

# The Commoner

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## Enforcement of Prohibition

Acquiescence in the will of the majority when expressed in accordance with our Constitution and our laws is the vital principle of our government. Jefferson said that acquiescence in the will of the people was the vital principle of the republic from which there is no appeal except to force, the principle of despotism.

That acquiescence in the will of the majority is the recognized policy of this country can be proven by innumerable facts in our history. For instance, in 1876 the Democrats acquiesced in the election of a Republican President by a majority of one in the electoral college when that one majority was secured by a decision of the electoral commission which voted eight to seven on every important question. In 1884 the Republicans acquiesced in the decision when Cleveland was elected by the vote of New York and the vote of New York turned upon a few hundred votes. In 1916 the Republicans again acquiesced in the decision when President Wilson was re-elected by a small majority in the electoral college and that majority came from California which went Democratic by a few votes.

Here we have three instances of acquiescence in the election of Presidents by a narrow margin. Although great interests were at stake there was no suggestion of resistance to the decree rendered according to the Constitution and laws. And yet, we find a large element, made up of some who claim respectability, resisting a prohibition law based upon a Constitutional Amendment adopted by a large majority after a fight of fifty years. No important question has ever been settled by so decisive a majority as that recorded in favor of prohibition. More than two-thirds of the states in the Union went dry by their individual act. More than two-thirds of the members of the Senate and House voted to submit prohibition. Forty-six states out of forty-eight have ratified prohibition. Only two states, Connecticut and Rhode Island, have refused to ratify and they are small states and in the largest of these one branch of the legislature favored ratification. Two congresses have been elected since national prohibition was submitted—one since prohibition went into effect—and both of these congresses have been dry by more than two-thirds majority.

And yet, instead of acquiescing in the will of the majority the "wets" in city, state, and nation are attempting to elect men to office pledged to violate their oath. They are trying to prevent the enforcement of the law and also trying to secure legislation which they know to be a violation of the prohibition Amendment.

So bold are these enemies of government that they insolently warn the Federal Government not to interfere with open conspiracies in neighboring nations and on the high seas. A Philadelphia paper recently insisted that the Federal Government should not interfere with rum-runners outside the three mile limit. What a doc-

trine to preach in this enlightened age! The geographies teach us that three-fourths of the earth's surface is covered by water. The wets would confine civilization to one quarter and turn over three quarters of the earth's surface to those who are outlaws and who are engaged in conspiracies against governments.

Whenever a ship puts the black flag above the flag of any nation it can be sunk without fear of war. No civilized nation will lend its flag to the violation of the law of any other nation and it will not protect its citizens when they disgrace their country and their country's flag by such kinds of piracy.

"Freedom of the seas" in this case will be "freedom to seize;" the nations that attempt to protect their homes from the invasion of alcohol will be prepared to seize those who attempt to use the seas for unlawful purposes.

W. J. BRYAN.

### THE FOUR POWER TREATY RATIFIED

The Four Power Treaty, a copy of which will be found in this issue, has been ratified by the Senate by a vote of sixty-five to twenty-seven, a majority of thirty-eight—eleven more than the two-thirds necessary to ratify. The committee amendment specifically denying that the treaty could be construed as an alliance and reserving the right of independent action was adopted by a vote of NINETY to TWO. It cured the defect in the original draft. A number of the amendments offered by the Democrats should have been adopted, especially the one offered by Senator Robinson.

It is unfortunate for the party that Democratic senators should have put it in the attitude of opposition to this treaty, although the failure of the effort to defeat it prevents the treaty being a campaign issue. It would have been disastrous to the party if the opposing Democrats had been able to secure one more than one-third and thus prevent its ratification. Twelve Democrats voted to ratify while twenty-three registered their opposition.

Instead of being willing to use an outgrown Constitutional provision to defeat the treaty the Democrats would serve the party and the country better if they would urge an amendment to the Constitution permitting ratification by a majority. It takes two-thirds of both houses to override the President's veto in matters of legislation even though the measures originate in congress; why should it require two-thirds of Congress to support the President in the ratification of treaties—a matter specifically entrusted to the President?

A majority of Congress can carry the country into war; why should it require two-thirds of the Senate to conclude a treaty?

If making the world safe for democracy is worth a world war, why not try democracy at home? The right of a majority to rule is the fundamental principle of popular government; why not apply it to treaties? W. J. BRYAN.

Speaking of unnecessary wastes of time and effort, we note that E. Mont Riley, Republican governor of Porto Rico, denies that he has any intention of resigning his office.

## The Coming Campaign

Prospects brighten; each month something adds to the Republicans' embarrassment and improves the chances of the Democrats. There will be no need to fight the campaign of 1920 over again; the new issues raised by the Republicans have turned attention from the past to the present.

The revenue measures will be the center of attack because it most clearly discloses the line of cleavage between the progressive Republicans (the rank and file of the party) and the reactionary leaders. The bill shifts the burden of taxation from the rich to the poor. The profiteers were given relief to the extent of four hundred and fifty million dollars a year (estimated) and the revenue bill, as introduced in the House would have given less than five thousand persons with big incomes relief estimated at ninety millions. This enormous sum of over five hundred millions bestowed upon the rich by these two items has to be made up by relatively greater taxes upon those who are poorer.

The crime would have been even more aggravated had not the Republican caucus stricken out the retroactive clause that would have extended relief for the last year as well as for the future.

Let every Democrat gird himself for the fray and be ready when the battle is called. We ought to carry the next Congress—that is, the House of Representatives; of course, it is hardly possible to get a majority in the Senate with only one-third of the Senate to be elected. Now is the time to lay the foundation for success by selecting the very best candidates in each congressional district and in each state that elects a senator.

W. J. BRYAN.

### THE SCHEME WONT WORK

The closing up of the Central Breweries in New York state, and the seizure of a large amount of four and a half per cent beer, gives the honest inquirer some idea of what the situation would be if light wines and beers were permitted. The breweries would open up all over the country and, under the pretense of manufacturing permitted beers, would be manufacturing beers of every strength. Nobody who knows anything about the breweries doubts that the scheme is intended to overthrow all prohibition and to restore the saloon with all that goes with it. But the scheme will not work. The saloon is dead, the distillery is dead and the brewery is dead. The prohibition law, like other laws, will be violated at times, but it will not be repealed. Prohibition is here to stay.

W. J. BRYAN.

The electrical wizards have so developed the amplification of sound that the footsteps of a fly as it walks across a piece of paper can be made to resemble the boom of thunder. All of which may be very interesting, but who wants to hear the boom of thunder?