

and no man nor set of men can promote democracy by usurping that sovereignty. A Democratic party cannot employ oligarchic methods and continue to be democratic. It must of necessity employ the methods of democracy, and those only; for its platforms must be the consensus of its voters, and its acts must be controlled by their deliberative will.

A Democratic party would itself be a democracy—a model democracy. It would be alert to employ methods that would promote the democracy of its own government. In the use of such methods it would lead the civil government, rather than follow it. It would use the initiative and referendum to build its platforms. Its voters would elect its officers, and have power to “recall” them. Its representative officers would represent constituencies and not territories. The voting power of each representative would be proportioned to the number of his constituents. And it would have in use yet other methods of democracy, now known to but few.

But instead of such a party, what do we behold? An organized oligarchy! A miserable manipulator of votes! A predatory band that dresses and parades in democratic garb to cheat the democracy out of its political power! Contemptible pretenders, so inconsistent with democracy, and so false to “government of the people; by the people, for the people,” that plutocrats, cunningly painting the treachery of these oligarchs as the folly of Democratic voters, have made Democracy an object of contempt and derision!

Is it not plain, my good fellow Democrat, that it is utter folly to hope to promote democracy by means of an oligarchy? “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” And may we not very positively assert that if the so-called Democratic party had been ruled by its voters instead of its ringsters, it never could have been symbolized as an ass?

ASHER GEO. BEECHER.

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“SHALL THE PEOPLE RULE?”

When Mr. Bryan sounded the slogan, “Shall the people rule?” there was clearly the presupposition that the American people are not self-governed, that the will of the majority fails to find free and untrammelled political expression. In the face of as great a defeat as Mr. Bryan met in his first campaign as standard bearer of his party, does there still remain any substance or significance in the denial of that dictum? Do the people rule?

Surface indications affirm the people’s political sovereignty, while material results have seemingly added new strength and prestige to the victorious

party. However, if there are ten thousand men who supported Mr. Bryan and who now vaguely believe that the people do rule, there are millions more who still believe that the people do not rule; that while the election of a large majority of Presidential electors on the Republican ticket is a political puzzle which cannot be easily unraveled, confusing and disquieting as it has been, there are causes, not fanciful but clear and true, which subtly influenced a majority of men in giving their support to Mr. Taft, even while their sympathies were with Mr. Bryan, and who in their hearts would have secretly rejoiced at his success. A paradox indeed. But is it true?

The American people are not morally or politically corrupt, however strongly is surging through the body politic the venous blood of the politician, and the leaven of corrupting influences working in social and economic life. What, then, is the answer?

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In the last years of the past century one of the clearest visioned of men left this message to his countrymen and to his fellow-men in all lands:

The power of a special interest, though inimical to the general interest, so to influence common thought as to make fallacies pass as truths, is a great fact, without which neither the political history of our own time and people nor that of other times and peoples can be understood. A comparatively small number of individuals brought into virtual though not necessarily formal agreement of thought and action by something that makes them individually wealthy without adding to the general wealth, may exert an influence out of all proportion to their numbers. A special interest of this kind is, to the general interests of society, as a standing army is to an unorganized mob. It gains intensity and energy in its specialization, and in the wealth it takes from the general stock finds power to mold opinion. Leisure and culture and the circumstances and conditions that command respect accompany wealth, and intellectual ability is attracted by it. On the other hand, those who suffer from the injustice that takes from the many to enrich the few, are in that very thing deprived by the leisure to think, and the opportunities, education and graces necessary to give their thought acceptable expression. They are necessarily the “unlettered,” the “ignorant,” the “vulgar,” prone in the consciousness of weakness to look up for leadership and guidance to those who have the advantages that the possession of wealth can give.

Now, if we consider it, injustice and absurdity are simply different aspects of incongruity. That which to right reason is unjust must be to right reason absurd. But an injustice that impoverishes the many to enrich the few shifts the centers of social power, and thus controls the social organs and agencies of opinion and education. Growing in strength and acceptance by what it feeds on, it has only to continue to exist to become at length so

vested or rooted, not in the constitution of the human mind itself, but in that constitution of opinions, beliefs and habits of thought which we take, as we take our mother tongue, from our social environment, that it is not perceived as injustice or absurdity, but seems even to the philosopher an integral part of the natural order, with which it were as idle if not as impious to quarrel as with the constitution of the elements. Even that highest gift, the gift of reason, is in its bestowal on man subjected to his use, and the very mental qualities that enable us to discover truth may be perverted to fortify error, and are always so perverted wherever an anti-social special interest gains control of the thinking and teaching functions of society.

In this lies the explanation of the fact that looking through the vista of what we know of human history we everywhere find what are to us the most palpable absurdities enshrining themselves in the human mind as unquestionable truths—whole nations the prey of preposterous superstitions, abasing themselves before fellow-creatures, often before idiots or voluptuaries, whom their imagination has converted into the representatives of Deity; the great masses toiling, suffering, starving, that those they bear on their shoulders may live idly and daintily. Wherever and whenever what we may now see to be a palpable absurdity has passed for truth, we may see if we look close enough that it has always been because behind it crouched some powerful special interest, and that the man has hushed the questioning of the child.

This is of human nature. The world is so new to us when we first come into it; we are so compelled at every turn to rely upon what we are told rather than on what we ourselves can discover; what we find to be the common and respected opinion of others has with us such almost irresistible weight, that it becomes possible for a special interest by usurping the teaching province to make to us black seem white and wrong seem right.

Let no one indeed feel confident that he could have escaped any delusion, no matter how preposterous, that has ever prevailed among men, if he had lived when and where it was accepted. From as far back as we can see, human nature has not changed, and we have but to look around us to discover in operation today the great agency that has made falsehood seem truth.

Is this not as a powerful glass revealing what remains a mystery to a large part of society, and making clear the causes which lead men to register their support for the very forces which not only mentally enslave them but press them down to a condition of industrial servitude?

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National interest is now turned expectantly toward the future. There is an apparent lessening of the tension felt in the financial world; there are surface indications which give promise for a return to what is superficially termed a period of prosperity—and to the average man prosperity has no greater meaning than an opportunity to

work, to meet his current obligations, to maintain in comparative comfort those who are dear to him, and to be freed from the specter of want and the keen pain of being compelled to accept the dole of charity. Liberty in its essence implies individualism, and any man mentally and physically equipped to take a large part in the useful activities of life, but denied the boon, is not a free man, let his political prerogatives be what they may.

Here, then, is the crux of the problem.

An analysis of the vote for the two Presidential candidates plainly shows that great masses of workingmen voted, not as they desired to do as a whole and where undoubtedly their sympathies were, but for that which promised the most in material things—meaning work. For the American workingman has so long listened to and blindly obeyed the high priests of Protection that his higher and fuller perceptions are smothered by the sense and knowledge of his industrial servitude. In a word, he has lost his individuality through fear. He is the twentieth century Laocoon, in the coils of privilege. In this condition of dependency and industrial servitude so stand every landless man and woman who toil with hands and brain for their daily bread.

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At the capital of the nation there are now gathered many eagles, with ruffled feathers and distended talons, to share in the division of the tariff carcass. In the cormorant greed displayed by each separate interest is there not presented an object lesson sufficient to appeal to every man endowed with the gift of reason? Will the American citizen who so blindly voted for the perpetuation of the protective tariff ignore the recent declaration of one of the largest beneficiaries of the tariff, that the protective system did not benefit labor but degraded it?

Is it not here that all may see the palpable absurdity, which, in the name of protection to the American workingman, has passed for truth, behind which there are grouped the powerful special interests whose solicitude for the American people is so tender they are willing to do anything except get off their backs?

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A retrospective glance brings a view of what are clearly lost opportunities. For twelve years there has been no real, no concrete, issue embodied in the platforms of the national Democratic party. What have been presented as vital questions have been minor or lesser problems, and were only re-

ated to the real issue as the branches of a tree owe their life to the parent trunk.

The problems confronting the American people have their primary cause in indirect taxation. Indirect taxation is the upas tree which is constantly poisoning our national life. Drawing its strength through its roots sunk deep and wide in land monopoly and special privilege, each decade sees the American people lessened in the virility of freemen, so subtle and insidious are the enervating influences of this source of all the plagues that scourge our nation. Passing so quickly into the decline of national life after but 132 years of political freedom, as we have, it is difficult, nay, impossible, for the masses of our people to believe that one by one their liberties have been taken from them and that today they are in the shadow of a feudal age.

To overthrow the system of protection alone is but taking an outpost of the citadel of the taxing power of the people. Enthroned and enshrined as it is by tradition and custom, only an unceasing campaign can awaken the American people to see the lighted path to real liberty. Special interests die hard. Each defeat at their hands would be merely the loss of a battle by the forces of righteousness with the powers of evil, but however long the war waged no retreat should ever be sounded. True free trade would emancipate labor. Not an emasculated free trade labeled "a tariff for revenue only," but a commerce that would be as free as the flight of a bird, and unrestricted by geographical boundaries. All taxation resting upon land values, the power of every tribute exacting interest would at once be destroyed, for this power has its whole source in land monopoly.

Such is the answer to the query, "Shall the people rule?"

The people do not now, nor will they ever, rule so long as shadows are pursued in the name of "issues;" but the predatory forces, constantly gathering strength in the Republic will continue to weaken the people's power of resistance to their encroachments upon political and economic freedom and social peace.

The American people have it in their power to destroy this gigantic evil. Once awakened to their danger, there is yet time to become a great cohesive, homogeneous and irresistible force as they see the central truth. Where now grows the towering wrong of privilege can be planted the seed of a mighty tree of true Free Trade, in whose shade shall be felt the redemption of labor and whose fruits shall be for the healing of the nations.

JAS. A. WARREN.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

AUSTRALIA.

Corowa, N. S. W., November 20.—The Federal High Court has given two more important decisions. It has declared the Federal union label to be unconstitutional, and the Surplus Revenue Act (p. 488), which authorizes the Federal government to retain a quarter of the revenue from customs and excise duties, even if it does not spend it all, to be constitutional.

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The Federal Parliament consists of four parties. At the end of last month the numbers were: Ministerialist 15, Labor 27, Opposition (direct) 20, Opposition (corner) 12. The Labor party had up to that time supported the ministry, but early this month Mr. Fisher, the Labor leader, stated that it would do so no longer. Shortly afterwards the ministry was defeated on an unimportant point; Mr. Deakin resigned, and Mr. Fisher formed a Labor ministry.

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The land valuation bill which was introduced into the State parliament of Victoria in September (p. 560), never reached the Legislative Council. It was opposed by the members of the "country party" supporting the government, so the Premier, Sir Thomas Bent, who is an opportunist, dropped it, and reconstructed his ministry by leaving out some of the more liberal members and replacing them with members of the country party, thus making it more conservative.

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The Legislative Assembly (lower house) of Victoria has passed another woman suffrage bill.

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A general election has just been held in New Zealand. The returns are not yet complete, but it is certain that Sir Joseph Ward, who succeeded the late Mr. Seddon, has been returned with a good majority, although one of his ministers was defeated. Mr. George Fowlds, the single taxer and minister for Education, was re-elected.

The Prohibition party has made further gains, for no-license was carried in at least six new electorates, and reaffirmed in the six in which it is now in force.

ERNEST BRAY.

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The healthy eye ought to see all visible things, and not to say, I wish for green things; for this is the condition of a diseased eye. And the healthy hearing and smelling ought to be ready to perceive all that can be heard or smelled. And the healthy stomach ought to be with respect to all food just as the mill with respect to all things which it is formed to grind. And accordingly the healthy understanding ought to be prepared for everything which happens. But that which says, Let my dear children live, and let all men praise whatever I may do, is an eye which seeks for green things, or teeth which seek for soft things.—Marcus Aurelius Antoninus.