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A Connecticut Pessimist

Among a list of -names of "old guard" populists, sent in by State Chairman Thomas of Connecticut, was the name of Robert Pyne, editor of the Hartford Weekly Examiner. Commenting on the list sent, Chairman Thomas said: "A large share of our old populists are now rank socialists, and I am in no shape to go around and see them, as I can ride only three or four miles. Bro. Pyne, of The Examiner, is a good old soul, but has lost faith in mankind—same as a good many of our good old workers."

A personal letter of invitation was sent Editor Pyne on May 6. The only reply was a marked copy of his paper, containing an editorial which The Independent feels impelled to reprint—not because it is encouraging, but because it gives a good picture of conditions in the Nutmeg state, and to a great extent coincides with The Independent's own view as to the futility of making any special effort to secure the support of organized labor. Mr. Pyne's editorial follows:

THE OLD GUARD OF POPULISM.

This is the term found on an enrollment blank now being sent around to once active workers of the people's party, with the design of reviving that organization. The party still lives in some of the western states, but throughout the country in general it is only a memory. It died from two causes—fusion with the democratic party and the indifference of the average American voter to matters of political reform. It was a people's party without the people, something alike in sentiment with the fellow in the play who proclaimed: "I can call spirits from the deep!" "So can I," retorted the other, "but will they come?" With the people's party many were called but few were chosen, for they didn't respond.

Nor will the people respond now no more than before. The same indifference to any reform effort still abides in solemn serenity. And he who would disturb them is a sinner. They can endure without murmur anything else in the world but an entreaty to get away from the rule of the politician and the monopolist exploiters.

But what strikes us as profoundly stupid in this effort of revivification of this practically defunct organization is the especial plea made to the men of organized labor to join its ranks. It speaks to them in this way: "The platform of the people's party made at Omaha in 1892 was originally made in a conference called and held by the labor organizations, February 22, 1892. We therefore invite the wealth-producers to take part in the primaries that shall choose delegates to our convention, guaranteeing that the influence of this party shall be given to advance the interests of organized labor by the recognition of the union label on manufactured products, as well as in legislation which at last is the only hope of just conditions for labor."

As a matter of fact the assertion here is true. But what was the result of this combination—made between the farmer organizations of the south and west and the men of organized labor. Simply nothing—the organized workers continued on in the even tenor of their way, voting their accustomed tickets as before; and even the leader of that day who although an officer of this conference referred to and voting his whole organization on questions coming up for settlement, was soon found publicly advocating the election of the republican presidential nominee, and then filling a \$5,000 position under his administration when elected.

These men now striving to galvanize into life the corpse of the people's party remind us of the story of the horse that once while being driven over a rotten bridge broke through into the water below. A dozen years after while being driven over the same road on coming to the place of his former mishap he refused to cross, although the old bridge had been replaced by a new one. What did this go to show? Simply that the animal had a good memory, but a poor judgment. And yet we fear that the simile here sought to be made is incorrect after all, for these populist reorganizers don't appear to have either memory or judgment. If they did they would now be able to realize the utter hopelessness of the task undertaken and consequently never attempt it.

Whatever basis of hope there is in an appeal to the people in general to arouse themselves to the necessity of another declaration of independence from the powers in control, there is absolutely no hope in any appeal to the organized working class in particular. Trade unionism is good enough for them. That is all they are able to understand, and even the greater por-

tion of them don't understand that, nor do they care to. If the comparatively few earnest and intelligent members will only do all the work of the organization the others are satisfied with all the resultant benefits, real or supposed.

Another thought. This appeal on paper to men of organized labor is in substance like the rose that wastes its perfume on the desert air. It doesn't reach them. It won't be allowed insertion in their trade journals because it is "politics" and that's debarred from the sphere of trade unionism. And in the political reform journals they would never see it for those mediums of thought are not patronized by them. They are too expensive, generally costing about 2 cents a week, and the saloon man or promoter of prize fights, horse races, ball games and so forth need all the spare pennies of the worker in circulation after the landlord, the grocer, the butcher and the doctor are attended to. And in many cases even these worthy people are forgotten—the saloon man, the gambling den and the brothel taking all. The parable relating to the casting of pearls before swine would apply here only for one thing—the caster cannot reach the swine with the pearls. And even could he it would be unavailing, for swine have no use for pearls, they want swill. Oh! how much philosophy was crammed into the famous ejaculation of Vanderbilt's—"The public be damned!" He well realized the little the people in general have to do with the controlling influences that surround them, and the utter futility of arousing them to a realization of the same.

No, there's no use; the advocates of reform through political action might as well give it up. And the sooner the wiser. For if things are to ever grow better they must first grow worse—grow so bad that they can be no longer endured. This is the only hope there is—and it is only a hope. The great masses of the people of China have developed a capacity in mankind for enduring all the burdens and rascalities that can possibly be heaped and inflicted upon a people, yet they are borne with docility, and may be with fortitude.

And "the spirit of '76" is no more seen abroad in this great "free and independent" land of ours. It is now the spirit of monopolistic greed instead that rules the destiny of the nation and molds every influence to its service. It is to this power we are looking for reform, if it ever is to come, for the light of the reformer without the lash of the monopolist is of utter impotency. It was ever thus and doubtless will ever so remain.

ROBERT PYNE.

A Correction.

The letter below explains itself. Bro. Poynter, quoted from The Prospector, a Washington paper, what was by The Independent erroneously attributed to the Albion News; the error occurred in correcting proof.

Editor Independent: I have just been reading The Independent of this week and notice that you got your lines crossed. On page 12, second column at the bottom, you accuse Editor Ladd, of the News, of saying what he did not. He may be fair enough, but he didn't say it. . . . I am much pleased with the words of encouragement in The Independent this week. It begins to look like the Springfield convention would be a considerable affair after all. Well, so be it.

D. J. POYNTER, Editor Argus, Albion, Neb.

Wind Storms

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