

# The Independent.

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## The Future of Populism

A Symposium by Well-Known Populists

Some days ago The Independent sent out a number of letters to well known populists in various parts of the United States, saying:

"A sufficient time has now elapsed to allow a recovery from the effects of the election. What, in your judgment, is the outlook for the future? What may be reasonably expected from the next national conventions? Now that the people's party organization has ceased to exist in most of the states and its members for the most part have been affiliated with the democratic party, what may we reasonably expect of populists next year? Will they revive the old organization? Will they rally again, put a presidential ticket in the field, and support it with the vigor of 1892? If you believe they will do this, what, if anything, can be done now to assist in the movement?"

Although The Independent had not expected to print any of the replies until next week, a number of those addressed were prompt and said so much that Independent readers will be anxious to hear, that we make the beginning this week.

It is conceded that when conditions are not ripe for the accomplishment of a given reform, no amount of agitation will have any effect. But it is equally true that very few will have any inspiration to agitate, under such conditions. The question today is, What will the people's party do next year? No one man can foretell—but the expressions of many will serve as an index to the general trend of thought along that line. It is to ascertain this trend of thought that The Independent has asked for expressions of opinion in answer to its questions.

### IOWA.

Editor Independent: It appears to me that history is substantially repeating itself in the demonstrations that have taken place in the past and recently present movements of the people's party organization in states and nation—comparing the same with other great reform movements which history, both sacred and profane, has clearly recorded. I have stated again and again, and now repeat, that there is no power on or in this planet which can stop the onward march of this movement for a remarkable, and, finally, radical reform in our national monetary system, as well as in our present unjust and inequitable system of taxation and our trust-breeding tariff Chinese wall.

The war of the rebellion could have been prevented by the investment of a few hundred millions of dollars, used in the purchase, at twice their market value, of less than 4,000,000 slaves, and then have had them manumitted, with progeny, forever and forever.

The haughty slave owner on the one part, and the greedy speculator on the other, would not listen to such a proposition of settlement, whereby thousands upon thousands of lives—very valuable lives—could have been saved to fields of great usefulness, and thousands of millions of property and money could have been saved to the people.

But the God-ordained doom of black chattel slavery had come, and the infinite edict was terribly executed.

Traverse the pages of all history touching great reform movements, and the way was made plain that a wayfaring man need not have erred, by which a readjustment in the line of new and needful developments and substantial progress could have been accomplished without the concomitant, or final result, of a destruction of human life in awful numbers and property and money in amazing sums of value.

A refusal by those in authority caused murder, rapine, and destruction to mark the way of the upward movement; yet the movement was pushed on, and on, until the reform had gained a foothold which led to a pronounced destruction of the larger interests of those who blocked the way of the reform movement.

No other reform movement has ever been set in motion, that would, or

could, by its inherent characteristics and natural forces, produce such magnificent results in the interests of, and for the general welfare of the great majority of all the peoples in this world, as could and would be produced by the operations of a wise and patriotic and humanitarian financial system, coupled with a broad gauge system of equitable taxation.

The middle class are slowly beginning to perceive that "the golden calf" and its prototype—gold coin—has cursed the world of humanity from the wanderings of the children of Israel in the wilderness until the present date, and also will continue to so curse the world of humanity until a lofty intelligence shall provide a wiser and better financial system.

We cannot afford to turn back now. We must move on with the current which God Almighty has set in motion. The mad greed of the money lords is helping our movement more than we are helping ourselves.

The crushing powers of a financial catastrophe is not far distant, which will be laid at the front door of the British money power of the world when it comes, as come it will. Then the people will awake to a full realizing sense of the just powers of the people by the lawful methods of the ballot. With it will also come a clear knowledge of the right remedies to be applied, with the clear courage to apply them instantly.

Keep the movement alive, and call a national nominating convention at an early date; and pledge each delegate and each candidate to the substantial terms of the Omaha platform; then move on, and on, and on. The final victory is certain, as God is God.

L. H. WELLER.

Nashua, Ia.

### INDIANA.

Editor Independent: Yours of the 23d inst. received. My judgment of the future must largely be based upon what I know of conditions, past and present, in Indiana. The effects produced upon our people by what has occurred outside the state, and by the position taken by some of our national leaders, make the outlook for next year discouraging.

It is about as certain as anything of this kind in the future can be that Roosevelt will be nominated. Nothing can be expected from the republican party except a continuation of its abject submission to Wall street. There is, however, a growing discontent among the rank and file of the party. What will be done by the democratic convention is not so easy to predict. I do not believe that the financial interests are satisfied with Roosevelt, although he appears to have been entirely subservient to their wishes. He is too erratic, too headstrong, has too many flashes of sentiment to make them feel secure. At present he is restrained by his ambition to be nominated and elected, but the men who represent these interests are too shrewd not to know that, if elected, the restraints will be removed. For this reason among others, I believe an effort greater than usual will be made to control the next democratic convention. No effort will be spared, or money either, to make it repudiate the last two platforms, and to nominate a man entirely satisfactory to the money interests. If this should occur, I shall not be surprised if the Wall street and the bank influences desert Roosevelt, and we have an attempt to bring about a result similar to the campaign of 1892.

In Indiana there is not a vestige of democratic organization. There is an organization of a few so-called local democratic leaders (probably not over fifty or sixty altogether, and every one of whom represent special interests), the purpose of which is to assist in the control of the next national convention in the way I have indicated. There are a number of somewhat prominent democrats in the state controlled by this organization, but never trusted by it. On the other hand, the masses have been deceived and disappointed so often that it is doubtful if

they can be induced to make another effort to control their party.

Under such circumstances, it can hardly be doubted that Wall street and the bank influences will control the delegation from this state to the next national convention with more certainty than they did to the last. If I judge other states by this, I cannot avoid the conclusion that this influence will control the next national convention and dictate the nominee.

There is no organization of the people's party in this state. It is worse than foolish to assert that there is. There are many who are populists in principle, but there is no organization to which they care to attach themselves. The address issued by the conference of September 23 expresses the views of a large number in this state, but they have no organization, and, so far as I can see, are not likely to have. All that I can see that can be done by most of us is to plant ourselves squarely upon principle and wait for developments and opportunity.

FLAVIUS J. VAN VORHIS.

Indianapolis, Ind.

### OHIO.

Editor Independent: All true reformers knew that defeat was in store for them wherever they had a hand in the campaign just ended; not that their propaganda was wrong, but because the plutocratic element within the party openly and silently knifed the candidates. In some cases the men nominated were not in accord with the platforms.

The populists can never accomplish much nationally by forcing the dominant party to go into partnership with them. An occasional dash in a state or county can be and has been successful, but in the long run will result and has resulted in the stronger organization dominating. Thus true reform is side-tracked, practically, although the platforms may contain planks urging reform measures.

A galaxy of candidates for president will appear next year. The democratic nominee will be a man that supported Bryan in one or both campaigns, although opposed to Bryan on the money question. It is possible that the reorganizers may take the bull by the horns and crowd out the Bryanites and name a clean-cut Cleveland man or Mr. Cleveland himself outright. The latter I honestly believe will occur.

We cannot look to the socialist party. It is undemocratic; it is tyrannical. Individual liberty would be crushed under socialism. The only shelter we have is populism, under the name of the people's party, and to this clean standard reformers can rally. The Denver conference of July 29, 1903, leads the way.

It matters not who the nominee of the people's party may be; the true reformers next year will vote for him. The Bryanites may revolt; but Bryan will not lead a revolt.

One program next year will be: Throw down the reorganizers, at the election, and then Bryanism will call on Bryan. This is an idle dream; the showing of the reorganizers will be so satisfactory that Cleveland, Gorman & Co. will be retained as managers. In the meantime the people's party will have rehabilitated itself.

On with the St. Louis conference, February 22, 1904.

DR. R. H. REEMELIN.

Cincinnati, O.

### ILLINOIS.

Editor Independent: All depends on the character of the meeting to be held at St. Louis, February 22. "What, if anything, can be done now to assist in the movement?" This calls for a candid statement of facts as I see them. I would say, agitation and organization. But, how can this be done without funds to meet expenses, is the question. Of course, if we had the funds, the answer is plain; but without funds, in the language of the street, "We are up against it."

All seem to be waiting the action of the February meeting. The next thing to be done to assist the movement, in my judgment, is for our press to boom the St. Louis meeting; for if

we fall there, we might as well retreat to the shades of oblivion. We can do but little between now and then. I say this because, believing that a personal sacrifice was indeed necessary, I wrote to the state chairmen offering my services for simply my expenses, and no one has accepted the offer. Strange to say, every other reform movement has organizers in the field; but our people won't even stand the speakers' expense. How, then, can we agitate and organize? How to get our people to support their faith by contributions, to campaign funds, is the question of questions.

The St. Louis meeting has a great responsibility and a great problem to solve. Personally, I know the populist principles are farther advanced in the nation today than ever before. Populism is in the air; and to crystallize and place before the people a declaration comprehending the remedy for the great evils that afflict the nation, is our first concern. The next problem to solve is to reorganize our whole organization. And last, but not least, provide for a campaign fund. This we must do; for our speakers, our newspapers and literature must get to the people.

Should the St. Louis conference prove a success, and lay our plans along harmonious lines, and our national convention indorse and provide for the successful accomplishment of the three above suggestions, then, Bro. Charles Q. De France, the camp fires of 1892 will light up the heavens, and all the powers of darkness cannot resist our onward march to victory! Here, then, lies our whole problem as a political factor in American politics.

Permit me in conclusion to say that the populist holds the strategic point, and that we must either advance or surrender—it. To surrender is criminal cowardice. I am very hopeful of our St. Louis meeting, and am looking for an old-fashioned populist revival. Comrades, let us pull together, and come up smiling, determined to push the battle on to victory.

J. S. FELTER.

Springfield, Ill.

### WISCONSIN.

Editor Independent: If the democratic party comes out for public ownership, as I believe it will, then we can do nothing but support it and lose out as usual. If the democrats do not do that, then we will either have to organize a new party for single tax, greenbacks, direct legislation and government ownership, or go over to the socialists.

As for myself, I believe the time has come for a single tax party, for in a very few years the people will be forced into just two parties—one standing for Individualism and the other for Socialism. The world must soon recognize this fact. Single tax stands for Individualism. Socialism for itself.

The republican party will go right on in the same old way, with the bad element of the democrats to help them in every emergency to keep the party in power.

Whether the people's party will come again depends much upon what the democrats do, but at present we are dead.

The only thing that can be done, is to send out speakers through each state to lecture, take subscribers for reform papers, and prepare for immediate action, for the organization of a new party. If we had a paper in each state like The Independent and one or more in each county we would stand some show of reorganizing the people's party.

We are now at the mercy of the democrats and socialists. As a party we are dead, provided that democrats come out for public ownership. Our position is a contingent one, and bad.

A new party would make a more rapid growth than the people's party did. I should like to see the populists go with the socialists on a platform not so raw as the socialists have now, but party idolatry, party slavery and prejudice will prevent it.

ALBINUS A. WORSLEY.

Butte, Neb.