

to popular vote. Upon one proposition, calling for an issue of \$200,000 for the construction of a municipal electric lighting plant, 5,838 votes were cast—3,623 in the affirmative and 2,215 in the negative. Though the affirmative majority was large, the proposition failed because a two-thirds vote was required for its adoption—two-thirds of those voting. The other proposition called for a bond issue of \$2,250,000 for the alteration, repair, construction and completion of main trunk sewers for the city. Its adoption required a majority of the votes cast upon the question, and it was defeated by a negative vote of 4,139 against an affirmative vote of only 1,537.

As the registered vote of Columbus is 35,000, this small referendum vote of less than 6,000 is pointed at as evidence of the failure of the referendum. Dr. Gladden complained that "more than 12,000 people were at the grand circuit meeting the day before the election, and yet they could not find time to say whether they wanted nearly \$3,000,000 issued." He is consequently quoted widely as a referendumist cured of his hobby. The Columbus Press-Post more wisely asks that the blame be put where it belongs. "Nothing is wrong with the referendum principle," it says, "but everything is wrong with the people themselves." In another editorial it explains:

Instead of discrediting the system, the paucity of the vote at referendum elections emphasizes the necessity for education of the electorate. The latter has been so long used to voting for men that it would be surprising if it should at once display equal interest in voting for measures. Time is needed to adjust it to the change. Special as well as the usual general means must be employed to enlighten it as to the merits of the particular matters to be voted upon, and also as to what the initiative and referendum, in the broad sense, involves and signifies. Every election is to some extent educational, and there can be little doubt that if referendum elections were more frequent more interest would be taken in them. The interest would steadily grow, and in time the vote upon measures would be relative-

ly as great as it now is upon men. Under the initiative and referendum citizens must think for themselves. The party system has so long spared them this trouble that they cannot suddenly exercise the faculty. It is hard for one to at once do for himself what he has long permitted and even relied upon others to do for him. But the habit of thinking for one's self comes and grows with practice, and in time, under the initiative and referendum, the eagerness to vote would be greater than to-day. The eagerness would be at once the evidence and the result of the elevation of the electorate to a higher intellectual and moral level.

Those are thoughtful words well put.

How sound they are is evidenced by the fact that the majority of the citizens who were possessed of sufficient civic spirit to be as eager to vote upon measures as for men, voted with good judgment and to good purpose. They approved the municipal lighting proposition by a majority almost large enough to carry it, and they put an emphatic veto upon an ill-considered sewer bond proposition.

So far as the voters who voted are concerned, the Columbus referendum election seems to have been a pronounced success. As to the others, they were disfranchised for the only reasons that ought to disfranchise—namely, deficient civic spirit and intelligence; and by the only tribunal that ought to be allowed to pass upon those qualifications—namely, the voter himself. Here is a voting qualification and a method of testing it as far superior to the arbitrary educational and property tests as government by ballots is superior to government by bullets. Not only as a truly democratic reform, but also as a just and automatic regulation of suffrage qualifications, the referendum is proving its value.

Mayor Johnson's influence, especially upon questions of fiscal policy, has spread beyond his own state into the state of Pennsylvania in most encouraging fashion. At the Cambria county democratic convention on the 5th a platform was adopted, which, as reported by the Johnstown Democrat, follows a warm commendation of Mr.

Bryan's leadership with intelligently phrased statements of sound doctrine such as these:

The democratic party stands for equality of rights and demands equality of opportunities. It is opposed to the granting of special privileges to individuals or corporations. It, therefore, condemns the protective tariff and demands that taxation shall be for public revenue only. It condemns the trusts as a monstrous outgrowth of privilege and it proposes to destroy the trusts by the simple device of withdrawing from them the benefit of the laws under which they have established and are maintaining monopolies. All goods controlled by trusts should be placed upon the free list; and every legislative advantage now conferred upon aggregations of capital should be recovered by the people. Taxation should fall, not upon industry nor upon thrift, but upon special advantages; and it should be apportioned in accordance with the benefits conferred by the government. The democratic party, therefore, condemns the existing system and practice in Pennsylvania under which the great burden of taxation falls upon the labor and industry of the people while aggregated monopoly practically escapes.

Corporate monopoly is scandalously favored at the expense of the farmer, the merchant, the manufacturer and the artisan. The latter contribute proportionately a hundred or perhaps a thousand times as much to the cost of the government as the railway and other privileged interests and they receive infinitely less in return. The principle of local option in taxation should command the widest recognition. . . .

We should like to republish the whole of this admirable platform, but readers specially interested may doubtless procure it of the Johnstown Democrat, in which it appeared in full in the issue of the 6th. The democrats of Tioga county echo the demands of those of Cambria. Were the Democratic party of Pennsylvania to adopt the ringing platform of the Cambria county convention, and nominate upon it candidates whose sincerity would command public confidence, this year's campaign in Pennsylvania would produce novel and hopeful results in the politics of that state.

On several occasions when reporting South African news we have warned our readers that it was probably deficient and dubious, owing to

the British press censorship. Our inferences in this regard are now verified. More than one responsible correspondent of the British press has managed, after long delays, to get explanations of the censorship through to his paper. Among these is a correspondent of the London Telegraph. After describing the situation as one in which the British authorities "are rapidly getting abreast of the mischievous methods of Napoleonic bulletins," trusting to the ancient proverb "about giving 'the thing that is not so' the start of truth," which "is grasped," he says, "by the military mind," he shows that "the restriction cannot be to prevent news being taken advantage of by the enemy" but thinks rather "it looks as if the enemy were the British public, who were to be held in strings as much as possible and only permitted access to official bulletins." That is undoubtedly the motive for the censorship. It is to mislead Russians, not the enemies of Russia, that the Russian authorities maintain a censorship. It was to mislead Americans, not the Filipinos, that our own censorship was enforced at Manila with Russian severity and is still maintained in some degree. Of course it is to mislead the British public and not DeWet or Botha that the British invaders concoct false bulletins and suppress the facts about the baffling war it is waging in South Africa.

#### MR. BRYAN ON TRUSTS.

With the intellectual sincerity and genuine candor that characterize all his public utterances, Mr. Bryan replies in a Commoner editorial of August 2 to *The Public* of July 20, on the subject of trusts. We purpose reviewing his reply.

##### I.

In our article, we criticised Mr. Bryan for urging congressional regulation, insisting that this would promote federal centralization and is therefore undemocratic. The Commoner, in its reply, pleads the necessity for congressional action. It urges that—  
laws must deal with conditions, and under present conditions it is impos-

sible to deal with the trust question completely by means of state laws.

Explaining this assertion the Commoner says:

If a trust has absolute control of the production of the necessities of life, a law preventing the monopoly from doing business within a given state might bring great hardship upon the people by depriving them of the article controlled by the trust.

In further defense of Mr. Bryan's proposition that congress regulate corporations doing an interstate business, the Commoner argues that this mode of suppressing trusts would be supplementary to and not an encroachment upon state functions.

We cannot accept that conclusion. If such action as Mr. Bryan proposes were adopted, it seems to us that the inevitable outcome would be a national business corporation to which the old United States bank that Jefferson was opposed to and which excited Jackson's ire, would, for centralizing and oppressive purposes, be as a pygmy to a giant.

Democrats in the days of the United States bank saw no authority in the constitution pursuant to which congress might create a corporation. The supreme court, dominated by a federalist chief justice of transcendent intellectual gifts, discovered such authority as an "implied power." Shall the democracy of our time, led by a man who for loyalty to the democratic impulse is next in succession to Jefferson, Jackson and Lincoln—shall our democracy, so led, become so far a federalistic centralizer as to make itself responsible for the nationalization of gigantic corporations, controlling the industry of the country and leading on to a regime of governmental socialism? Mr. Bryan does not contemplate this, it is true; no one would shrink from it quicker than he. But it is the logical culmination of his proposed system of corporation-licensing by congress. From licenses to charters is an easy step.

That congress has the authority to adopt Mr. Bryan's plan, under the federalistic interpretation of the constitution which now prevails, we do not deny. Neither do we deny that congress has taken similar action heretofore. But that is unimportant.

The trust question is not a legal question. It is political and economic. Not what courts have decided, but what statesmen think, is the important thing. The whole tendency of which Mr. Bryan's proposition is part is centralizing and undemocratic. It should therefore be antagonized rather than fostered by democratic statesmen.

But the Commoner not only falls in line with this tendency; it sets up a principle of constitutional construction which would give the centralizing tendency a field for development as expansive as the anarchistic doctrine of necessity—a doctrine that proverbially knows no law. We quote:

The federal government was organized to give to the people of the nation that protection which must be secured by the joint action of the people of the several states, . . .

That is not, in our judgment, what the federal government was organized for. We believe the true democratic doctrine, in essential principle as well as historically, to be that the federal government was organized to execute the powers, and only those, which the people through the constitution, confer upon it. Its present powers might, indeed, be so enlarged by constitutional amendments as to comprise every power which the states, acting each for itself, cannot effectively exercise; or, for that matter, all the power they have, whether they might themselves exercise it effectively or not. But the question of constitutional amendment is not under discussion.

The political aspects, however, of the Commoner's reply to the *Public* are less vital than the economic considerations it raises.

##### II.

Preliminary to our observations on those economic points, let us state a fact which no regular reader of the *Public* needs to be reminded of. We fully agree with the Commoner that remedial laws must deal with conditions as they are. No social reform, however valuable in itself, can go much ahead of public sentiment. If it does so, it is revolutionary and its benefits are endangered by reaction. Social progress cannot proceed by