

Populist Journalism

An Inquiry into
the Situation in
Alabama.

The American Newspaper Annual for 1901 credits 12 populist papers in the state of Alabama. None are counted except those reported as "populist." It sometimes happens that a staunch advocate of populism is recorded as an "independent" paper, and this may be true in Alabama.

Back in 1891 the American Non-conformist's directory of reform papers showed the following:

Advocate, Birmingham.
St. Clair Echo, Edin.
Alliance Eagle, Ellenville.
Alliance Herald, Montgomery.
Mirror, Selma.

An inspection of the directory for 1901 fails to show the names of any of these papers, except the last, and it is marked as "democratic."

The editors of The Independent would appreciate any information from readers in Alabama regarding the five papers named above. What became of the first four, and is the last a populist or democratic paper?

Referring again to the directory for 1901, we publish the following information relative to the 12 populist papers, and would esteem it a favor to learn any additions or corrections to be made in the list:

Southern Alliance, Ashville; established 1903; L. W. Watson, editor.
Sand Mountain Signal, Boaz; 1903; C. L. Noel.

Choctaw Alliance, Butler; 1892; F. L. Barefield.

Pickens County News, Carrollton; 1891; W. N. Dale.

Banner, Clanton; 1892; Frank Clifton.

Cleburne Plowboy, Edwardsville;

1891; White & Baber.

Tribune, Ensley; 1894; McKenzie & Moore.

People's Voice (weekly edition of Evening Journal), Gadsden; 1899; W. S. Griffith.

People's Journal, Jacksonville; 1896; I. E. Watson.

Gleaner, Luverne; 1895; L. S. Knight
Free Press, Ozark; 1896; C. W. Mathison.

People's Courier, Rockford; 1894; Bond & Bird.

The Independent would be glad to exchange with each of these papers and to publish a symposium from the pens of their editors answering the following questions:

1. Do you favor the continuance of the people's party organization, with a national ticket in the field next year?

2. Do you approve the steps taken at the Denver conference to unify the people's party?

3. What changes, if any, would you advise to be made in populist demands as enunciated at Omaha in 1892?

4. What is the outlook for populism in Alabama? Have many former populists joined the socialist party?

5. Would you favor an enrollment of the populists of Alabama, with the view of ultimately allowing no one a voice in the party councils whose name does not appear in the records?

Much of the desired information will assist greatly in accomplishing the work outlined at the Denver conference, the associate editor of The Independent being assistant secretary of the committee on organization. May we expect prompt responses from the brothers in Alabama?

Out of the West

There was a book published by Harper & Bros. in 1902 that at the time created considerable comment in the press. It was entitled "Out of the West," and its author was Elizabeth Higgins. It treats of the rise of the people's party and in its pages there is much of the soundest philosophy. The writer had an insight into things that must have been gained by actual contact with the people of this state at that time, although here and there there are sentences that show an ignorance of actual farming in the west. The book shows how in a year when the crops were enormous, the railroads charged such excessive rates that they could not be shipped to market and the corn was burned for fuel or rotted in the fields, or on the ground where it was piled up. Then came the year of drouth and the people starved and suffered.

Concerning the organization of the people's party, it is remarked that there was a class of men who were hereditary democrats, who were willing to do anything to beat the republicans and for that purpose went into the new organization without understanding its principles, or the economic necessities that produced it. The legislature is analyzed with a peculiar insight. The majority was an unorganized mass of honest men striving to do right, who had to meet a minority of the republican party trained in all the details of legislative work. This republican minority was largely made up of the trained and highly educated republican lawyers, many of whom were railroad attorneys, and the wonder is that the minority of hard working farmers were able under the circumstances to do anything.

The power of money over western representatives in congress was never before so graphically depicted. No one who has never spent a winter in Washington can realize how overwhelming this power is and to what a strain a member representing the farming interest is subjected. The writing on this subject is powerful. It was the work of some one who has had a look into the inner life of official Washington.

The incident, located in Washington, where the plutocratic minister

spoke of the lowly rising in discontent against the position which the Maker saw fit to place them and the reply to this is as forceful writing as one often sees.

"The lowly, as you call them, Dr. Dolton," said Edith, "have never had their leaders from among themselves. The men today who are working most zealously for them are not of them. For the history of the struggle of the many against the few, you must go back to ancient Rome. Take, for example, the wrongs that the plebians suffered at the hands of the patricians, the utter lawlessness of the higher classes to further their selfish and dishonest ends."

"We are dealing with the present," said Dr. Dolton.

"Present or past, it is the same; for the selfish and vile instincts of men's hearts has always been at the bottom of it. Every argument that we speak today is ages old, and the battle we are fighting has been lost and won over and over in ancient Rome. The first man to rise up and ask for laws, or, rather, for the enforcement of the laws for the betterment of the plebians was Spurius Cassius, a patrician of the oldest and purest blood. So were the Gracchi; so was Christ, for he came of the most wealthy and princely house of Judea."

The Independent has often said that slaves never free themselves and that no "class conscious" line can be drawn, especially in this country. It is not from the oppressed and starving hosts that the populist party will draw its champions. That is the class that furnishes the votes for the republican party. A dollar, or even a glass of beer, will get them. As the Englishman said: "One-half of them can always be hired to shoot the other half for a shilling a day." They are doing that out in Colorado at this very moment.

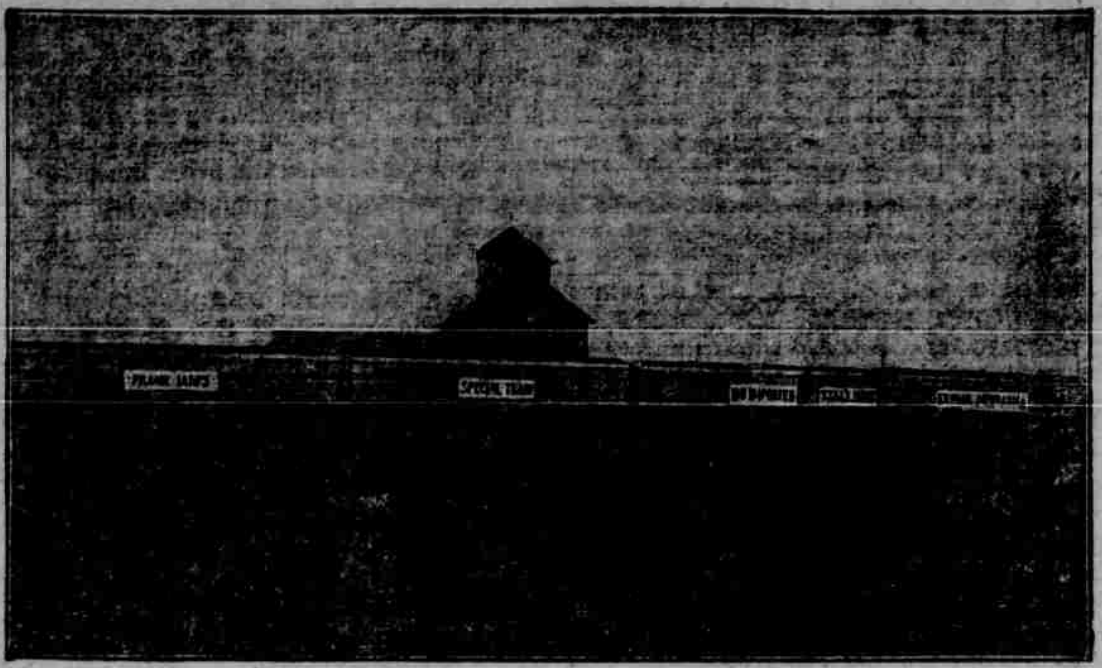
"I see little call for your pyrotechnics," said the Rev. Dr. Dolton. "These men were defeated because the good Lord has not made his creatures wholly blind. These unscrupulous demagogues may arouse men for a time; they cannot fail to do this when they go before the lowly, appealing to each man's basest passions and lowest instincts."

"What are these appeals to man's basest passions?" cried Edith. "Are the lowest instincts aroused when they are told that they should no longer bear the torments of hunger or the biting winter's cold; that a fireside, happy children and a life of honestly recompensed labor are their God-given rights? If these be men's basest passions and lowest instincts, are lust and avarice his highest?"

To know the effect of that shot one will have to read the book.

Another thing that is revealed in the pages of the book is the utter helplessness of many of the "great" senators. They are simply automatons, cyphers, nonentities. They are paraded constantly in the great dallies as statesmen and legislators. But the truth is that they have nothing to do with

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References: St. Paul State Bank, First State Bank and Citizens' National Bank.

ST. PAUL, NEBRASKA.

politics or legislation. That is attended to by the boss in their states. Many of these men, like Aldrich for instance, never make a speech, never do anything except as it is mapped out for them. No public policies are ever initiated by them, and yet their names are kept continually before the public by little unimportant incidents that have nothing to do with government. Year after year they are kept in their seats by the commercial interests behind them.

Whoever wrote this book knew many things that the mass of people know nothing about.

The Independent does not agree with the picture given of Nebraska prairies in the years of rain and full crops. There is a beauty in the growing grain, the waving wheat, and there is a happiness in the humble homes that the author has not seen. There is a cultivated society in the towns of which she seems to have no knowledge.—T.

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