

# The Commoner

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## The Farmer's Condition

The following letter from a prominent farmer in a western state discloses a very serious condition that demands serious attention:

"I am writing you in regard to the Wheat Growers' Association. Do you think the farmers can make a success in organizing, or would you prefer Government control of the price of wheat and other commodities?"

"I am a farmer, and a subscriber of The Commoner, and I favor Government control if it can be obtained. I raised 40,000 bushels of wheat this year and at the present time I cannot get the cost of production."

"The International Harvesting company sold binders last year for \$300.00, and sent word the other day of a 20 per cent raise. What will become of the farmer if there isn't some adjustment made?"

"There are hundreds of farmers on the Pacific coast facing bankruptcy at present. Your opinion would be appreciated."

The Wheat Growers association is legitimate and will prove of service to the farmer, but it is well to understand the farmer's handicap as compared with large manufacturers. The farmers are too numerous to permit of the forming of an effective combination for the limiting of production or for the holding of crops. Farmers' societies can collect and distribute information, arouse public sentiment and exert political influence in the farmer's behalf, but they can not form a trust. Manufacturers are comparatively few in number and can combine for the limiting of the output and for the fixing of the price; hence, the farmer is the victim of all combinations without being able to protect himself effectively by combination.

Legislation is his hope and his only security. Just now he may and should be protected from too sudden a return to pre-war prices. He will not complain of changes that are NATURAL and GENERAL, but he SHOULD complain of artificial fluctuation in the price of his products and of a depression in price that does not include the things that he must buy.

The farmer feeds the world and the government protects ALL when it assures him, as it should, of a price that will guarantee a sufficient food supply. There should also be legislation against gambling in his products. It would seem incredible, if it were not an actual fact, that congress would for a single day permit a few speculators to make fortunes by selling and buying grain which they do not own and never expect to accept or deliver.

If the farmers will take the trouble to bombard their senators and congressmen with specific demands they can get what they need in the way of legislation. The law recently passed over the President's veto is an illustration of this. If the Harvester company is overcharging, the facts should be brought before the Trade commission. It would seem unnecessary to raise prices now when the trend of prices is downward.

W. J. BRYAN.

## Deserve to Win—Then Organize

The day is past when the liquor machines and Wall Street interests of the large cities can successfully dictate to the great moral majority of the nation. Make the Democratic party deserve to win, then organize for the coming struggle. The Republican party, as organized, officered and controlled can not bring content and prosperity to the masses—the reaction will come fast and emphatic. Democrats, progressives and independents should meet, confer, plan and outline legislative needs, municipal, state and national.

The Commoner desires to hear from those who will undertake to help rehabilitate the party in their respective counties and states.

### STATE LEGISLATORS—NOTICE

You have to deal with an IMMEDIATE need. Each state should have a Trade commission patterned after the Federal Trade commission, and each community should be authorized to create such a local commission when it desires to do so. The Federal Trade commission can attend to trade conspiracies and profiteering when they operate throughout the nation, but this commission has neither time nor authority for local wrong doing. The state must look after trade combinations and profiteers operating wholly WITHIN the state and each county and municipality should have power to deal with injustices that are purely local. Publicity may be sufficient—at least it is the easiest remedy to try, and experience with this remedy will point the way to such other remedies as may be needed. Every merchant and manufacturer has the courts at his command; he can collect his accounts by judicial process, but the purchaser has at present no tribunal before which he can call the extortioner and the profiteer. Why this one-sidedness? Because the middlemen have more influence than the masses. The masses should demand and the legislators should provide state and local trade commissions.

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### CONGRESS, ATTENTION!

What are you going to do with American citizens who go into British, Mexican or Cuban territory to find a base of operations against the prohibition laws of the United States? They should at least lose their citizenship. Punish them and then we shall be in position to protest against such use of foreign territory by foreigners.

Retailers report that Christmas shopping was not so great in volume as the previous year, but that profits remained much the same. As we figured it out from the price sheets that was the intention.

## The Commoner's 21st Year

In its initial issue, January 23, 1901, The Commoner published the following statements in its dedicatory editorial:

The name has been selected for this paper because The Commoner will endeavor to aid the common people in the protection of their rights, the advancement of their interests and the realization of their aspirations. \* \* \* \* \* The Commoner will be satisfied if, by fidelity to the common people, it proves its right to the name which has been chosen.

These statements have been repeated from time to time on recurring anniversaries, and are repeated now, at the beginning of The Commoner's 21st year of publication, as an evidence of its purpose to dedicate itself anew to the solemn pledges made in its initial issue, and, also, to announce its intention to outline a new constructive program, national, state and municipal, for the betterment of the common people. The details of this program are being worked out, and will be announced in a later issue. It is sufficient to say that this program will embody many new remedies for the correction of glaring evils and gross injustices of the present day.

During the twenty years of its publication, The Commoner has witnessed the fruition of a large number of needed reforms which it has advocated. It can truthfully be said that more has been accomplished for the common people in the past twenty years than during the entire half century preceding. These accomplishments have been so substantial in character as to give renewed hope for greater things in the immediate future.

The Commoner is proud of the part it has played in helping to bring about the great reforms of the past two decades. The good that it has been able to accomplish has been made possible by the steadfast cooperation of its readers in extending its circulation in their communities, and for their hearty support at critical periods of the fight. To this loyal band we wish to express our gratitude and assurance of the unceasing advocacy of Democratic principles in an effort to protect the masses from exploitation.

### PROFITEERING CONTINUES

Investigations are revealing profiteering so flagrant and conscienceless that it is hard to understand why congress does not act (see coal prices, for instance). Instead of protecting the people from the profiteers congress is now considering the repeal of the excess profits tax—a gift of a billion to the profiteers.

While congress is investigating coal profiteers and lumber profiteers, it might be well to turn the searchlight on the new combination of profiteers recently organized as the National Prosperity Bureau. Its announced purpose is to persuade the public to buy at present prices, which would seem to be an organized effort to prevent the reductions necessary.