

Trusts—The Cause and Cure

NATIONAL SUPERVISION.

Trusts are large corporations, doing business in several other states besides the one in which they are incorporated. It seems to me that in dealing with this problem of the trusts, the first is to give somebody the power to exercise the supervision and regulation of them. The first thing is to give the national government the power. When the national government has the power, I should most earnestly advocate that it be used with the greatest wisdom and self-restraint.

My view is that congress should pass a law that would have under any circumstance one sovereign to which the big corporations should be responsible—a sovereign in whose courts the corporation could be held accountable for any failure to comply with the laws of the legislature of that sovereign. I do not think a remedy for trusts can be accomplished by the efforts of the forty-six sovereigns of the states. I think it will have to be through the national government.

Some states have passed laws if they had not been ineffective, would have totally prevented any important corporate works being done within their limits. Other states have such lax laws that there is no effective effort made to control any of the abuses. As a result we have a system of divided control where the nation has something to say, but it is a little difficult to know exactly how much and where the different states have each something to say; but where there is no supreme power that can speak with authority, there is little accomplished. That is why I advocate congress passing laws, giving the national government the voice in the supervision and regulation of trusts. President Roosevelt has strongly advocated the necessity of such laws in his second annual message to congress. The president has taken a determined stand on the question and has urged the congress to devote its chief attention to legislation that will make more effective the existing anti-trust laws. It was not in the nature of a constitutional amendment, but is an improved and revised act, strength-

ening the efficiency of the Sherman anti-trust law. I heartily approved of the president's views and hope that the present congress will take prompt action, and get the trusts well under control. GUY F. BOWEN.
Horton's Summit, Va.

PUBLICITY AND GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP.

Editor Independent: I believe it is conceded by the great majority of the reading public that trusts are organized for the purpose of increasing the incomes of the promoters and stockholders. This is accomplished by the reduction of operating expenses through consolidation, and by raising the price to the consumer when competition has been destroyed and the monopoly secured. The monopoly is made possible by a system of rebates granted by carrying corporations, and by underbidding the small or independent business man and forcing him from the market when his small capital will no longer hold out against the consolidated millions of the trust. The trust has lost money during the process of "freezing out" the small business man, but as soon as it has been accomplished, the prices go up and the loss is quickly made up.

The remedy for trust evils is easily within the reach of the people. First, I would recommend a bureau of publicity, which would embrace a classification of all industries, monopolistic in their tendencies, and a uniform system of accounting under the supervision of paid government officials. Second, the government ownership of the railways, which can be accomplished through the right of eminent domain. Whenever it becomes apparent from the report of the officials in charge of the bureau of publicity that the trusts are exacting exorbitant prices from the public, or are transgressing the laws governing interstate commerce the government, owning the railroads, could refuse to carry their product. Then, indeed, we could "shackle cunning." "Good trusts" would be so from necessity, if not from choice. E. SEIDEL.
Redmond, Wash.

AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT

Republican Party Returned to Power on Eve of Commercial Crisis

A long time ago—as one often counts a number of weeks or months when events crowd swiftly upon each other—The Independent began to tell its readers that the enormous bank deposits (8½ billions) over which every little republican sheet in America was singing paeans of joy, merely evidenced such an enormous expansion of credits as compared to the increase of actual money, that sooner or later the reaction must come. That this expansion had played an important part in producing the prevailing high prices, and that when contraction begins and prices begin to fall—as they must, in the very nature of things—then the people will learn why the republican application of populist principles brings prosperity that will not last—because the republican makeshifts for money are not enduring like the scientific article demanded by the populists.

"Get your house in order and be ready for the storm," more than once has The Independent advised its readers. But don't be foolish; don't be cowardly. It will avail you nothing to fret and fume and fuss. Just be calm—but get out of debt, if you can; and keep out of debt as well as may be.

Don't mortgage that dear eighty of yours to buy the one adjoining—and lose both. Keep your home clear of incumbrance. Be careful about feeding too many cattle on which you are paying heavy interest—the high prices of this year are even now a thing of the past.

Far-seeing men in all parties see the handwriting on the wall, but one of the clearest interpretations we have seen lately is "The Turning Tide," by Ernest Untermann in Appeal to Reason, from which we quote:

"For the first time in its history the republican party has been returned to power on the eve of a commercial crisis. The leading business men of that party saw the coming danger. The prominent politicians of that party were aware of it. They know that it will crush thousands of small business men. They foresee that it will swallow the scant earnings of hundreds of thousands of farmers. They feel that it will bring want and suffering to millions of wage-workers. And they

are familiar with the wave of mortality and crime that follows in its wake. "Yet not one word did the party press breathe about it before election. They never ceased dangling the bait of prosperity under the noses of the voters. And so they lured them into the g. o. p. trap.

"True, the commercial papers devoted to the exclusive interests of the exploiters sounded a note of warning long before election. But this cry of alarm warned only the inner circle to look to their spoils. It was not addressed to the people and did not reach them. On the contrary. While the drones were reclining in their sumptuous cushions and discussing, between their champagne and oysters, the financial outlook, the political press of the ruling party continued to din "prosperity" into the ears of their highly appreciative working class audience.

"But now a change has come over them. The political agents of the great exploiters' party will be in power during a period of industrial depression. In a short while, the prosperity lie will be revealed to the whole nation. Forthwith the republican press takes its cue from the business press of their masters.

"They must adjust themselves to the new conditions. The minds of the multitude must be prepared for the next presidential campaign under such conditions, as the republican party has always laid at the door of the democratic party. What a calamity!

"But nothing is easier for a good politician than to adapt himself to circumstances. The republican press knows a way out of the difficulty. "Constitutionally unable to put a proper valuation on truthfulness," as Roosevelt says with fine self-irony of Thomas Jefferson, the republican press has all the resourcefulness and bravado of the liar. It simply declares now, that the ruling political party is now no longer responsible for Wall street conditions and for the industrial situation. Can anything be simpler and more natural? If the country is prosperous, the republican party claims the credit. If the land is writhing in the throes of a commercial crisis, the republican party shrugs its shoulders and can't help it.

"The 'colorless high bred gentleman of no special ability, but well fitted to act as presidential figurehead,' as Roosevelt so well characterizes one of

his predecessors, judging others by himself, will help to shift the burden of responsibility from the shoulders of the republican party to those of the trusts, and carry on a sham battle against them for the purpose of diverting the attention from the party that fostered them."

Mr. Untermann goes on to say that neither the republican nor the democratic party will escape the retribution that is drawing near, and believes that the tide is turning toward socialism.

"The democrats," he says, "will make the people radical and steal what they dare from the socialist platform. They will favor municipal ownership, direct legislation, and even nationalization of certain industries. They will only balk at the control of production by the working class for the use of the working class."

More About Fusion

Editor Independent: Having been indulged, is it asking too much if I reply to a few of your comments on my letter? My faith in man is strong, but in parties is weak. I once thought the republican party was grand, yet it could not stand success, but turned its back upon the cause of its strength. The greenback party lost through compromising. The anti-monopoly, the union labor and people's party through fusion. Each of these came to the front because they were of the people, but when they catered to a selfishness they fell.

My "insanity" is the result of a conscience that tells me never to unite with a thing I condemn after I condemn it; and you know how at Cincinnati we from the north joined hands with those from the south over the chasm while we buried the "bloody shirt," charging the two old parties with the crime. There the nation got new lift and soon men were standing in the halls of congress pouring upon the heads of the two old party criminals such truth and with such force that consternation took hold of their sinful representatives. In 1892 nearly two million freemen joined our ranks. It was then that republicans fused with our party in the south and democrats in the north and in 1896 when the two sections met in St. Louis they found a condition confronting them. It was just as fair for those from the south to nominate Mr. McKinley with whose party they had affiliated, as for us from the north to nominate Mr. Bryan with whose party we had affiliated, yet the south yielded after making sure that a populist candidate be a consideration in the deal. That deal was the result of greed for office rather than principle and the result is history. Partisan politics would have avoided the error. You say you would be a republican if that party would take up our principles. Did the democratic party do it? I answer no. True, a large portion did in part, yet so tenacious were they for party name that a monopolist shipbuilder in Maine received even the kind consideration of Mr. Bryan, while Thomas E. Watson, a true, patriotic man, was ignored. Ah, brother, you must admit that the object was intended as it has resulted: Our senators, our congressmen and the states of populism are gone and our organization so crippled as to be unfit for duty. Fusion is confusion always. I am ever ready to take the hand of any honest voter on a common ground and yet stand for a freeman's right, but no entangling alliances for me.

W. C. STARKEY.

Violet, Neb.

(Conscience is a strange thing. Mr. Starkey's tells him "never to unite with a thing" after he has condemned it. That had reference, of course, to the democratic party. Yet in the same sentence he recalls the fact "how at Cincinnati we from the north joined hands with those from the south over the chasm, while we buried the bloody shirt." Hadn't the south been condemned? Yet here was Mr. Starkey willing to join hands with it and bury the bloody shirt.

The fact is, we are all too prone to call the man dishonest who does a dishonest act, and to call a party bad names instead of concentrating our attack upon its policies we condemn. Viewed at this distance the republican party was right in the sixties and the democratic party was wrong; but since 1896 the conditions have been reversed.

Undoubtedly the vice presidential situation in 1896 was little in keeping with the Chicago platform. It was certainly a mistake to retain the Maine shipbuilder as running mate for Mr. Bryan. But Mr. Bryan could not control the actions of all members of his party. He could not say bluntly to Mr. Sewall, "Get off the ticket and let Watson run." Hundreds of thousands of populists expected up to

the last moment before election that Sewall would withdraw—as he should have done—but he did not.

The people's party joined hands with the democrats in 1896 and 1900 because a majority believed that was the wisest thing to do under the circumstances. Viewed in the abstract from a populist standpoint perhaps the wisest thing would have been for the democratic party to reaffirm its 1892 platform at Chicago in 1896—because no populist would have dreamed of fusion, and the party would have made an enormous growth in all probability. But the democratic party did not reaffirm its 1892 platform, and whether we "fused" or not our party growth was checked from that moment. But the people's party lacks a great deal of being dead. It takes more than a few defeats to kill a party that stands for government money and government railroads.—Ed. Ind.)

Dawson county is another place where the populists contracted partisan insanity and quarrelled with each other over questions of party policy. Billy Thompson carried the county by a bare 9 plurality, while the rest of the fusion ticket, except her home candidate, were snowed under. The republican state victory costs Dawson county \$838.85—enough to pay for almost 21 months of school teaching at \$40 a month; or for shucking nearly 28,000 bushels of corn at 3 cents. The smallest fusion December apportionment (1898) was \$3,592.68. This year it is \$2,753.83.

In reply to two or three letters, the editor wishes to remark that there are some democrats who are bigger fools than the man who gets mad and stays at home on election day because democrats insist on voting the populist ticket. At the Kansas City convention one of these kind did not want to give seats on the platform to the great silver republican leaders like Senator Teller. They didn't want anybody but "democrats." But all democrats are not like that, for one of them made a spirited reply in which he said that he would rather welcome to that platform men who had left their party to vote the democratic ticket than those who stayed in the democratic party and voted the republican ticket. Both of these sorts of men are troubled with an insanity that leads them to believe that they must not vote for principles, but for a name. If the wrong party name is at the head of the ticket, that settles it.

A movement is on foot in New York toward forming a new trust composed of the insurance companies, the clearing house banks and trust companies. When they get the thing completed the United States treasury will look like 30 cents in comparison with them in revenues and financial powers. The Independent hopes that the project will succeed. This trust business must reach a climax and the sooner it is done the better. It seems that the fellow who wrote the book some years ago entitled "The Universal Trust" was a sort of prophet. Such a trust as the one proposed would dominate everything else. "Stand pat." "Stay put." "Let well enough alone." All that is needed is "publicity." Just let the people know the exact amount of which they are robbed and they will be contented and happy.

Birds and Cats

Editor Independent: Now that winter is upon us, and the ground is covered with snow, let us not forget the little birds and homeless cats that come to our window begging a crumb from our table. The man or woman who can't find a pleasure in aiding these suffering and helpless creatures, in such a cheap and easy way, is indeed a barnacle upon the keel of progress and humanity.

JOHN H. MEANS, Jr.
Dorchester, Mass.

Last week in writing a head-line concerning Professor Hilprecht's discovery of a Babylonian library 10,000 years old, "ten centuries" was written where one hundred centuries was intended. This editor has to wade through the editorial drivel of more than half a dozen dailies each day and it is a wonder after three-fourths of that kind of torture that he can tell the difference between a century and a thousand years. The fact that written records 10,000 years old have been found in the ruins of Babylon will be somewhat astonishing to those who have looked upon the figures placed in the Bible by Archbishop Usher at the top of the columns, as part of the original Bible writings, and as much inspired as anything else in it. It is on account of those figures that the children of several generations of men have been taught that this world was only 6,000 years old.