

The Independent.

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THE POPULIST REVIVAL

EDITORIAL AND OTHER COMMENT ON THE DENVER CONFERENCE.

FERRISS DELIGHTED.

James H. Ferriss, editor of The Joliet News, was so pleased that he gave six columns in the News of the 3rd inst. to a report of the conference, starting it with a cartoon head entitled "Populists Unite," representing a long, lank, lean, long-whiskered individual, labelled "Tex." (did he mean Editor Mallett?) clasped in the embrace of a powerfully built person, probably intended for Senator Allen, marked "Neb."

Following this the headlines say: "The rankest radicals and the most conservative of conservatives come together at Denver—On the Omaha Platform—No Fusion—Convention to be held first—An excellent attendance—All completely satisfied—Organization to extend into every state, and the Old Guard called into action."

The report itself, being similar to that of The Independent two weeks ago, need not be here reproduced; but Editor Ferriss said some things editorially that Independent readers ought to hear—because Ferriss is without doubt one of the ablest mid-roads, a staunch populist and a successful newspaperman. He said:

A very large number of our readers are pleased to see the populists again a united and happy party. We are sure of this for we populists ourselves in a neighborly way are pleased to witness the pleasant things that fall to anybody. If things go well, when orators speak truly, and candidates are honorable we populists feel for the time being that we are republicans or democrats as the case may be and rejoice with them in their victories. We are truly glad to welcome a Roosevelt or a Bryan to our city. None on these occasions has a wider, more truly hospitable smile than a populist.

The bulk of the News readers are not active, working populists. We think they believe in public ownership and government money; we know they do in the referendum for their vote showed it, but as the world goes they belong to the older parties. They encourage these good things when it does not hurt their own party and seem to be hoping in a vague far-away manner that in some mysterious way these measures of improvement and relief will be brought around in their own party lines. They surely have an interest in the good luck of the populists.

When the Chicago democratic convention of 1896 was in session it was a question as to which was the third party in the field as to numbers, the democratic or the populist. Bryan's speech turned the tide in favor of the democrats. The fusionists by a few votes compelled the populists to in-corse Bryan in the populist convention at St. Louis a few days after.

A large part of the populists doubted the wisdom of this action, although as a rule they supported Bryan heartily. Especially was this true in the north.

Soon after the election the party split and the two divisions were commonly known as fusionists and middle-of-the-roads. As they drew farther and farther apart their dislike for each other increased. Truly since the St. Louis convention populists have done little less than make war upon each other. Their common enemies, democrats and republicans, were given a season of refreshment.

The News espoused the mid-road cause, but did not enter into a discussion of populist differences. Partly because it is a newspaper and the discussion would not interest its readers, partly because the editor hoped for a time when all who believed in the principles would come together—mid-road and fusion, Bryan democrats, single taxers, some socialists and all good reformers and true Christians. All of these at least are brothers and their differences are so little time will adjust all before their president is elected.

Truly the fight was quite bitter. The fusionists supposed the mid-roads at heart desired to help the republicans. They called us "Hannacrats." On the other hand we supposed the fusionists to be mere democrats in

disguise, making a sneak for offices and personal profit.

But we are joined together now for no more fusion and all are good and true brothers once more. We mid-roads were surprised to find that these fusionists were still as true to the principles as ourselves.

In the past so many democrats have come into our ranks to desert again as soon as nominated for office we were as afraid of fusion as the burnt child is of fire. These were men of great prominence, Thurman, Vorhees, Ewing, Plaisted, Carey, sufficient to fill this page in this type, and some like Palmer went over to Wall street and became the most bitter of opponents.

Bryan was of different mettle. He is one in a million—outside the populists. He has been such another as Jackson or Lincoln, steadfast to his ideas, and thus populists who followed him were not tempted to lay aside their platform.

It is remarkable that these men, consorting with democrats and the lust of victory, have remained so true. It is now twenty-seven years since the writer enlisted in the cause and many were ahead of him. These years in a party sense have been full of grief. There was no luxury in it surely to tempt an ambitious politician.

Military men who stand in the breach for ten or fifteen minutes are honored with medals, promotions, and monuments. History records their great achievements, volume on volume, but these friends of ours, the

populists, have stood in the breach, imperiling life, reputation and property for thirty years. They surely furnish a substantial basis for a great party. Populist is an honorable name. These were heroes who gathered around the standard at Denver.

Bryan is highly respected by the populists and some adore him, but the gold bugs have been capturing his party machinery. The Wall street influence utterly despising both Bryan and Roosevelt, promise to raise \$50,000,000 to elect Cleveland. Again should Bryan or a friend of his be placed in nomination what would it avail! Merely a continuation of petty warfare in the party.

The steady rise and accessions of the Wall street influence in the democratic party, and the waste of time required to build up reform in a divided wrangling party should the Bryan element by a miracle control the next national convention are two things having much to do with this early conference. Senator Allen in his interview in this issue enlarges a little fully on this.

Again, the populist signal fires will burn brightly on the hill tops. Their orators will gather their listeners at street corners and in the country school houses. There will be immense mass meetings, fairs and excursion trains. Farmers, merchants and workmen will hoard up documents to work upon neighbors and the family doctor will have his pockets filled with tracts. There is harmony, hope in the entire populist party, something

to live for—and above all perhaps to carry him forward, the knowledge that our neighbor democrats and republicans believe the populist principles to be true and that they believe the populist himself to be an honest, consistent, courageous specimen of manhood.

We predict the populists will have a great revival and that it is to be a great party.

Beal & Wimmer in the Custer County Beacon, Broken Bow, Neb., (issue of the 31st) said: "The conference of populists now in session at Denver have united on the good old populist principles and the upward tendency of the people's party will date from that great conference. A part of the declarations of the principles is as follows:" (Quoting from the address.)

MACK'S OPINION.

In these days when those who attended the Denver conference, and those who sent them letters of approval, are subjected to caustic criticisms from the democratic press and denounced as "assistant republicans" for daring to express an opinion as to what course the people's party should pursue in the future, it is refreshing to read an editorial opinion of a different nature, coming, too, from a New York state democratic newspaper whose editor is a member of the democratic national committee—no less a personage than Norman E. Mack, editor of the Buffalo Evening Times, with whom, some time ago, Richard L. Metcalfe, editor of the Omaha World-Herald, exchanged some open letters on the subject of the next democratic national platform. Mr. Mack said editorially in the Times of August 3:

WHO ARE THE POPULISTS?

Of far greater interest than at first appears is the result of the national conference of the people's party in Denver, while the cumulative effects of that result may prove to be of far-reaching importance.

The mere amalgamation of the two wings of the populists is significant in itself—how significant, time alone can show. It is to be noted that besides the adoption of a resolution of unification of what the populists are pleased to style as "reform" forces, there is also a pledge of hostility to affiliation with either democrats or republicans.

Of late years the populist party has not cut much of a figure in politics; but that it did so at one time it were useless to deny; the populists elected city, county and state officials, besides representatives in congress and members of the United States senate. It is not to be forgotten that in 1892 James E. Weaver, the populist candidate for president, received more than 1,000,000 votes—more than enough, in fact, to turn the scale one way or the other.

Because their political individuality has been lost or merged for several years is not proof that the party itself is dead, or even that it is less numerous than before.

As a matter of fact, it may prove to have a greater numerical strength than ever, when the "show-down" comes. It may have secured adherents where least suspected. There are principles in its platform, if such it may be called, which appeal to many men who have hitherto been known as republicans or as democrats, and its ranks may be largely swelled by recruits from each of those parties.

Among the declarations in the address adopted at Denver are those for money issued exclusively by the government, whether gold, silver or paper; for public ownership of a system of transportation and of the transmission of intelligence—meaning, we suppose, government ownership of railway, telegraph and telephone facilities; a demand that land be put to active use, instead of being held for speculative purposes; that ownership of land in the United States by foreign residents be abolished, and that American ships be provided for American commerce, without a dollar of subsidy being granted.

These are propositions which will challenge the attention of the thought-

"Old Guard" Edition

"For Those Who Have Come All the Way Over the Trail."

A health to the old guard boys,
A health to the brave old guard,
Who dared to march in the ranks of truth,
In times when the way was hard,
Who bravely stood for the people's cause,
And made that cause their own,
In days before it had won applause,
In days when they stood alone.

A health to the old guard boys,
A health to the brave old guard,
Who gave their time and their life and means,
With hope of no reward,
Who battled long 'gainst Mammon's might,
Like veterans true and tried,
Who dared to fight for love of right,
'Tho they fought on the losing side.

A health to the old guard boys,
A health to the brave old guard,
Who little knew how much we owe,
To these warriors battle-scarred;
But when the fight is won at last,
The world will place each name,
Away up high for future's eye,
On the deathless roll of fame.

(Song composed by J. A. Edgerton; music by L. Du Pri; sang at opening of Denver conference, July 27, by Miss A. M. Smith.)

Yes, "a health to the old guard boys," a health to "those who have come all the way over the trail," and fond memories of those who have crossed the "great divide."

The single taxers had their inning on May 14. The Henry George Edition, it is conceded, did much toward disseminating a knowledge of the "philosophy of freedom." The socialists, too, have reason to be proud of their showing in the Karl Marx Edition of July 23.

But these special editions have not converted all populist readers of The Independent to either the single tax or socialism. There are some thousands of them who are not yet convinced that a tax on land values only will solve the problem, so long as congress illegally delegates to private persons (known as banking corporations) the power "to coin money and regulate the value thereof." They cannot see relief in the simple levying upon "economic rent" of land, so long as the laws require that rent to be paid—not in the energy or products of the rent-payer, but in a particular commodity, which can only be had by borrowing at usury from the national banker or owner of gold, or by sacrificing human energy or products of toil in order to buy the bank notes or gold with which

to pay the "economic rent" or single tax.

Neither are they ready to join in the demand for the collective ownership of all the means of production and distribution of wealth; and, hence, they are not ready to become socialists. Populists hold that there is a well-defined practical line of demarcation between those businesses which must be public and those in which private, individual initiative seems best. That this line changes, is doubtless true; and the time may come when the socialist demand will seem imperative. It is also true that one's position in life has its effect upon his views of economic problems. Doubtless populists hold to their doctrines because as a rule they belong to what the socialists call the "middle class;" that is to say, farmers, home owners, small business men—in a word, all those directly dependent upon agriculture or income from land.

But to date the populists "stand pat" upon the fundamental principles enunciated in the Omaha platform, July 4, 1892. None of these reforms have been actually accomplished; and until they shall have been, the economic necessity for the people's party—or some other occupying similar ground—will continue to exist.

The Independent of September 10, 1903, will be known as the "Old Guard" Edition. We want to fill it—not with academic discussions of populist principles, but with short letters from the old-timers "who have come all the way over the trail." These letters should be in the nature of short autobiographical sketches of the writers—and not to exceed 300 words; less would be better. Tell year born, and where; former politics; when you broke away; part taken in fighting the battles of reform; what you consider the greatest economic issue; and, finally, how you feel over the Denver conference.

And send us a list of the old-time, true blue populists in your neck-of-the-woods. We want each of them to subscribe—and 40 cents out of every dollar paid on new subscription will go to the Organization Fund to assist Chairman Edgerton in his work. Address THE INDEPENDENT, Liberty Building, Lincoln, Neb.