

## Democracy's Law Giver

William Jennings Bryan—A Vindication By Hon. Wayne C. Williams, Ex-Industrial Commissioner of Colorado

From July 9th, 1896 to 1916 and even to the present hour, Bryan has been the leader of the Democratic party and for most of that period its sole leader. As leader and candidate in three presidential campaigns; as the arbiter of the other three campaigns; as the writer of four of its six platforms; and as the directing spirit of at least one of the remaining two platforms; we may well seek to comprehend the compelling influence of this man upon the political life of this generation.

Excepting only Henry Clay, he has led his party longer than any other man in American public life. For an entire generation his ideas have dominated Democratic councils and inspired Democratic platforms. Thrice defeated, consigned to oblivion on numerous occasions, politically buried at a score of funerals, yet manifesting an astonishing political vitality that must be explained.

### NOT A PRESIDENTIAL PROPAGANDA

But a preliminary word will be necessary lest some reader jump to conclusions. Is this article written with another fight for the presidency in view? Answer—Not that I know of. Mr. Bryan has declared that he is not seeking a nomination. No one knows what will be the situation two months from today in America or how the political scenes will have shifted.

The presidency could offer Bryan but few attractions compared with the exalted platform from which he now influences public life. Why should a leader of public opinion, whose influence is almost without a parallel, exchange this sure record of triumphs for the uncertainties of the presidency where the mistake of a single subordinate or a mistake in the choice of a single official might mar the presidential record?

Why change the prestige of a Henry Clay for the empty honors of a Millard Fillmore? Who has a real place in American history—Daniel Webster or John Tyler? Of course, Bryan would not be a Fillmore or a Tyler, but I mentioned these names to show that the presidency of itself brings neither lasting fame or personal happiness. To desire the presidency for solid achievement, for results—that is worth while; but to desire it for mere glory or fame, just to be pointed out or deferred to—that is quite a different thing.

### APPRECIATION OF PRESIDENT WILSON

What about President Wilson? Are we attempting invidious comparisons? Not at all. If we prize Bryan, do we thereby decry Wilson? To ask the question is to reveal its absurdity. No single Democrat in America surpasses the writer in admiration of President Wilson. He is one of the three greatest presidents of America. He has performed a service for mankind that no other American president has ever performed. His League of Nations is the greatest signal political achievement in the history of mankind. Undoubtedly the president will be the first to credit the Nebraska leader with remodeling the Democratic party along progressive lines and laying the foundations of the greatest political advances of the last twelve years in this country.

### A VINDICATION OF POLICIES

But the most remarkable thing about the Bryan leadership is not even the fact of that leadership, unprecedented as that may be. The remarkable thing is the vindication of the Bryan views and policies. Probably no other man in history has advocated so wide a program and then lived to see his principles receive such universal approval and adoption as has Mr. Bryan.

Certainly, this is true of any political leader who has had to depend upon public opinion and the votes of self governing peoples to carry out his ideas. A monarch of the old autocratic days might acquire an idea some fine morning and put it into power before night by imperial decree, but in a Democracy, a leader must impress his ideas upon men only by reason and persuasion and by the force and value of those ideas.

Unless his principles comprehend themselves to those who listen to him, he has no following and cannot realize any achievement in putting

those principles into law. Mr. Bryan on the public platform, reasoning and pleading with his fellow men for great ideals of government and humanity forms the true measure of the political advances of this generation, the climax of Democracy in government.

### A MAKER OF PLATFORMS

As a background for the claim that Bryan has been vindicated in his views, let us first examine what his views are and see how they have been accepted by his party. Bryan joined in writing the Democratic platform of 1896. He was directly responsible for the platforms of 1900 and 1908, on which he again ran for the presidency. He materially assisted in framing the platform of 1904.

He wrote the platform of 1912 on which Wilson successfully ran for the presidency; and many of his ideas were written in the platform of 1916, the latest pronouncement of the Democratic party. We are not now speaking of governmental measures and politics and laws. We are speaking of the giver of law to the Democratic party. A consideration of the governmental measures which represent the Bryan ideas will come later. The Chicago platform of 1896 contained the following planks:

1. Bimetallism. 2. Tariff for revenue only. 3. Income tax. 4. No importation of pauper labor. 5. Arbitration of disputes of interstate railway employes. 6. Enlargement of powers of interstate commerce commission; enlarged control of railroads. 7. Opposition to government by injunction. 8. Monroe doctrine to be maintained. 9. No third term in the presidential office. 10. Fixed term in civil service. 11. Federal government to improve the Mississippi river and internal waterways.

### PRINCIPLES IN DETAIL

These principles and planks will repay careful study. Aside from the civil service plank, they have all been adopted or realized in substance and time in some manner or another has vindicated them.

Bimetallism never did have so great a vindication as at this hour in world commerce. The gold dollar is a fifty cent dollar. Nations are clamoring for silver. Banking and currency bills, to the passing of which Bryan contributed so much, destroyed the grip of Wall Street financiers on the currency of the nation.

Tariff for revenue only is the law of the land.

The income tax is in force. Bryan fought for it actively from 1893 to 1913, when as secretary of state he signed the final certificate proclaiming the income tax amendment adopted. Without the income tax the rich could not have been made to pay a single personal penny to the war.

### PAYING A PENALTY

America is paying the penalty at this hour for the importation of pauper labor.

If we had had a law for the arbitration of railway wage disputes, the Adamson law and its attendant crisis would never have confronted America, and a great industrial crisis looms before the government, and the United States has no law to meet it.

Enlarging the powers of the interstate commerce commission. The great fight of President Roosevelt in 1915 and 1916 was over this very question and Roosevelt was Bryan's most bitter opponent in 1896.

Shall we enlarge governmental control of the railroads? Unquestionably it will be further enlarged. The most hardened reactionary admits it. The only difference of opinion is as to what form future governmental control will assume.

Government by injunction has been curbed by law. Can any one recall the fierce and bitter storm of criticism that broke over the head of Bryan in 1896 for this reform which is now a part of the law of the land? Yet in 1896 Roosevelt said that any one who opposed government injunction in labor disputes was fit only to wear stripes and live in a cave.

### A TRIUMPH OF LEADERSHIP

In 1900 the Bryan platform had a plank demanding a new currency law. It declared for election of senators by the people and that amendment has been ratified. It declared for a department of labor in the cabinet and a union man bearing a union card sits in the cabinet with the president in Washington at this hour. It declared for an interoceanic canal.

It declared for storing water to irrigate and improve the arid lands of the west, the forerunner of the great reclamation project. It declared against ship subsidies, a position from which the nation has not retreated. In 1908 the platform declared for governmental guar-

antee of bank deposits and the reform is in force in many states and the idea has been sustained as to its constitutionality and legality by the supreme court of the United States.

When we add to these substantial achievements the successful Bryan fight for campaign publicity before elections, for initiative and referendum and his aid in the movement for a child labor law, we have a substantial program to command the attention of the men who must write the political history of this generation. Here is credit enough for any single life, but the main chapters are yet to be written.

The great achievements have not been recounted. Between 1896 and 1902, new issues were thrust upon the country. The issues of the trusts and imperialism, the serious problem of colonial expansion. Upon these two issues Mr. Bryan took advanced and decisive ground and upon them he has received his greatest vindication.

### FROM A COMMONER READER

Theo E. Slinkard, Indiana—Everything is shaping itself for the nomination of Hon. W. J. Bryan for president on the Democratic ticket in the next campaign. There are no soldiers here in this community who want any more wars—that is, those who saw actual service in France. Mr. Bryan is favorable to peace which is well known to this nation. The fight to make the liquor question an issue will throw the south and west to Mr. Bryan. He has said nothing nor has he done anything in regard to the Covenant of the League of Nations and the Peace Treaty but what will have the approval of a great majority of the people, in my judgment. The fact that he left the cabinet will make little difference to the people, as no one knows whether we could have kept out of the war, if Mr. Bryan's counsel had been followed, and as war-weary as the people are, no other argument need be made, except to say, that no one knows what the result would have been had his counsel been followed. We have hoped for years that he would some day be president.

### MR. BRYAN VINDICATED

Every prediction, every political principle, every course of public action, both domestic and foreign, laid down by Mr. Bryan has been vindicated to date. Even the much derided free silver policy is now seen to have been correct. The quantitative theory of money is everywhere being accepted and the right of the people to determine their own financial policy instead of leaving it to a group of big bankers and speculators has been fully agreed to by the great majority of the people. A long list of sound, practical government reforms advocated long before they were popular, by Mr. Bryan, have come into being and been enthusiastically and generally accepted. Now Mr. Bryan steps forth and begins to point the way once more. He will be derided, ridiculed, maligned, slandered and abused as usual, but the course he maps out will be the one the majority of the people will finally come to believe in, just the same. Mr. Bryan may never occupy any high office, but his place in history as a political seer and wise prophet is secure.—Fairbury, Neb., Journal.

### BOOKS RESERVED

With One Voice. A study in Prohibition in the U. S. A. By Robert B. S. Hammond, of Australia. Published by N. S. W. Alliance, McDonnell House, Sydney, Australia.

No-wa-na. An Indian Tale. Told in Verse. By John Fremont Kyger. Fremont Publishing Co., 106 N. LaSalle St., Chicago, Ill. Price \$1.25 net.

The White Ribboner or How Paul Hamilton Won Victory. By Horace G. McDonald. Bethel Publishing Co., Portland, Ore.

The Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow of Motherhood. By Aurore Dudevant. The Burton Publishing Company, Publishers, Kansas City, Mo.

The Opium Monopoly. By Ellen N. La Motte. The Macmillan Company, New York. Price \$1.00.

Leonard Wood. Soldier. Administrator. Citizen. By William Herbert Hobbs, Professor of the University of Michigan. Member of the Executive Committee of the National Security League, Author of "The World War and Its Consequences," Etc. With an Introduction by Henry A. Wise Wood. Illustrated. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York and London. Price \$2.00.