

Hearing from the People

Below will be found extracts from a few of the many letters received from Commoner readers commenting on current events:

J. F. Buchheit, Pennsylvania.—When I was a young man, in the campaign of 1896, I cast my first presidential vote for you. I had the good fortune to hear you once during that campaign. I also read every speech you made to which I could gain access. The sound political philosophy contained in your addresses and the genuine Democratic doctrine which you preached did much to help me find my proper place as a citizen of the republic and to give me the point of view that I believe every citizen should have if he would be true to the ideals for which our country stands.

My interest in you and in the things for which you stand did not wane with that election. I was one of the first subscribers to The Commoner and have continued a subscriber to this day. Just a few minutes ago I finished reading the December number. In past years, when my duties were not quite so exacting, I used to send you a number of subscriptions every year. Since then I have frequently paid for a number of subscriptions and had the magazine sent to persons who, I felt, were susceptible to the truth. I have bought all the books you have published and I have followed your career closely during all these years. During the campaigns of 1900 and 1908 I not only voted for you but I made a number of speeches for you and the cause. I don't think this is the only reason you did not carry Pennsylvania.

I have said the foregoing in order that I may the more properly say what follows and that it may be clear that what I say is not merely the outburst of a sudden or temporary enthusiasm but a firm conviction that has been steadily growing upon me for twenty years, namely, that you are the cleanest politician, the sincerest friend of the common people, and the wisest and most far-seeing statesman, irrespective of party, in the entire country, and furthermore, that you are right now the only hope of the Democratic party. In saying these things I believe I am voicing the sentiment of millions of the best Democrats throughout the nation.

While it is true that you failed to attain the presidency in each of the three campaigns in which you were our standard bearer, it is also true that you were RIGHT in every one of those campaigns and no other candidate could have polled as many votes as you did. Moreover, everybody knows that in 1912 it was you who put Woodrow Wilson into the White House and, again, that it was YOU who put him back into office in 1916 when he was hopelessly defeated in the east. This you did in spite of the fact that the adoption of policies to which you could not subscribe (and which later carried us into the war) had made it necessary to quit Wilson's cabinet.

You consistently opposed our entering the war until the last. If your advice had been taken and your policies pursued it would not have been necessary for us to go into it, and, even as it was, if the matter had been submitted to the people in a "solemn referendum" before the congress, at the request of the president, declared war, the result would have been a more decided negative than the vote on the second of November when the people were asked to decide whether Wilsonism, under Cox leadership, should have a new lease of life. When, however, the die was cast and we entered the conflict, your personal opinions were immediately suspended, and you did more than any other private citizen for the success of our arms. Again, when the war was finally over and the victory won, no other man, in or out of office, did as much as you did to secure ratification of the treaty and the league of nations covenant without reservations as long as there was any hope of success.

When this became clearly impossible, invoking the fundamental principle of majority rule, you advocated a compromise with an adverse majority, but an obstinate and inflexible (?) president, committing the most fatal blunder of his life, insisted upon throwing this momentous international question into the presidential campaign where it became the football of partisan discussion. Not only that, the several amendments you offered to the party platform at the San Francisco convention, two of which would, even at that late hour, have taken the league

question out of the campaign and prevented the nomination of a "wet," were ruthlessly voted down by a body of delegates who did not represent the rank and file of the Democratic party. In doing so they placed you in a position where you could not, without stultifying yourself, take an active part in the campaign, even if there had been a chance of winning, which there was not. And what was the result? A defeat infinitely worse than Parker's in 1904, when the party was temporarily turned over to reactionary leadership.

And now, what is the situation? The Democratic party is not dead but it IS demoralized. What it needs is real, sane, progressive leadership, a leadership that will enable it to get back to the true Democratic position on all the great political, social, and economic questions that press for solution. Where is this leadership to be found? It would be an unpardonable libel upon the Democratic party to say that we do not have a number of men who can qualify, but why should we not have the BEST man? There is only one BEST man, and that is William Jennings Bryan, the man who for twenty years has stood without a peer in this country, the man who, out of office, has been instrumental in putting upon our statute books, even through the medium of the opposition party, more progressive and remedial legislation than any other man ever secured in office. It is YOU, Mr. Bryan, that the Democratic party needs to lead us to victory in the next campaign. As a humble Democrat I appeal to you to assume your rightful place again as the leader of the party and we shall follow you.

Theo. E. Slinkard, Indiana.—Accepting your invitation to say something which might help the democracy, and restore the confidence of the people in it, we suggest, as to Indiana:

1. Election of the public service commission by the people instead of appointment, as now provided by law.

2. Change the constitution so that: (a) All state and county officers be elected each four years instead of part of them each two years and some each six years; (b) So that registration of voters apply only to cities of 4,000 and over; (c) Increase the number of judges in the supreme court to nine, and make three judges of circuit courts, intermediate courts of appeal, requiring them to write and publish opinions in civil cases.

There is just one thing needed in order to again acquire public confidence for the democracy and that is to get back to Bryan and principles, forwarding the interests of the whole people: (a) Opposition to high tariffs, or tariffs for protection; (b) Stringent laws against profiteering; (c) Stringent and effective laws against grain gambling; (d) Federal taxes collected from incomes, and luxuries; (e) Opposition to the regulation of the people in their business affairs in the matter of price fixing by laws and commissions.

J. H. Ketner, Texas.—I think The Commoner contains more good to the square inch than any other paper I know of. It is the biggest little paper in the country, but when we stop for a moment and think who its owner and editor is we are not surprised in the least at such a wonderful little paper. Mr. Bryan is a man that stands for everything that is right and against everything that is wrong, and right will surely win out in the end. Mr. Bryan is loved more today by the good people of our land than ever before. Now that we have strong drink stamped out the thing that was the cause of nine-tenths of all the meanness that was committed all over the country, all other good things are sure to follow for the good and the bad will not go together—they are as far apart as the east from the west. I hope and trust to the good Lord above us all that some time yet in the future Mr. Bryan will be elected to the high office of President of the United States; then with all the purity and goodness that he possesses he will cause this land of ours to be a Heaven on earth so to speak.

Mr. Bryan has won two victories since the Democrats went down in defeat. First one is, that it shows to the people of the country that by the Democrats getting defeated was because they turned Mr. Bryan down at the San Francisco convention and they could not accomplish any-

thing without his help and support. What you sow you must reap. The second victory is that after the Republicans elected their man Mr. Harding for President he sent for Mr. Bryan to come and see him—he wanted to confer with him and get his ideas of how he thought would be the best way to run the affairs of our government. Now I believe this is proof enough to the people that Mr. Bryan is today more popular than ever before. I think that a man like Williams Jennings Bryan, who has had the great honor bestowed upon him three different times to run for the high office of President, and to never have anything brought up against him by either side that he ever did one dishonest act, sure deserves great praise from his fellow-man.

I am a Bryan Democrat, and I am for Mr. Bryan first, last and all the time. I voted for him three different times for President and not sorry for it, and I am waiting patiently for the opportunity to vote for him the fourth time. If Mr. Bryan is nominated again for President, which I believe he will be, he will be elected by the biggest majority any President ever was before, for he will get all the prohibition votes of both women and men of the entire country and their strength will be felt in the presidential elections in the future.

J. F. Clark, Illinois.—As a commercial traveler we boast of being one of the strongest Bryan men that ever traveled the road for nearly twenty-five years. In many a hotel lobby have we, to speak roughly, gone to the carpet in defense of the principles enunciated by the Great Commoner.

When one thinks back over those twenty years of trials and struggles we cannot help but ponder how the people could be so unappreciative of the things political that Bryan has persistently endeavored to make clear to them. It is inconceivable that the masses could be so indifferent.

In 1904 I attended the St. Louis convention, where we were all treated to Mr. Pulitzer's Post-Dispatch and New York World, ante-mortem obituary editorials of how Bryan had fallen. "Wonderful!" and oh, how considerate were their analyses on the Bryan corpse. And Walter Wellman's Chicago Herald's articles, too; how he too had poor Bryan relegated to the ranks of "Exploded phenoms" and the "Mighties fallen." It was rich while it lasted. But, oh, what a rude awakening was there. What a beautiful surprise was in store for these famous and truly wise publicists.

It took less than fifteen minutes from the time that the organization of that convention was well under way for these would-be grave diggers of Bryan's to get one of the most laughable jolts that was ever meted out to a conceited bunch of politicians in any political organization. It is needless to go into details as to what took place in that convention except to state that those who came under the wrath of Bryan never recovered from the wounds of the lashing received. They went there bent on burying Bryan, and when the clouds had cleared they, all of them, Belmont, Hill, Sullivan, Hopkins, Senator Daniels and, later, their candidate Parker, were in due time eliminated as factors in the party. Baltimore eight years later was only practice when one considers what Bryan did at St. Louis. Any one with a grain of sense would have known that Parker's chances of election were too ridiculous to even consider seriously. The same was true of Cox.

The funniest thing of this whole political situation is that even after getting such overwhelming bumps these same political leaders, or their proteges, still seem to think that they can name a winner without a passport from Bryan or that there is room for two conservative parties.

If any business man, retailer or commercial traveler should display so little judgment of human nature, how long would they continue in the business? Of all men, political leaders seem to learn the least from experience.

In the years to come and the battles to be fought to again put the party in right with the voters, now at sea, it will no doubt be the same old story, we will all sit back and let George (Bryan) do it, and this notwithstanding the fact that he is now rounding out his 60th year.

Will E. Purdy, Oregon.—I have in times past endorsed your stand in many different political problems up to and including the convention at San Francisco, where I was a delegate