

"POPULIST-DEMOCRAT'S" VIEWS

The Independent is a firm believer in giving a patient hearing—so far as space will permit—to all who are actuated by sincere motives in behalf of reform. But it does not, by the publication of a communication, thereby give editorial indorsement to the views therein expressed. What it does do, however, is to say in effect, "This person is actuated by good motives and deserves a respectful hearing."

Hence, the publication of the letter from "Populist-Democrat" on another page must not be taken as The Independent's idea of political action to be taken by populists the coming year. But there is no doubt of his sincerity; and in these days of political chaos, there is wisdom in the counsel of many.

"Populist-Democrat" has outlined a model platform. He will have no trouble in receiving unqualified indorsement of it from populists everywhere. But grave differences of opinion will arise over his plan for securing the enactment of these principles into law. There is where the hitch will come.

Few populists—even the most uncompromising "mid-rovers"—will deny that Mr. Bryan wields a larger influence among the rank and file of American citizenship than any other living man. Few of them entertain for him other than the kindest feelings, the keenest of admiration, or the greatest respect. But populists generally—the thorough-paced, "Old Guard" sort especially—repudiate the whole idea of "leadership" as it is generally understood. In other words, they claim the right to think for themselves, and to give expression to their thoughts, without first receiving a "cue" from the "leader." And, while granting the wonderful influence exercised by Mr. Bryan, they know that his followers may be divided into three groups: (a) Those who have the utmost confidence in Mr. Bryan, and who are thoroughly in accord with the principles he stands for; (b) those who do not take the trouble to study and understand economic and political questions, but have such implicit confidence in Mr. Bryan as to accept whatever he says without question; and (c) those who are looking for a seat at the pie-counter and who care nothing for Mr. Bryan or any other man or principles—men who simply want to win.

While this classification is theoretically easy to make, it is difficult to apply practically even today. But after the next democratic national convention, it will not be so difficult to point out those who belong in class "c" at least—unless those in class "a" should happen to be overwhelmingly in the majority at that convention.

The Independent does not agree with "Populist-Democrat's" plan of action. A few populist representatives and senators at Washington, as long as they maintained their party integrity, were to a large degree the "balance of power;" but as soon as they entered the democratic caucus, and agreed to be bound by the action of that body, they lost completely their power to influence legislation. The existence of a powerful people's party from 1839 to 1896, made it possible for the Bryan element in the democratic party to win in the convention of that year. It is highly probable that both the democratic and republican parties in 1836 would have repeated their tactics of 1892 had the people's party been completely annihilated.

"Democratic-Populist" seems to forget that Mr. Bryan has never affiliated with the people's party—unless his vote for the Weaver electors in 1892, under advice from the democratic party managers, in order to take Nebraska away from Harrison, is sufficient to make him a populist; hence, any effort on the part of populists to

repair their now broken-down organization, can hardly be called an effort "to create a diversion from the hosts he leads." Mr. Bryan has never "led" genuine populists; but upwards of a million of them voted for him in 1896—aye, even in the face of the refusal of his party to recognize the nomination of Tom Watson, and its persistence in keeping on its ticket a vice presidential candidate who had no sympathy whatever for the platform upon which he supposedly stood.

In two presidential campaigns the democratic party has resolutely refused to accept populist support upon any other basis than that of voting the ticket named wholly by the democratic party. And the recent efforts being made to harmonize the two utterly antagonistic elements in the democratic party, have convinced populists that a large number of class "c" democrats may be found among the loudest shouters for Bryan in 1896 and 1900. This being so, it seems evident that if "harmony" is effected in the democratic convention of 1904, it will be a victory for the plutocratic element in the party—perhaps a colorless candidate on a straddle platform.

Genuine populists—men of the "middle class," the "bone and sinew of America," the small producers, home builders and home owners—desire legislation which will protect them from legalized robbery; which will insure "equal rights to all, special privileges to none." They care nothing about the name of the party which gives them this protection and which insures their rights. But a great many of them have despaired of receiving what they ask at the hands of either old party. Will "Populist-Democrat" deny them the right to this opinion? Will he deny them the right to act in harmony with it? If not, why should an attempt to do what they believe to be right, "discredit those engaged in it?"

What the people's party may ultimately accomplish, no man can foretell; but it is evident that a great many populists, when once aroused from their present apathy, are earnestly in favor of "independent national action," as stated in the Denver conference address. That they will put a ticket in the field, seems certain. And that they have an undoubted right to do so, without being "discredited," is certain.

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THE CO-OPERATIVE CONVENTION

The meeting at Faneuil Hall, Boston, on Tuesday and Wednesday of this week did not receive much space at the hands of plutocratic journalism, but in it the trained observer of human events can see the germ of a forward movement in behalf of humanity.

Reformers in great variety were there, each with his particular pre-

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scription for curing all social ills, and doubtless some of them went away from the meeting with a feeling akin to chagrin because so many refused to be converted to his "school" of social medicine.

But these little differences were but ripples on the surface of a deep-flowing, powerful river. The meeting, as a whole, is a mile-stone along the way to a better and higher civilization.

Thinking men are more and more coming to the conclusion that the present state of society, with its gross inequalities and injustices, is ripe for a change of some sort—whether for better or for worse, time alone will tell. Most of the wrangling today is as to whether the future condition of society can be shaped or modified by statute law; if so, what is the most desirable shape or modification to be made; that determined, then how it can be accomplished—by individual self-purification, through political action, voluntary co-operation, or some other means, etc.

When all the underbrush is cut away, it will be found that all are agreed upon the proposition that statute law exerts a powerful influence upon society. But the Marxian socialists, adhering to the theory of economic determinism, insist that no statutes will be enacted inimical to the economic interests of the dominant class in control of the government; hence, that no modification of the social structure is possible through statute law, except as the entire system then in vogue proves inadequate and breaks down of its own weight. Upon this theory they prove that ancient slavery and the later serfdom were abolished—because they did not PAY. And upon this theory they try to show that the present wage system will break down, thus compelling a change; and that a change for the better must be to the co-operative commonwealth. Some of them believe the co-operative commonwealth is inevitable. Others, like Mr. Ghent, believe that a "benevolent feudalism" will result if the people are not aroused to the danger of the present age of rapid concentration of wealth.

The moving spirits in the convention, or, rather, in calling it, were Bradford Peck, Ralph Albertson and others of the co-operative association of America; and these men believe that the co-operative commonwealth will be ushered in through voluntary co-operation, at first in building up small local affairs; afterward in con-

solidating these into larger ones, until, finally, all industry will be on a co-operative basis—one grand "people's trust."

The meeting at Boston was in harmony with this idea.

The Lincoln Daily Star is having a tilt with the Post check currency bureau, and calls the plan a "bit of paternalism." This comes with poor grace from a sheet that upholds a "protective tariff" as blindly and unreasonably as does the Star. Anything that would be a convenience to the little fellow is "paternalism." But if it helps the big fellow—enables him to rob millions of the little ones—then it's "protection" and "patriotism."

Advertising in The Independent brings results. Branch & Miller, the big grocery house in this city, recently received a letter from a lady in Oswego, N. Y., saying: "I have seen your ad. in that splendid paper, The Independent, and write you to say that if you will send me 100 pounds of sugar, I will send you a barrel of selected apples—greenings, northern spies, Talman sweets, seek-no-further, and a few gilliflowers for the children." Of course, they couldn't swap on that basis, freight rates standing in the way. Besides, Nebraska produces a great amount of apples, and Missouri, Kansas and Iowa are not far distant.

Owing to the fact that another paper in Denver had incorporated the word "Independent" as part of its name, The Colorado Independent, which was started by E. A. Sciple a few weeks ago, was obliged to change its name in order to secure entry as second-class matter. Hence, No. 6 comes out as The Colorado Commoner, with a new address: Room 17, Lewis block, Denver. It is now a four-column quarto, filled to the brim with live populist matter and if the populists of Colorado do not give Mr. Sciple the support he deserves—well, they ought to go without a state paper.

If the populists didn't capture that co-operative convention, down at Faneuil Hall, Boston, Tuesday and Wednesday, it must have been because they didn't care to do so. The program shows the names of many of the Old Guard: Amos W. Rideout, George H. Shibley, E. Gerry Brown, George F. Washburn, and others.