

# The Independent.

VOL. XVI.

LINCOLN, NEB., MARCH 23, 1905.

No. 44

## POPULISM IN NEW YORK

Tom Watson at Work and Full Ticket Will Be Put in the Field—To Overthrow Tammany

### "PUBLIC OWNERSHIP" THE ISSUE

Rascality and Thievery in the Metropolis Now Greater than in the Days of Boss Tweed.

The vast system of rascality which now oppresses New York would not have been dreamed of in the Days of Tweed—the people absolutely at the mercy of a small band of ignorant cunning political knaves.—Tom Watson.

(By James Creelman, in the New York World.)

There was a shine of enthusiasm in the thin, fighting countenance of Thomas E. Watson as he announced that the people's party would take part in the New York mayoralty campaign this year.

"We propose to help the people of New York to rescue their city from the grafters and blackmailers who are in control now," he said. "With our municipal principles of government ownership of public utilities, the initiative and referendum and the right of recall, I believe that we can poll 50,000 votes in this community at any time. We will make our fight right here, and will support any honest and courageous man who will make the struggle for principle and for the redemption of the city from misrule."

A bright, brave, clever face, seamed and puckered and dimpled, lean, bony, clean-shaven; keen, merry eyes; a sensitive, humorous mouth; fine, thin ears a high brow and straight, slender nose.

The figure is tall, slight and erect; the hands sinewy and refined. The whole look of the man is alert, nervous and earnest beyond words to express.

This is the Georgia lawyer, author, and politician who stood for vice president on the ticket with Bryan in 1896, was the populist candidate for president last year, has just established a magazine in New York and is about to take part in the fight to overthrow Tammany Hall.

Mr. Watson is a recognized scholar and historian. He comes of an old and good family. He owns \$300,000 worth of cotton lands in Georgia and has an income of \$15,000 a year, aside from his book royalties.

Mr. Watson sat in the office of the "Tom Watson's Magazine." At his side was Dr. John H. Girdner, his editorial associate, once the friend and adviser of Mr. Bryan, but now the local leader of populism in New York.

"We have decided to make a fight in New York this year because our principles and policies make a centre of graft and special privileges like this a splendid field for our activities. We are very much alive and decidedly in earnest. We propose to attack the grafters of both the old parties. It is true that my own home is in Georgia, but I spend about half of my time in New York, and consider myself identified with its interests, I talk freely with representative men of the city and have a profound feeling of resentment and indignation when I see how the powers of the municipal government are abused. The situation grows worse every day.

### "Ignorant, Cunning Political Knaves"

"It is time for the people's party to enter upon this scene vigorously. I believe that it can exercise a decisive influence. The population of the country is crowding into the cities, towns and villages more and more. Thirty-one per cent of our entire population lives in incorporated places. More than 28,000,000 Americans live in cities, towns and villages. The Greater New York has as great a population now as the whole country had when the constitution was adopted. It has a greater population than any of the

other states, except Illinois, Pennsylvania and Ohio. This one city, with an area of only 326 3/4 square miles, has more inhabitants than Texas, with an area of 265,780 square miles. Yet this magnificent metropolis, the greatest centre of wealth and commerce on the continent, finds itself today absolutely at the mercy of a small band of ignorant but cunning political knaves. Its two great political parties seem dead to the shame of the situation.

"Take Tammany Hall, for instance. It calls itself democratic simply because that is a good name to do business under. It has no democratic principles and does not care for them. It is ready to knife the democratic ticket when it suits its purposes, and has done it repeatedly in the past. To all intents and purposes it is a business organization, which makes business out of the city government. Everybody knows something about the Croker fortune, which reeks with dishonor. The fortune which Murphy, his successor, is piling up will be just as much tainted.

"The man who picks my pocket in a crowd may be more honest, when properly judged, than those who make use of public office to despoil the people. The vast system of rascality which now oppresses New York would not have been dreamed of in the days of Tweed, and the most marvellous thing about it is the patience with which the people submit to it. An overwhelming majority of the citizens are brave and honest. Perhaps a majority of those in office are brave and honest. Yet brave men here submit like cowards and honest men submit to what they know is dishonest rather than fly the flag of revolt and fight it till they kill it.

"Such a system as that which Tammany has imposed on New York could not stand a real fight. The only hope of the thieves is the continued patience of a plundered public. Let an independent ticket of honest and courageous men be put up, and the whole corrupt Tammany ring will be smashed like a lot of rotten eggs.

"To accomplish such a purpose there should be no partisan politics introduced into the fight. There is no hope of help to be found in any of the regular political conventions in New York. The regular machines will control the nominations. What is needed now in this city is union for honest and courageous action by honest and courageous men, by no matter what name they call themselves. That is the way to clean out the stable.

### Great Enterprises Held Up

"Under the present system great enterprises vital to the city's growth and happiness are held up, things which the city needs and can not get till its false officials are first bought off.

"Yet all this is in the second city of the world—the metropolis of a country which boasts of its progressive civilization and which is so anxious to impose its civilization upon foreign countries and upon its own world-mission that it has gone thousands of miles from home, with rifle and cannon, to impress this system upon other peoples.

"The Pennsylvania Railroad company, under Mr. Cassatt, and the Metropolitan Street Railroad company, under Mr. Ryan, have undertaken great enterprises in this city which are being held up by the Tammany board of aldermen. As I understand it, these two men wield vast power, and are men of the highest order of intelligence. They are reputed to be masters of their business, and represent hundreds of millions of invested dollars. Yet they are halted in the highway and reduced to impotence by a lot of nondescripts who happen to find their way into municipal office.

"The way a populist would look at a thing like that is this: If these enterprises, undertaken by Mr. Cassatt and Mr. Ryan, are undesirable, they should not be permitted at any price; but if the enterprises promise to be beneficial to the city, if the city is actually suffering for want of them, then whatever money is paid by the corporations should go into the public treasury for the common benefit of the people, who own the franchise wealth created here by concentration of population. Why, the state itself has classed franchises for street railways as real estate, and the courts have declared the classification to be valid.

"Of course, you understand, populism demands the public ownership of public utilities, and that populism would get rid of dishonest aldermen by what we style 'the recall.' That would settle the Tammany system at once and forever. The moment an alderman sold out the people to corporations, or used his office for private gain, we would simply recall him and put another man in his place, as was done with Davenport in the city of Los Angeles last year. This plan would be absolutely effective and would purify the city government, because it is incredible that a majority of the people would vote for a man shown to be a thief or a blackmailer.

"The system of recall advocated in our platform applies immediately. It is a simple and practical idea, which has worked well in Los Angeles. If an official has betrayed his trust, a certain percentage of citizens have only to sign a petition to have a new election to fill his place at once.

"New York should apply that system to men like Alderman Gaffney and Alderman 'Tim' Sullivan, and those who act as their confederates. Under such a law it would be impossible to have graft perpetuated, unless it is conceivable that a majority of the people would indorse a man caught with the goods on him. Official rascals could be indicted and tried at the bar of public opinion in thirty days.

"This plan is an automatic corrective of municipal corruption. Once put it in force, and graft, blackmailing or any other form of official wrongdoing could not live in New York two months.

"We believe that is the only remedy. With that idea we will enter the fight in New York full of confidence. We have no man in sight for mayor. No remedy is proposed by either of the old parties. To go from Tammany to the local republican machine is simply to swap the devil for a witch, to jump from the frying pan into the fire. You change the men, but you don't change the methods. The only hope on earth for New York this year is an independent ticket that will draw to itself all the people who want an honest city government. With our principle of public ownership of public utilities, the initiative and referendum and the right of recall, I am confident that we can poll 50,000 votes in this city.

"Perhaps the principle of public ownership is stronger in itself than any political party in New York, and could, of itself, poll more votes than the democratic party. If it had a square test on its merits, I believe it would sweep the city.

"The country is beginning to realize what populism means. At one end of the line stand the socialists, proposing that the house be demolished and a new one built. At the other end of the line stand the republicans, representing special privilege and those class wars which suggest the predictions made by De Tocqueville more than sixty years ago. The democrats have joined the republicans. In the last session of congress it was plain to be seen that party lines had faded away.

"Between these two extremes stand the populists, who want to protect private property and the rights of the individual, but, at the same time, have the lawmaking power used for the benefit of all, instead of for the enrichment of the few."

Miss Ida Tarbell is in Kansas studying the Rockefeller situation there. She has the same opinion about the effectiveness of a state oil refinery in fighting Rockefeller and his railroads that The Independent has expressed. In an interview Miss Tarbell says:

"Your state refinery is a very interesting experiment, but I do not think it will bring relief. It can handle only one-fifteenth of your product and were it large enough to refine all of the crude oil produced in the Kansas field, the problem would still be unsolved. Kansas produces more than enough oil to supply the entire Mississippi valley. With certain strong competition from the Standard the marketing of the refined product would be impossible. As an evidence of the intention of Kansas to protect the interests of the independent refinery, the state refinery is a worthy institution. Still I wish that the \$410,000 you propose to use in constructing a refinery was to be used in laying a pipe line to the gulf."

## THE INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE

It Creates New Nations, Builds up Peoples and Through It the World Moves On.

### AN UNKNOWN NEVADA HERO

Will This Country Follow the Nations of Old—First Liberty, Then Wealth, Then Decay?

Editor Independent: Recently an European diplomat congratulated the English Chamberlain on the English colonial policy and Chamberlain replied that England had no colonial policy, that she had simply blundered into a great colonial empire. The German kaiser has tried hard to build up German colonies and has miserably failed and he can not understand the reason why. Chamberlain, by his speech, and the kaiser, by his acts, show how profoundly ignorant they are of the reason of democratic progress. England has gotten a colonial empire because of the strong and vital democratic spirit of her colonists; Germany has failed to get such an outside empire because that democratic spirit is hampered and tied with rules and regulations so that it can not expand and grow.

The secret of colonial and all other progress consists in freedom, in so developing the power and spirit of individual initiative that whenever a new occasion arises, the individual is ready to meet it and does not have to go to some authority to tell him what to do. He meets the crisis in some way and conquers it.

For this reason, real progress is rarely brilliant, spectacular, eye-attracting. It consists of a multitude of small deeds of initiative and creation by a multitude of men. It is not boastful and bragging, it does not surround itself with pageants. The autocratic spirit can not understand it. It seems to them weak and humble, a mass of petty details and happy blunders. But England did not blunder into a colonial empire; her sons and daughters came to this country, to Canada, to Australia and to the ends of the earth and usually the home government left them alone which was the very best thing they could do and the real democratic spirit of these virile men and women met each condition as it arose and great lands and peoples developed out of hard conditions. When the home government interfered and strove to force its will on a colony, it made a tremendous blunder that divided the Anglo-Saxon peoples by the American revolution.

The autocratic spirit today possesses the business and industry of our country. It largely controls the press. It simply does not see the signs of real progress. It is blind and its blindness some day will lead it to over-reach itself and a tremendous downfall, just as the blindness of the Russian autocracy has led it into the overwhelming blunder of the Russo-Japanese war.

But the immediate purpose of this article is to tell of the really greatest happening at the last election on Nov. 8, 1904, and this great happening illustrates both the method of democratic progress and the utter blindness of our autocratic leaders of industry, of the press and pulpit.

Shortly after the election, I wrote to all the secretaries of state in our country asking if there had been any referendums on constitutional amendments and if so, for copies of the amendments and the vote on them. I wished to prepare an article on these referendums. I was greatly surprised to receive from the secretary of state of Nevada the following:

### "Constitutional Amendment for the Referendum in Nevada

"Section 1. Whenever 10 per centum or more of the voters of this state, as shown by the number of votes cast at the last preceding general election, shall express their wish that any law or resolution made by the legislature be submitted to a vote of the people, the officers charged with the duty of announcing and proclaiming elections and of certifying nominations or questions to be voted on, shall submit the question of the approval or disapproval of said law or resolution to be voted on at the next ensuing election where-