking system.

Those editors who insisted that it was perfectly all right for the President to attend the peace conference and said that he would be a commanding figure at it hit off in part at least what the senate seems to think about it. Their chief testimony has been that the President has been too commanding to suit their ideas of their own dignity.