

# The Commoner

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## The Leper's Choice

It is strange that any senator can be so blind to conditions in Europe as to assume responsibility for a single day's delay in ratifying the treaty and the League of Nations. The covenant of the league is not perfect, — who would be so foolish as to expect perfection? It is a choice between alternatives, and duty compels our nation to choose the best alternative in sight.

The Bible tells us of a leper who sat at the gate of a besieged city when the people within the walls were reduced to the point of starvation. The leper reasoned thus with himself, "If I stay I perish; if I go to the camp of the enemy I may live". Neither alternative was bright but he chose the brightest. He went to the camp of the enemy and found that the enemy had been frightened in the night and had fled, leaving bread for a starving city.

We are confronted by the same alternative; if we stay we perish; if we go forward with the League of Nations we may live. If we refuse to go forward we invite recurring wars and the old ways of blood and slaughter. We must go forward; it is better to take our chances with the League of Nations than to endure the certainties that will follow a refusal to join in the promotion of world peace.

Our delegates to the League of Nations will represent our nation; they can be chosen in any way the people desire, and they can be instructed as to the course they shall pursue. If congress has any instructions to give, let them be given but let the treaty be ratified at once so that the world may have peace and begin the work of rebuilding the waste places. By friendly co-operation we can secure any desired changes in the league more easily than we can secure them by an attitude of unfriendliness, which would simply create opposition elsewhere. The easiest way is the best way; it is the only way if we look toward peace.

Those who believe war desirable or necessary cannot be expected to look kindly upon a plan that has for its purpose the prevention of war; but a large majority of the American people want peace,—universal peace—prolonged peace; they look forward; they pray for, the time when swords can be beaten into plowshares and nations will war no more. The League of Nations will hasten the coming of that day; the treaty should be ratified immediately and unambiguously.

W. J. BRYAN.

### PROFITEERS STILL UNWHIPPED

The air is full of threats, but the profiteer continues to ply his trade without serious molestation. Why? Because the case requires state action as well as federal action. Governors ought to call SPECIAL SESSIONS at once and secure legislation creating state trade commissions and authorizing cities and towns to create trade commissions. Give the people the machinery and they will use it. At present there is no machinery for dealing with local profiteering. The people are without a remedy. How long will the voters permit this one-sided situation to continue? The merchants can call their customers into court but the customer has no tribunal before which he can call the profiteer. Why?

W. J. BRYAN.

## What the Democratic Party Has Done for Labor

To the Wage Earners of the United States:

The press dispatches announce that a national convention has been called to meet at Chicago in November for the purpose of forming a Labor party. The reason given for the organization of the new party is "the hopeless bankruptcy of the dominant political parties and their utter inability to function in the interests of the people in the present crisis and to meet the profound economic and social problems that now portend". I do not attempt to speak for the republican party, but so far as the democratic party is concerned, its record since 1896 ought to be a sufficient answer to the charge that it is "hopelessly bankrupt" or "unable to function in the interests of the people in the present crisis". Laboring men, least of all, have reason to make such a charge because the democratic party has consistently and persistently championed the cause of the toiling masses, wage earners as well as farmers. In 1896 the rank and file of the democratic party reorganized the party and made it the champion of the interests of the people. During the twenty-three years that have elapsed since that time, with a fidelity to the public welfare never excelled by any party and seldom equaled, it has kept the faith with the exception of a few months in 1904 when it passed temporarily into the hands of the reactionary element. It sinned grievously then but it answered so grievously for its sin at that time that it was immediately cured of its apostasy and in 1908 presented to the public a program, since carried out, which has given the country a series of great economic reforms more numerous and more important than were ever secured before in the same length of time.

The platform of 1896 registered the first emphatic protest, made since the Civil war, against the control of American politics by predatory corporations. That platform demanded

the abolition of "Government by injunction". The democratic party continued the fight for this reform until it was secured during President Wilson's first term. That plank, demanding justice to the wage earners cost the democratic party more votes than the silver plank, but the party was right in taking the stand it did and it was right in maintaining its position until it won out. Can the laboring men forget that important service rendered then by the democratic party?

In 1900 the democratic party advocated the appointment of a secretary of labor in order that the wage earners might have a representative in the president's cabinet, and its efforts were continued until it won this right for the laboring men and Secretary Wilson took his place as one of the president's counselors. Is this not a victory worth remembering?

In the campaign of 1916 the eight hour day became an issue, with the democratic party supporting it and the republican candidate opposing it. By the aid of the democratic party the Brotherhoods won out. Can such a triumph be ignored?

The child labor law, enacted under the democratic administration, had the support of the wage earners, as did legislation looking to the purification of politics. The laboring men have also shared in the advantages brought by the popular election of senators, secured under the leadership of the democratic party, and by currency reform secured in spite of the active opposition of republican leaders; and by the income tax which the democratic party has championed for a quarter of a century. The popular election of senators gave the laboring men a larger share in the selection of United States senators; the currency law gave labor protection from recurring panics, and the income tax transferred from the shoulders of the masses to the holders of large incomes a considerable part of the burdens of government. Taxes upon consumption had overburdened the poor while the rich escaped their share of the taxes. The income tax permitted a more equitable distribution of taxes.

The farmers as well as the wage earners have been benefited by the above remedial measures, and they have received a special benefit from the farm loan law, the first distinct boon to the farmers in a generation.

Both wage earners and farmers were likewise interested in the promise of independence to the Filipinos,—a promise first made in 1900 and repeated in platform after platform until finally, during Mr. Wilson's first term, it was embodied in a resolution of congress. This promise made it possible for the United States to preach democ-

## CONTENTS

THE LEPER'S CHOICE
WHAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS DONE FOR LABOR
PROFITEERS STILL UNWHIPPED
PROHIBITION IS HERE
THE VATICAN FOR DEMOCRACY
A GOVERNMENT BULLETIN
WHO WILL ASSUME THE RESPONSIBILITY?
"THE HEART OF THE LEAGUE"
FIRST STEP OF THE PYRAMID
MR. BRYAN'S STRIKE REMEDY
PUNISH THE PROFITEER
THE PLUMB PLAN FOR OWNERSHIP AND OPERATION OF RAILROADS