

The Commoner

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A Word of Farewell

The breaking of the ties that have grown up between the readers of *The Commoner* and myself is a painful task. The paper has furnished me with a means of reaching political friends scattered throughout the United States and I am inclined to be reminiscent as I say farewell to them.

The paper was established in 1901, just after my second presidential campaign. When I retired from congress in March, 1895, I expected to return to my law practice which had been suspended for four years. But the silver question was then forging to the front and I soon found that I must either continue the discussion of public questions or disappoint a host of friends with whom I had become a co-laborer. I decided, therefore, to continue my political work until after the presidential campaign. The nomination came to me in July, 1896, and when the election was over it was apparent that I would be re-nominated in 1900. During the four years between 1896 and 1900 I devoted myself entirely to public questions. By the end of the second campaign I was so deeply involved in national politics that I did not feel justified in returning to the trial of law suits, so the paper was established in order to give me constant and certain access to the progressive element of the Democratic party.

I need not recount the many events that have followed during the publication of *The Commoner*, but it may not be out of place to call attention to some of the things which it has championed.

It was an advocate of popular election of United States Senators from the day of the first issue until the amendment became a part of the Constitution in 1918.

It advocated an income tax from the day it was founded until the income tax became a part of the Constitution in February, 1913.

Beginning in 1910 *The Commoner* increasingly discussed legislation aimed at the liquor traffic—first county option, which became an issue in Nebraska in 1910, and later prohibition as it became an issue in Nebraska and the nation.

In 1914 *The Commoner* began the advocacy of Woman Suffrage, it being a state issue in Nebraska that year.

The paper also supported the Currency Law, Tariff reform, Anti-Trust Legislation, the Child Labor Law, the Farm Banking Law, the law that forbids gambling in farm products, the regulation of the meat packing industry, the regulation of the railroads, the changing of the rules of the House so as to put an end to the despotic power of the speaker, legislation requiring publicity as to newspaper ownership, publication of campaign contributions before the election, and all the other remedial measures that have come before the public.

The Commoner has been the supporter of four great Constitutional Amendments and the champion of every reform measure proposed during its existence. It is proud of its record and proud

of the friends who have supported it. Its circulation has been dependent upon the active interest of its readers and they have put me under an obligation that I shall not be able to fully discharge during my lifetime—an obligation which I shall pay in installments whenever opportunity offers.

I am not retiring from politics, nor shall I lose interest in public measures. Through interviews and articles published in various magazines and papers, as well as in my speeches, I shall discuss public issues from the Democratic standpoint. In this way I hope to keep in touch with the American people.

During the last few years I have given considerable space in *The Commoner* to the discussion of religious questions. I have felt it my duty to do this in order that my readers might be fully informed as to the subjects which I was discussing. My Bible Talks now reach a very considerable percentage of the American people, being published in papers with a combined circulation of some four millions.

I shall continue to follow all the lines of work in which I have been engaged—I cannot in good conscience abandon any of the movements with which I am connected because I believe them all vitally important to the country.

During the publication of *The Commoner*, I have been constantly meeting people who informed me that they were readers and have been grateful for their expressions of appreciation of *The Commoner's* attitude and arguments on public questions. As my travelling will continue, although the length and number of my trips will probably decrease with advancing years, I hope to still have the pleasure of meeting those who have been subscribers of my paper. In bidding them adieu, I beg to express for my brother, as well as for myself, heartfelt appreciation of their loyalty and cordial good will. May they all live long and prosper.

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN.

ANOTHER DRED SCOTT DECISION

The recent 5 to 3 decision of the Supreme Court (Justice Brandies took no part) declaring the minimum wage law unconstitutional is another Dred Scott decision. It will—or should—awaken the country to the heartlessness of plutocracy. The "sacredness of contract" becomes a cruel farce when the employee can be forced into labor that is devitalizing. Chief Justice Taft is to be congratulated on his dissenting opinion. Humanity will react against the policy which the court has endorsed, as it will against the doctrine recently announced by President Vaclain of the Baldwin Locomotive works. He says his day men work ten hours and his night men fourteen hours and can work more if they want to. It is a return to barbarism in both cases.

Senator Brookhart of Iowa, in supporting the filibuster to prevent consideration of the ship subsidy bill, talked for thirteen hours. The senator has thus early fulfilled the predictions that were made before his election by both his enemies and his friends.

To the Readers of The Commoner

It is with genuine regret that I announce to the readers of *The Commoner* that the publication of the paper will be discontinued with this, the April issue. The paper was established in January 1901 as a means of reaching the public in the discussion of political, economic and sociological questions. It has served its purpose well; for nearly a quarter of a century it has enabled me to lay before the progressive Democrats of the nation the problems under consideration and the arguments employed in the support of the Democratic side of public questions. It has been a source of great pleasure to me and, from the assurances I have received, I am sure it has strengthened our cause and gratified the active exponents of Democracy in their several communities throughout the United States.

When I entered the Cabinet, I found it necessary to change the paper from a weekly to a monthly because I could not spare the time required by a weekly and the paper was so personal in its character that I was not willing to entrust it entirely to the direction of others.

With advancing years the field of my activity has broadened instead of narrowing until I now find it impossible to continue *The Commoner* without withdrawing from lines of work into which circumstances have led me. The new demands, while lessening my time for editorial work, have given me new means of reaching the public which bring me into contact with more readers than I was able to reach through *The Commoner*. My Bible Talks, for instance, are published weekly in papers having a circulation of about four millions, and a reading public of ten to twelve millions.

In addition to these limitations upon my own time, my brother, who, as publisher, has from the beginning relieved me of all the work connected with the paper except the writing of editorials, has been drawn into increasing political activity. Being now Governor of the State of Nebraska he finds it impossible to give to the paper the time which he has devoted to it from its establishment. These two reasons, one affecting him, and the other affecting myself, coerce us into taking the action here announced.

We have arranged for *The Household*, a monthly family magazine, and *Capper's Farmer*, a monthly farm paper, published at Topeka, Kansas, to take over our subscription list and, in order to do full justice to those who subscriptions extend beyond the month of June, 1923, I shall write a monthly article on the political situation for the period of about one year.

I cannot bring to a close the cordial relationship that has existed between *The Commoner* and its readers without expressing for my brother, as well as for myself, profound appreciation of the generous cooperation of the readers to whose active interest *The Commoner* has been largely indebted for its circulation and influence.

WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN.