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Bryanism.

Santa Rosa, Calif., July 28th, 1908.

I regard the resolution of the late Denver convention in favor of the government guaranteeing deposits in the federal banks as the most dangerous and unDemocratic doctrine ever enunciated by any convention of a national party since the commencement of this government.

The Democratic party has historically stood for a strict construction of the Constitution of the U. S. and for as large an individualism for the States as may be consistent with the federal Constitution. Its essential element, above all others, finds expression in the opposition of Jefferson to the centralising doctrines of Hamilton. If that feature of Democratic doctrine is eliminated there is nothing distinctive left to keep it in touch with its historic faith, and though the organization ^{may} still pass ~~es~~ under the old name, it will be only a ghastly masquerade. It is the essence of a thing that gives it its place and meaning; not its name.

I would like for the advocates of this new doctrine to point out that part of the federal constitution that gives the federal government the power to carry out such a program. I assert that no such power exists. Were Congress to enact such a statute no doubt it would be declared unconstitutional by the present Supreme Court. But what would be held by that court after Bryan had appointed a majority of the Justices, as he certainly will do if elected, is not so sure. He would perhaps, in making such appointments, remember the threat he made in 1896 as to a reorganization of that court. He then declared that in such a contingency he would appoint such judges as would decide the way he wanted the decision. Those were not, of course,

his words, but that is the meaning of what he said. His admirers and supporters will not permit us to say that he has changed since then. They will not admit that so wise and great a man could make a mistake or change his opinion. Rather do we find them now defending what he said then.

Bryan and his followers point to the operation of a similar law in the new state of Oklahoma, and claim that it is working well there. That is purely a state affair. We must not become confused about the difference in doing this by a state and doing it by the national government. There is no danger perhaps, in a state entering into such an enterprise. The states have the power to do so. All the governmental power the federal government has is given to it by grant in the Constitution, and all other power of that nature is reserved by and to the states. The historic faith of the Democratic party is to prevent the general government absorbing the powers reserved to the states. This is wise and right; since in the diversified nature of the widely separated portions of this nation local self-government is necessary to the well being of the people. The vast majority of matters touched by law belongs to the states separately and should be there kept. What is good law in California may not be desirable law in Maine. The diversified industries and products make such local differences inevitable and local self-government desirable. The trouble is that when once that wise limitation of the constitution is passed in any case however desirable, who can say where and when it shall stop? The permanency of our institutions depends upon keeping this distinction clear. It is not whether it would be wiser in any particular instance that it be different. To preserve this line inviolate has been the life-object of the Democratic party up to a few years ago, when it began

to show signs of becoming a Socialistic party.

The experiment with this doctrine in Oklahoma has just begun. No one can say yet whether it will work well. It seems to do so so far, but we are not yet to the fruitage of the experiment. What has been done under it now is too little to be worth much. Even as a state experiment it is socialistic in the extreme, and undemocratic. Even if wise, it is undemocratic; and if one thinks it best to have it, all well and good, have it; but don't call it what it is not. Don't call it Democratic, for it is nothing of the kind. It is about as Democratic as it would be Republican for a Republican convention to declare in favor of secession.

But let us waive the question of constitutionality and consider the working of the scheme.

No bank does business on its capital; that is the business it does on its capital constitutes a small part of good banking business. Banks do most of their business on deposits. If the government should guarantee the deposits in the national banks, immediately all deposits would go to the national banks. No depositor would then be fool enough to deposit in a ~~commercial or~~ state bank. The ~~commercial and~~ state banks would thus be forced to either become national banks or go out of business, and this in short order. If all the banks should become national, under present laws each one to be on equality with others, would have to purchase national bonds and deposit the same with the national treasury as security for the 90 per cent of same for which such bank could issue bank notes to circulate as money. This would take more bonds than are outstanding. If there were sufficient bonds available, we would have a flood of bank-notes many times the face value of what ^{bonds are} ~~is~~ now outstanding. In fact we would have a flood of bank notes with all the disastrous results of wild-cat financiering. If the law should be changed eliminating the

bank-note feature, then there would be a shortage of circulating medium, to be supplied no doubt, under Bryan, with silver ^{at} 16 to 1. If we had bank-notes without bonds then the holders of the notes would have no security for the notes but the government, and the latter would have none at all. And again the wildcats would be loose.

But this is not all; nor even the worse. When every bank has been nationalised, the government as guarantor for its security would have to exercise supervision and control over the bank. This would call for another swarm of officials, and it would take a swarm to do all that supervising. These would all be administration appointees, and would have the keenest incentive to perpetuate the power and life of the administration. How far their political influence would extend into the banking business is not difficult to discover. They would have the power to make or mar every bank, for, banded together to the same end, each could and no doubt would sustain every other, and if the officials of any bank tried to disregard the political orders of the gang--they would be made to feel the lash in a way they could not disregard. The government would then be engaged in the banking business and would have control of all the banking of the entire country, and ~~we~~ ^{we} could not keep partizan politics out of it. Not only every bank official could be bulldozed, but the debtors of every bank would be also. As it is now if a bank debtor is unfairly used by his bank he can generally go to another bank that will treat him ^{fairly} ~~better~~. Competition and individualism protect him. But when all the banks are under the same thumb, the debtor can't get away nor can he find anywhere to go ~~to~~. He may be told that he must sustain the administration or he will be closed out. What can he do under such conditions? Let some Bryanite tell us.

The purse of a people is its life. Who owns the purse owns the liberty of all. This is what Bryan says when he howls against concentrated wealth. He is right in much of that howl. But this remedy is no remedy at all. It is a more certain slavery. This plan of so-called relief is but another and heavier shackle but thinly disguised with the pretense of relief. How much more centralized could the government be than with such a doctrine brought to realisation? Could any Socialist ask for more? Would it not be Paternalism run mad? If not, kindly show why not.

It will not do to reply that no administration would thus take advantage of the people. Every bad man, every average man, always has and always will exercise all the power over his fellow-men he can; almost every good man will do the same. It seems to be the law of human life. Why we need not ask; to rail at it is foolish. It does no good. Take a man like Roosevelt. He wants to do right. But he is so ~~constructed~~ ^{instilled} that he cannot conceive that he is in error about anything. Such a man might conceive it the ^{only} salvation of the country that he succeed himself indefinitely ---to become the Diaz of this nation. With the best of intentions he might use this vast power that no class nor all men could withstand. The encroachment of the federal government upon all power and in every direction has been steady for many years. It is insidious, continual and never sleeps. Do you suppose it would not draw to the administration all the power it could with every instrumentality in its grasp? How can any Democrat deny this or even doubt it?

This would not follow if the true spirit of such an arrangement should be always observed. That is the theory of the thing. But old human nature ^{would be} ~~is~~ a factor in the equation ~~as~~ ^{in the} operated ~~in~~. It will not do to give any man or set of men ever born the power to perpetuate their own rule. There was but one Washington, and there may not be

another. It will not do to count on his like again. We will honor such a man when he comes and proves that he is ^{such}. But we should trust no man to be like Washington till we know ^{his} and then that man will be dead. That one thing makes Washington loom up above all men of all peoples and all times like a Colossus among pigmies. His was the truest greatness of all ages.

Men have, during all the ages of which we have accounts, trusted men and classes, only to find in oppression, in ruin and blood-shed, that none ^{should} ~~can~~ be trusted with the power to perpetuate their own rule. If one can show an instance in all history where it has been otherwise, except in the case of that truly great American, he will do what I confess I am unable to find. Even the church, trying to follow conscientiously the example of the meek and lowly One, has never failed to oppress when it had the power. It has applied the thumb-screw and the faggot to force belief. It did that honestly and with the best of intentions. But the act was wrong nevertheless. The intention was quite immaterial to the fellow who owned the thumbs or who was roasted. It was a knowledge of all this that caused some wise man to say that eternal vigilance ^{is} ~~was~~ the price of liberty. And such experiences lead us to add that it also inspired the further remark that hell was paved with good intentions.

That doctrine is pure Socialism. Tom Johnson was honest and saw the right when he declared at Denver that the name of the modern Democratic party should be changed to "Radical". That is what it is. It is a radical departure from the old doctrines, the historic doctrines. Up to a few years ago it was ever the conservative party of the nation. Nor is there any reason now apparent why it should be radical and unconservative. That is, unless it has changed its nature, unless it now seeks what it has heretofore fought as the enemy of

American liberty. The admirer of Bryan can not, with any respect for the history of the past few weeks, affirm that he would not be the kind of a man to use all that power to enforce his own ideas of what should be. He rode the Denver convention with whip and spur just where and at what pace he desired. He is a boss of the bosses. His whole career shows this. Just name the Democrat who has ever done the like before. He never lived. This is perhaps because the historic faith and spirit neither ^{heard} ~~used~~ such men nor would submit for a moment to such methods.

This is not all. The burden of Bryan's song has always been that special privilege should not be allowed and that all men should stand with equality before the law. But how does he apply this right rule? By standing in with Gompers in a demand for special privileges for a class, privilege to defy the right; to riot and outrage and forbid with force the right of other men to work when and where they wish. The demands of Gompers, made to both conventions, is the rawest demand for special privilege that has ever darkened the story of the American people. Gompers says it is "the right to live". Is the right to burn and deny the right of property and of individual freedom to others an essential part of "the right to live"? If so then equal rights do not exist. What Gompers demands is the right to his class in excess of what others have, to force by lawless methods, by mob methods and intimidation, to rule and control the whole country. Talk of trusts! The most dangerous trust today is the labor trust when headed by a Gompers. We have seen his kind throwing bricks at women and children for doing what they had a right under the law to do. We have seen them by force that stopped not short of ~~denying~~ ^{Murder} denying to citizens, with equal rights, ~~forbidding them~~ the opportunity to earn a living by lawful toil. We have seen them banded

together by means of the infamous boycott trying to destroy the property of men who had never done them a wrong, simply and alone because they would not run their business as the Gompersites chose they should. We have seen them inducting into American life the rule of the mob. Those men do not seem able to see that mob-rule that is theirs today may be and surely will be the rule of another tomorrow, and they then be defenseless against it. They seem unable to see that such rule destroys their liberties; that when liberty of any class is destroyed the liberty of all classes is likewise and by the same act also destroyed. Shall such ruthless un-American ideas prevail in this land? You need not tell me Bryan does not know better. He does know better, but he is drunk with the lust for votes. He would do anything to win. I say this advisedly. Any one who would thus stand in with Gompers in this demand and do so for votes as he does, would do anything for votes.

James W. Oates.