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OHIO POPULISTS

National Committeeman Groot Expresses His Conviction That the Money Question is Still Vital and Paramount

Editor Independent: Your letter of May 16 and 28, 1903, and a copy of the Henry George Edition of your valuable paper were duly received, for which accept thanks. I note your requests, but will be unable to answer them except in a general way. Since 1896 the populists in Ohio have followed the leadership of Bryan and I believe they are willing to continue to follow him wherever he may lead, providing he does not abandon the money question. Since 1900 they have acted independently because of the peculiar conditions existing politically in this state. They will not abandon the principles of the people's party as announced in the platforms of 1892 and 1900. They distrust the democrat leaders in this state and many of them believe that they are merely adjuncts to the republican party and they will not be governed and controlled by them unless they stand squarely on the Chicago and Kansas City platforms.

If the democratic party should in 1904 abandon the money question the populists will abandon that party and will insist upon acting independently of other party organizations. It must be understood that those of us who left the republican party because of the money question will never affiliate with any organization that does not make that question the paramount one as it is now and always has been.

Bryan has been true to his convictions, although in 1900 he was induced to put aside the consideration of the money question and to take up what many thought to be a matter of more vital importance, viz: "imperialism." I thought then that he and all those who were in control of the democratic party made a mistake in so doing and I know it now and I think he does. I am one of those who believe that no permanent good can come from the discussion of political questions that are of no general importance. The fight for political power must be made by the plain people of this country upon the money question and that alone, and that fight must continue until success crowns their efforts if they ever expect to receive any permanent benefits. Every political question takes its root in the money question and when that is solved as it should be the rest of them will disappear. In 1896 the money question was for the first time in the history of the world made a political issue and the reason we did not succeed then is that the people had not sufficient information upon the subject to enable them to vote intelligently upon it, and those who debated the question upon the stump were not qualified, except in a few instances, to convey to them proper information. When it will be again made the paramount issue is a hard question to answer.

If the democratic party in 1904 should abandon that question it will be defeated by an overwhelming majority as it ought to be. If it should it would be an evidence of cowardice or its part and the people are not yet prepared to support a policy of cowardice nor to elect cowards to political office. If our contention in 1896 were correct it is certainly correct now. If it were of sufficient importance to be made a chief political issue then there is no reason why it should not continue to be.

A good many people seem to think that if we had single tax or if the tariff were revised and the protective feature abandoned or if we had free trade we would have general prosperity and the people would be contented and happy. It is singular how easily people are drawn away from the consideration of the great question, the money question, that concerns their temporal welfare and made to believe that some other remedy is necessary in order to make them prosperous. If the people of this country should adopt the theory of single tax and it should be carried out in all its fullness or if they had free trade pure and simple, conditions would not be changed for their permanent good; prices would not be affected. It must be understood that it is not a question of taxation nor of tariff nor of free trade that is important. It is the

question of money that concerns us all, for without money taxes cannot be paid however levied. The people must provide themselves with the means for paying taxes before considering the question of taxation. They must understand that they can pay taxes more easily with money when it is plentiful than when it is scarce. They must understand that there is no way to relieve themselves from the burden of taxation nor from the grip of the monopolist and usurer, except with money. Money is the great panacea for substantially all the political ills that the people are afflicted with. To abandon, therefore, the fight for a just and proper monetary system which would give to the people ample money with which to do their business and relieve them from the necessity of going to the money scavenger to borrow what they ought to be able to buy is to basely surrender to our implacable enemy and leave hope behind. It is absolutely essential to secure appropriate financial legislation so as to furnish to the people not less than one hundred dollars per capita and this can only be done through the instrumentality of a party that is pledged to carry out this work. I am afraid, however, that the usurer is permanently in the saddle and that he will dominate and control public affairs in this country in the future. It is certain that he will do so until the people become familiar with this all important question.

Let us go forward in this work and make the fight for a new and better financial system, one that will bring permanent and lasting relief to the toiling millions. You can count on me to render all the assistance in my power to help this cause along, but I will not devote my time nor energies nor money to the exploiting of any fake question, such as the single tax, tariff or free trade. I like the substance of things, and not the shadow. Any movement, therefore, looking towards the organization of a party that stands for the money question will receive my hearty support.

I believe that a whole lot of other things should be done by the government, but the money question should be the first one that should be settled and I would rather go down a thousand times in a contest over that question than to succeed upon any other.

As a result of the legislation that has been secured by the money barons 75 per cent of the people who labor in the shops, mills, factories and mines in this country are constantly within sixty days of the poor-house. It is to be taken as one of the strong evidences in support of such legislation and a reason why the gold standard should be maintained? This is the condition that the usurer and his agents and attorneys have fastened upon this people and which they insist shall not be interfered with. The strangest thing about it all is that those who stand nearest to the poor-house are those who shout the loudest in favor of the usurer and his methods.

I believe that the democratic party at its next national convention will adopt the republican party's position upon the money question and will attempt to create a fake issue over which the campaign of 1904 will be fought. If it should then it is safe to conclude that there is no hope of relief through the democratic party and the people's party must take the initiative in the great work of revolutionizing the American government at the polls. GEO. A. GROOT.
Cleveland, O.

Oklahoma Vacancy.

R. E. Bray, formerly of Enid, Okl., member of the people's party national committee, is now at Wayland, N. Y., where he is editor of the Wayland Register. In a personal letter to The Independent Mr. Bray says he is running a neutral paper, but that personally, outside of the office, he is a "howling Bryan democrat and don't care a continental who knows it." He says that there is no populist organization in New York state, and believes the contest in the Empire State democracy will be between Hill and Hearst.

Mr. Bray's removal to New York creates a vacancy in the Oklahoma quota of national committeemen. Arrangements should be made to fill this at the Denver meeting.

Madden Educational Subscriptions

A Review of the Work Being Done.

A short review of events in the life of The Independent, occurring within the past two or three months, may be of interest, especially to our increasing list of new subscribers.

As all our old subscribers know (and we have many of them who "came all the way over the trail") The Independent is now and always has been a populist paper; that is to say, it is a supporter of the people's party and a teacher of the economic reforms as enunciated at its national convention in Omaha, 1892, and later.

But some of The Independent's most energetic subscribers have been of that school of political economy developed by Henry George, and for want of a better name known as the "single tax." From time to time in the past The Independent has published communications from these single tax subscribers and argued with them editorially—for The Independent then believed and still believes that the money question is the vital, pressing, urgent one before any other.

However, these single taxers showed such hearty good humor in all their controversies with The Independent, that it was decided and announced on April 9 (wholly without consultation with any single taxer) to issue a special number to be known as the Henry George Edition—wherein the single taxers might take the whole paper for presenting their side of the case.

How well they did it may be inferred from the fact that the Henry George Edition was sent to persons all over the civilized world—to Scotland, England, Australia, Canada, New Zealand; in fact, wherever the works of Henry George have been read and studied. Able writers furnished The Independent enough well written manuscripts to fill a hundred-page paper, of which enough was selected to fill 50 pages. Something over twelve thousand additional copies were printed and these were bought and circulated by the single taxers.

The Independent had made a rate of \$1 per hundred for the Henry George Edition, barely paying the mechanical cost of producing the paper, depending upon the extension of its subscription list as a reward for the large amount of extra work devolving upon the editorial force in handling the single tax manuscripts—if we must use the commercial glasses now universally prescribed by our economic eye-doctors. The rate was the same whether the hundred were to be sent direct to the purchaser in a bundle, or mailed in single wrappers to a hundred different persons, whose names and addresses the purchaser furnished.

The success of the Henry George Edition, especially as an educator in political economy, was too much for the plutocrats to stand, and Czar Madden began the tactics so familiar to those who have watched his course with reference to *Wiltshire's Magazine*, *The Appeal to Reason* and other publications. He notified the postmaster at Lincoln, and the postmaster in turn notified The Independent that complaint had been made that—

... "large number of copies of the issue of May 14, 1903, were mailed at the pound rate of postage to names furnished by persons interested in the circulation of the publication, in violation of paragraph 5, section 456, P. L. & R."

To this The Independent answered, setting up the facts just as they were, contending that no violation of the laws and regulations had been intended and holding that the test of violation in a case like this hinges upon what the department means by the word "interested." In order that Mr. Madden might know what sort of "interest" the single taxers had in circulating the Henry George Edition, a letter was written to all those who purchased copies (which were mailed to list of names furnished by them), asking that they write the third assistant postmaster general a letter informing him. Copies of these letters were also sent to The Independent, and they are such interesting

reading that we must print a few excerpts, omitting the purely formal parts.

They are interesting because they show the independent spirit of the single taxers—the spirit that does not cringe before a czar like Madden, but treats him simply as an American citizen engaged in performing work for wages, as any other laborer might, and with no right to do other than the work he is hired to do.

... I, as a contributor to that issue, desire to make a statement regarding my "interest" in it—my "interest" probably being similar to those of the other contributors.

I remitted the sum of \$4.05 for 405 copies, of which 85 copies were ordered sent to persons of more or less prominence whom I knew to be interested in the philosophy of Henry George—the single tax question, many of whom would probably be induced to subscribe for the paper which gave promise of becoming more than ever an open forum for economic discussion. Of the remaining number, 170 copies were ordered for myself, 100 for Wm. A. Gray, Central Phosphate Co., 25 for Wm. S. Skelly, Phosphate contractor, and 20 for D. A. Trice, farmer, "Rural Route No. 1," all of whom are active Henry George propagandists and regular subscribers to The Independent, for local distribution or for redistribution through the mails at 1 cent each or at the rate of 1 cent for each 4 ounces. All four of us subscribed for the papers with our own money. We had no pecuniary interest in the paper or in any advertisement in it—our "interest" being wholly concerned with the economic discussion anticipated.

A very large number of thinking voters are coming, rightly or wrongly, to regard the postal censorship of the last few years as rabid partisanship—as prostitution on the part of the public's servants for plutocratic ends. If the postal department is not self-sustaining, why does it not compel the railroads to carry its printed matter at the same rate as they charge the express companies for the same service? That the public is discriminated against in this particular is no secret. Then the department could show a handsome surplus. Or, if it considers that only selected printed matter should have the benefit of the second-class rates, why does it discriminate in favor of such low-grade mental pabulum as the average monthly advertising sheet, like the *Homeside Magazine*, etc., whose only excuse for existence is to advertise comparatively worthless novelties—permitting them to load down the mails with thousands of tons of matter which is practically worthless to the subscriber—while drawing the line at every paper which tries to make the people think on the larger questions of the day?

Why not make postal rates high enough to cover the cost of service and let all printed matter—good, bad and indifferent—go through at the same rate? Then there would be no need of a "Russianized" censorship.

Which were better for public morals (not plutocratic interests), for subscribers who recognize merit in a paper to call the attention of others to its excellence by sending them copies through the mails and thus increasing its circulation, or for the paper to expand its circulation by the doubtful gambling device of a guessing contest?

It is not a proper function of government to say what the people shall read. America is not yet ready for a *Torquemada*. The federal government is getting too paternal. It is getting to feel too much like a stepfather to most of us. Every unjust (whether consciously or not) ruling of the postal department but hastens the downfall of the party which is responsible for it—or the downfall of the republic. But "smug" plutocracy can say, with the French aristocracy "After us the deluge." The country sadly needs a Jefferson or a Jackson to pry apart the parasitic classes from their privileges and reaffirm the in-