

EDITORIAL COMMENT

OUR COMMONEST GREAT COMMONER

(From The Chicago Tribune.)

The American people had two great leaders in the last twenty or more years. One was Roosevelt. The other was Bryan. Bryan remains. Washington reports that he again looms. Looming is a portentous political posture. Mr. Bryan may loom as long as he lives.

He is expected to dominate the Jackson day dinner assemblage of Democratic candidates for the presidency in Washington Jan. 8. Mr. McAdoo declines to be loomed upon or against. He will not eat under Mr. Bryan's shadow.

Roosevelt was the inspiration of the republic. Bryan is its reality. Roosevelt's achievements were in realities, but his power was in inspiration. Bryan himself is the reality. He is the expression of the normal American citizen.

He will be a leader, so long as he lives, because he is the expression of the normal habit, taste, moral thought, custom, and habit of life. He would no more go to Africa to hunt lions or to Brazil to explore rivers than would the normal American citizen who has a fireside or an easy chair. He would be as lost at a picture exhibit as the normal citizen. He is one of the readers of Harold Bell Wright. He would not be interested in a cheewink, except as a bird of some kind, and he would not know a warbler from a hermit thrush.

He is the tremendous expression of normal American life, kindly, shrewd, active, with a simple power of eloquence which is mighty in its effect. He is not only a democrat in political principle. He is a democrat in knowledge, taste, and custom, in amiability and benevolence. He is a leader because he is a reflection.

Soviet Russia is trying to level humanity, partly by the slow process of raising up a majority and partly by the quick process of cutting the minority down. Healthy, good natured young Chinamen, Lenin's killers, lop off the heads of Russians who do or might, whether by intelligence or position, stand higher than the rest. Lenin employs Chinamen because they are so unemotional. A head on or off is a matter of small consequence. A head on means a mouth to fill. It is better for many men to die.

We have a horror of this revolution because of the violence with which it keeps a scythe traveling along the ordained level, cutting off anything which appears above the prairie of heads. We have not examined ourselves or we should find that our principles are closer to the Russian than we thought.

Our ideas do not touch property, or touch it only slight, and because we are not trying to establish an economic communism we fail to see that we are trying to level the nation. Congress is a hotbed of leveling. Congress is an expression of the American people. Mr. Bryan is the expression.

Mr. Bryan was for bringing gold and silver to a level. He would not have an aristocracy of currency imposed on the masses. He was for prohibition, national prohibition, when the most timid wet never lost an hour's sleep over the possibility of what is now a fact. He was against the trusts. He was the most tremendous voice for the leveling of industry and for the leveling of habit.

Spencer said that the coming slavery would be found in the subjugation of the individual to the mass. The most serious problem in the sustenance of the nation is that of distribution, but if an organization is perfected with a system of distribution which the mass of distributors cannot meet in competition, government, reflecting popular sentiment, makes the organization reduce to the level—or tries to.

The essence of our legislation is leveling. In Chicago we cannot get a subway because it might further increase the difference between one section of the city, in which activity is concentrated, and the others in which it is diffused. We might indeed demand that every building over five stories high have its upper stories lopped off. Habit and customs, taste and manners and morals must be reduced to a level. A city must submit to the regimen of a

village. We are willing to make everything universal except military training.

In this day Mr. Bryan is more powerful than he ever was. He may never be president. He may not even be a candidate for president again. But he remains a natural leader, the natural leader the American people have.

He is the commonest great commoner we ever had.

WILLIAM J. BRYAN AGAIN

The dinner given in honor of William J. Bryan in Washington the other day by ex-Gov. Folk, of Missouri, with the active participation of fourteen Democratic senators, may or may not be the prelude to an organized attempt to nominate the former boy orator of the Platte as the Democratic candidate for the presidency. But the developments at the feast certainly seemed to furnish evidence of Col. Bryan's political vitality.

It has become the fashion, even among Democrats to regard the perpetual candidate for the presidency in the light of a mirth-provoking personality. Mr. Bryan's host took the opportunity of the presence of the high lights of the party at the Shoreham dinner to point out that some of the radical departures which the Nebraskan has preached early and often, and which have been denounced by both Republicans and Democrats as a revelation of his visionary state of mind, have become present actualities.

Among them are woman suffrage and prohibition, which two decades ago were inscribed upon the Bryanite banners amid considerable laughter and ironical applause. Even Mr. Bryan's espousal of the cause of silver seems to acquire some posthumous justification from the rise in value of that metal which has given it a slight advantage over gold for the time being.

Echoes from the gold room at the Shoreham, where the feast was held, would seem to indicate the possibility that Mr. Bryan may be heard from to some purpose at the Democratic national convention next summer.

William J. Bryan has shown such remarkable capacity for self-resurrection that even the most confirmed non-Bryanite need not be unduly astonished at his reappearance as a formidable aspirant for presidential honors.—New York Evening Mail.

MR. WM. J. BRYAN AGAIN IN THE POLITICAL RING

In contemplating the political possibilities of the immediate future do not fail to consider Mr. William Jennings Bryan. He is in the ring as a worker and his wishes and efforts will cut no small figure in the events political during the year 1920.

Mr. Bryan's old followers have never lost faith in his ability, his patriotism, or in his marvelous grasp of important questions. In many things he was much ahead of his time, but developments in nearly every case vindicated his position.

Big interests and corrupt interests all over the land fought him with the vigor of desperation but the plain people believed in him and believe in him today as firmly as ever. He stood for the election of U. S. senators by the people when every corrupt and legislature controlling corporation in the country was against it. He advocated universal suffrage when it was little more than a joke to be on that side of the question. He had previously advocated about every practical step of progressive and humane legislation that the progressive party afterwards took up and appropriated as their own.

And Mr. Bryan has been considering the serious questions that confront the people today and he is likely to be heard from in a manner to make the weaklings in politics tremble. He sees the labor question, not as a political hobby, but as the embodiment of a humane principle whose just solution on lines of Christian brotherhood and equality, is essential to the world's progress and to a vindication of the rights of mankind.

Mr. Bryan is not a faddist, but a careful, conscientious, able student of conditions and events, and as long as he lives and has his health he will continue to be a factor that must be reck-

oned with by those endeavoring to shape the political affairs of the nation. He has the peculiar trait of being strong with party leaders as well as with the man at his daily work. Few men of modern times have been as thoroughly trusted and as fully honored by the men who dig the ditches, run the engines and wield the hammer as is Mr. Bryan. One interested in such matters some time ago asked a dozen workers whom they regarded as the greatest statesman of the present era. An amazingly large number said "Bryan." This was in New York State where Mr. Bryan was never considered strong and at a time when he appeared to be in political retracy. One man on a builders' scaffold, hearing the conversation, called down, "You'll hear from Bryan again. They can't down a good man!"

No one can say at this stage what turn affairs may take, but it is pretty safe to conclude that the man named to lead the democratic fight will be one who has the friendly aid of Mr. Bryan. Some political opponents deeply interested in seeing Mr. Bryan keep out of the game, are quoting with apprehension, some extracts from the editorial columns of his paper, *The Commoner*.

One editorial, entitled: "The Philistines be upon thee," calls upon the democratic party to "be aroused by some such startling warning as that used to stir Sampson to deeds of strength," and refers to the present state of the democratic party as "palsied."

In another editorial Mr. Bryan's paper asks: "What is the matter: Is this the party that triumphed in 1912 and wrote such a glorious chapter of reforms between 1913 and 1917? What has palsied the party's arm and sapped its vigor?"

The inference seems to be plain that Mr. Bryan thinks his party is falling into the hands of these politicians, and that it is time for some Sampson to lead it forth to new victories.—Albany, N. Y., Times-Union.

THE COMMONER EMERGES

Mr. Bryan's appearance in Washington at the critical stage of the peace treaty fight seems to demonstrate a willingness on his part to re-enter politics. Conditions have certainly shaped themselves so as to permit his playing an important part in the next Democratic national convention. President Wilson's health precludes any serious thought of nominating him for a third term. Moreover, the second Wilson administration has so disorganized the Democratic party that a candidate free from administration associations is likely to be sought.

When Mr. Bryan left the cabinet he broke definitely with the Wilson regime. He has been in retirement four years and a half. He could make his own campaign or his own issues. He said jokingly a few days ago that Democratic prospects were so poor it would be perfectly natural for the party to want to draft him. Running for President has always been a diversion for Mr. Bryan. He has thrived on defeats. A party looking for a cheerful long shot nominee couldn't do much better than to pick the undaunted loser of 1896, 1900 and 1908.

At all events, Mr. Bryan evidently intends to figure conspicuously in the Democratic national convention of 1920. If he is there sparks will fly. And if any residuary legate of the Wilson administration is nominated—well, there is the haunting memory of Judge Parker's campaign of 1904.—New York Tribune.

MR. BRYAN

To Omaha today comes again William Jennings Bryan, Nebraska's best known citizen, and the man who has the ear of the country as none other has.

Mr. Bryan has been pronounced politically dead many times. Yet the rumblings of a new presidential campaign are hardly heard before he bobs up with something to say, and the whole nation stops to listen. He has suffered defeats which would have put an ordinary man into complete political oblivion. But today hundreds of newspapers are commenting upon him as a potential candidate for the presidency.

This happens because Bryan is a fighter and a natural born leader, and because he is guided by a deep-seated conviction that the things for which he stands are right. He combines with a keen political sagacity a fearless championship of issues which appeal to him as vital. His repeated comebacks are doubtless possible because of his firm belief that the world moves