

# AN APPEAL FOR A NATIONAL REFORM PARTY.

Extract from a paper read before the "National Reform Party" Conference, Chicago, Jan. 15th, 1889,—with notes.

"Leaders of Thought, ought ye not to consider if these things be so."

The undersigned, who was appointed one of a committee of appeal, by the late Reform Conference of Chicago, hereby asks your careful perusal of the following, as some of the considerations which deserve your earnest thought. We believe there has never been a time in the history of this country when there was so strong a feeling among the masses of people that reform in political affairs is most pressing needed; when so many thoughtful men were dissatisfied with their political party associations, and wishing for a party equal to reforming the great abuses of this time

We believe the greatly needed reforms of the time can never be put in force except by a new "*National Reform Party*," whose AIM, END, and GLORY shall be to work out the urgently needed reforms and correct the abuses of this day.

We believe that if by miraculous power all present political parties were swept from existence and memory, the people would at once divide into two great parties: one composed of all the best elements, intent on lifting our government to a higher moral plane than ever before, and to more fully carry out the hopes of our fathers for a "government of the people, and for the people;" the other party — alas, that there must be such — composed of only those who would oppose moral reform, and seek only for their selfish ends, at the expense of the many.

Honest, earnest men have been hoping that some of the most pressing reforms would be acted upon by one of the existing parties; but no such step seems likely to be taken by either party. Strife and self-seeking occupy the whole attention of the powerful *Party Leaders and press of the day*, while the moral abuses of the time grow worse and the needs and the oppression of the common people are ignored. No common ground for union of action seems possible within either of the old parties. [NOTE 1]

*The time seems fully ripe for the formation of a great National Reform Party, loyal Southern Democrats and*

*Northern Republicans, Farmers' Alliance and Union Labor men, Knights of Labor, Prohibitionists, Finance Reformers, Civil Service Reformers and Woman's Christian Temperance Unions* can meet on the common ground of the people's need, and with a united mighty effort purify our political system, and bring about legislation that shall bring relief to the producing classes of people and destroy that great monopoly of sin and disgrace — the Liquor Traffic. When these do unite they can sweep the country, and control the Nation. The selfish oppressive power of the great monopolistic class has come to such a tyrannical position in this country, and has had control of legislation so long, with the aid of the saloon, that nothing but a complete revolution can ever save the producing classes from ultimate serfdom and moral degradation. This revolution will surely come, either peaceably through a reform party and the ballot box, or at last in blood and tears, like a French Revolution. The American people will never submit to become serfs, or be overpowered by a traffic so inhuman.

The great mass of our people have a common interest. Every one of the honest, earnest workers for reform are wonderfully unanimous as to the greatest of needed reforms and are equally unanimous in the knowledge that the whole legislation of the past twenty-five years has been altogether in the interest of the wealthy and office-holding class, and working injustice and injury to the producing and laboring classes.

How can this help but be, when our Congress is almost wholly made up of millionaires and monopolists and their attorneys, while the great commercial, mechanical, agricultural and laboring class are almost wholly unrepresented — the very class that most needs the protection and help from government?

There is to-day nothing in the way of a great effort that shall reunite all sections and all the present active parties for reform with all the best elements of both old parties in one grand party of reform. *Such a party by force of*

*original aim, and from the very nature of its organization, will inevitably seek its glory and and its success in the thorough manner in which it will carry forward the great National reforms so much desired. A party coming from the uprising of the people, working for the people, can only result in the people's good.*

The immortal Lincoln, and other noble men of his time, foresaw and forewarned against the very abuses of this day. They saw the danger of a corrupt political system and a divided people; of a class of wealth, oppressing and preying upon the laboring and producing classes, just as we find it to-day.

It is apparent to every thinking mind that if the drift of the wealth of the nation into the hands of the few, continues as rapidly another fifty years, we shall be in the condition of Ireland, with the whole land in the hands of a few, while the masses of the people will become but a poverty stricken class of serfs. [NOTE 2]

The rapid destruction of the great class of small dealers and small manufactures during the past generation, the lack of prosperity among small farmers, the degradation of so many thousands by the drink evil, already betokens the extinction of the great prosperous moral middle class on which the greatness of any nation depends. During the past generation in this country, wealth has passed more rapidly into the hands of a few families, individuals and corporations, than in any other nation. This tendency can never be reformed except by the united vote of all this class with the good and humane of the wealthy class. There is no time to lose to save our land from a despotism worse than slavery.

One of the wisest of our labor reformers, (Powderly), has truly said that one of "*the most tyrannical and dangerous of monopolies is the organized liquor traffic, which robs labor, vitiates politics, and corrupts the very foundations of our popular government, wastes in worse than useless ruin our economical system, and murders more victims than war and pestilence.*"

*The country is ripe for this reform, and if it could be submitted to the people, untrammelled by partisan influence, and alone, it would be at once stamped from existence and put away. On this reform there is wonderful unanimity of opinion.*

We appeal to those who have given much thought to labor reform, finance reform, to civil service reform, to study carefully this great question, and the effects on government of this great moral, political and economic evil, and see if there can be any hope of success for any other reform, while this monster pollutes our politics, wastes more money than all our tariffs, and all our cost for bread, kills and wounds more men than war, defies all lawful control, and demands control of all political action. This monster evil has of late become more dangerous to our national life by adding to its ill-gotten wealth, millions of British gold, from that land where government is more corrupted and controlled by the money power, than any other civilized nation.

The need of a purified ballot cannot be overstated. A mass of ignorant voters in the South, and of newly arrived aliens in the North, who cannot read our laws, and know nothing of our institutions, are some of the perils of the day, and naturally lead to corruption and defiance of law and social order, while the exclusion of the moral and intelligent mother element is a wrong that hinders the reforms of the worst moral abuses in our political system.

On the question of Tariffs the vast majority of producers are agreed that a radical modification of the present war tariff should be brought about, while there are but few who have yet thought that entire free trade is best for this country. [NOTE 3]

The demand of labor for a better share in the benefits of modern progress in production, for shorter hours of labor, for a share of the profits of the combined product of labor and capital\* (by the encouragement of the humane system of co-operation), for arbitration to take the place of strikes, lockouts and litigation, are some of the reforms urgently demanded by a reform party, "of the people and for the people." [\*NOTE 4]

The demand for financial reform is apparant to all who think how rapid has been the growth of vast estates, nearly equaling in amount controlled by one family\* the whole banking capital of the country; while the pressure of poverty and dissipation has made an army of tramps, the most pitiful product of the abuses of our financial and industrial system, [\*NOTE 5]

It may well be a matter of profound study to all reformers in the interest of the producing classes, why the currency of this country should be contracted to less than one-third the amount per capita that France has found necessary for the prosperity of her industrial classes.

It is a fact known to all, that producers have seen but scant prosperity since 1873,\* when the currency was contracted, and silver demonetized through the influence of the scheming sharpers of Wall street and through the same selfish interest the currency has since been kept below one-half the natural amount needed for our vastly enlarging business. It needs no philosopher's wisdom to perceive that if money is made unnaturally scarce for the needs of the people it will become of higher value, and labor products which it purchases will be correspondingly depressed in price. Hence the influence of the vast banking power of Europe\* to demonetize silver, and contract the currency, and thus control more fully, in their own selfish interest, the products and commerce of the world.\* [\*NOTE 6]

Surely the financial system of our free people needs to be reformed in the interest of the common people, and not controlled by the agents of the money power of despotic Europe, or by their imitators in this country.

The evils which have arisen in older nations from the ownership of vast tracts of land by single individuals\* are sufficient warning to guard against a like abuse in this country, and demand the earnest study of all humane men and the power of national law to keep our precious gift of wonderfully productive soil for the use of the vast millions of people\* who are so soon to need every acre for their sustenance. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof," and He has given it for the use and benefit of all his children, not for the selfish greed of the few.

The possibility that our American farmers may be reduced to a poverty-stricken class of tenantry, is a danger worthy of revolution. [\*NOTE 7]

A reform party is perhaps nowhere more needed than to correct the shameful corruption of our civil service. For the past sixty years the demoralizing sentiment has been held by both dominant parties that "To the victor belongs the spoils," till party strife has become a mad scramble for place, and nearly every portion of Government service has been demoralized by this baneful sentiment.

When an honest civil service reform is put in force, the powers of the Gov-

ernment\* may well serve the people in many ways, as effectually as it now does in the Postal service. On this great question there is wonderful accord among the best men of all parties, and no reform is more hated by professional politicians. [\*NOTE 8]

In the essential principles of the needs and interests of the common people on all these great questions, there is no wide variation of opinion. And there can be nothing to hinder the union of the vast moral, intelligent, middle or producing classes of this land in a mass convention during the present year when a platform of principles and purposes can be formulated on which every man who loves the best interests of his country, more than he loves his party, can stand, and a party can be formed that shall control this country in the highest interests of the common people for the next generation, until this nation shall be indeed all its founders hoped for it. A nation where the principles of the universal brotherhood of man shall be more fully exemplified than ever before among the nations of the earth.

The best elements of American citizenship united in one party can realize such government. The time is at hand for such a party.\* An irrepressible conflict is upon us which never can be put down, and never can be settled, until settled on principles of right and equity to the great moral and producing elements of the country, who are now awake and are demanding these radical reforms.

Every generation has its great questions to grapple, its abuses to reform, to re-adjust itself to new conditions and the higher demands of human progress. No generation ever had a plainer path of duty or perhaps a more difficult problem than to secure the industrial, moral and financial reforms imperatively demanded by the present. If these reforms are carried out from the highest motives of humanity the achievements of this generation may rank in history with our forefathers who secured independence, and our fathers who took from our flag the dishonor of slavery.

#### NOTES.

\*1--The intense partisan spirit of today, led on by a rabid partisan press, is one of the worst dangers of our political system.

A press that will denounce every act and maliciously blacken the motive of every adherant of an opposite party is a slur upon our civilization. Nothing is more to be desired than an enlarged independent press, and a large class of independent voters, who will discuss and act upon great public questions of

merits, and not from the standard of party only. The man who says "I go with my party, any way" is a craven and not worthy the birthright of a sovereign citizenship.

So long as the two old parties are dominant just so long will the antagonisms of the past be kept alive and sectional strife take the place of real reform.

Northern Republicans will not become Democrats, no matter what the platform; nor will southern Democrats become Republicans. This is self-evident.

Nor is this any new case of a need for a new party organization. Chase was an anti-slavery democrat, while Sumner was a whig. They could not have found common ground except through a new party, where the dominant ideas of each found expression, free from the mutual antagonisms of the old parties.

So today the better elements north and south can never work together for present reform until a new party is formed.

The sage advice of Garfield to the class of young men is now more emphatic than ever before. He said: "Do not pitch your political tent in the cemetery of dead issues"

Partisan strife in the press has come to such an extreme as to be an actual detriment to the intelligence of the people.

The great questions of public interest are treated as an unscrupulous attorney treats the facts and equities of the opposing side, by all the slurs, false colorings and misrepresentations as the exigency of party strife requires.

In this way the facts of the great questions of finance, temperance, tariff and the franchise have been so placed before the people as to mystify, by conflicting statements and false arguments till it has become a common expression "we cannot believe any statements in the papers."

Those who blindly follow the teachings of the partisan press, on either side, are as incapable of an intelligent opinion as the juryman who wished to decide the case immediately on hearing the first attorney's plea.

We boldly reaffirm the statement that the partisan press has come to be a detriment to the intelligence of the people.

Washington declared that any party long in power will become corrupt.

A frequent organization of parties on new issues is the only hope of keeping our politics from remediless corruption.

See article on "Owners of Wealth in U.S." by Shearman, in January

"Forum," showing that one-half the estimated wealth of the nation is already concentrated in less than 25,000 owners' hands.

\*3—The "tariff" is confessedly the one great question in political economy which admits of plausible argument on both sides; so has been the most convenient "man of straw" for political parties to set up and belabor for or against, and has been most used to distract the attention of the people from more important subjects.

From 1840 to 1860 it was the hobby to cry up and cry down to keep the people from uniting to destroy slavery in a legal way. From 1870 to 1880 it was used to throw dust in the eyes of the people and keep them from seeing that a corrupt course of finance had brought the nation to a state of financial depression unprecedented in severity. At the present time it is the "Will-o-the-wisp" that is being used to distract the attention and prevent union of action to destroy the horrors and waste of the Liquor Traffic and the oppression of monopolistic greed.

The "tariff" is the politicians' "man Friday," ever at hand and ready to be used for personal purposes, with no real purpose by either party to arrange it for the "best good to the greatest number." How long will the masses strain at this gnat while swallowing the camel of greater evils?

The question of "Free Trade" is not before the country, only as a false issue raised by the partisan press. Probably not 10 per cent. of any party believe in actual Free Trade, while a majority of all producers believe in a very radical reduction in the present extreme or war tariff, that is only kept up by the most persistent lobbying of the monopolies it has fostered.

\*4—The most careful students of political economy have very unanimously come to the conclusion that with modern processes the present demand for all things can be supplied by the present working force with but four to six hours labor per working day and that by study to this end, even this can be reduced. Yet we find as bitter opposition to the appeal of labor for an eight-hour working day as there was only a generation ago to the Earl of Shaftsbury's factory law in England for a ten-hour day.

We also find corporate greed more and more intruding on the one day of rest in seven, which skeptic and christian alike deem necessary for the welfare of labor, and thousands under this tyranny dare not even express a protest

from fear of losing the position which alone keeps their families from want. Surely the demand of labor for humane consideration at the law making power demands a party of reform.

\*5—How vastly more to the prosperity and welfare of the nation if the wealth of the Vanderbilts had been spread among 100,000 families—giving \$4,000 to each family—rather than \$400,000,000 controlled by a single family; and so of all the other colossal fortunes gotten by "legal robbery" and used to depress and degrade the masses of the people.

\*6—The fact is scarcely ever alluded to by the partisan press of either party that the enormous contraction of the currency and demonetizing of silver was opposed by the best men of both parties, but was brought about by the most shameful lobbying ever known. The warning protests of Wilson, Garfield, Thad Stevens, Greeley, Peter Cooper and others of the time read like the history of to-day. They said ruin and disaster would be the result, and it has been to the commercial and producing classes.

It has been forgotten by many that the circulating medium was contracted from about \$50.00 per capita to less than \$15.00 from '66 to '73; (and has been contracted \$200,000,000 since '82 by the action of the National Banks.) When the natural increase of population and commerce would require as great an expansion to be healthful, it is a very pertinent inquiry in whose interest all this financial manipulation has been carried on, and at whose instigation. It surely has not been done at the request of the commercial, or manufacturing, or agricultural or laboring classes, nor in their interest. Who, then, but the crafty schemers of Wall street and their pliant tools in Congress?

Senator Wilson once said he felt tath he stood for the interests of the people assailed by a merciless horde of Shylocks. Garfield said: "WHO CONTROLS THE VOLUME OF CURRENCY CONTROLS THE PROSPERITY OF THE COUNTRY." Surely this is a power too great to be left in the hands of a few men to control in their own selfish interest. Thad Stevens said: "The proposed contraction of the currency and destruction of silver as money will be a calamity equal to another war." So it proved.

The writer will be very grateful for any plausible theory why August Belmont left his own party and supported Grant in '72, unless for a personal selfish motive. Belmont is the American



agent for the Rothschilds, a more autocratic, tyrannical power than any monarchy of Europe, with less sympathy for the rights of the common people than the Czar of Russia. At that time the banking interest gained a control over the financial policy of this government and over party leaders and press that has moulded public opinion, and brought about legislation in its own interest and against the interests of the people. We are now but just reaching the natural results of that craftily laid scheme, and just the results that good men of both parties foretold.

Instead of destroying the millions of greenbacks and demonetizing silver, if the interests of the people had been protected instead of the interests of Wall street, resumption might have been brought about by coinage of silver, and the natural amount of currency per capita kept in the hands of the people; prosperity and profit would have been instead of panic and depression since '73. But the same crafty influence was potent which had, only a few years before, secured the demonetizing of gold in Europe, fearing the great influx from California and Australia was to be so great it could not be controlled by the great bankers, who are the powers behind the thrones of Europe, and also are quietly seeking the power of imperialism over the wealth of this country, and likely to get it. Wall street has had control of the financial policy of our Treasury Department since that time, and to-day dictates to both old parties.

\*7—To those who decline to believe that labor and producers are in danger from the machinations of capital, we beg to study in the light of recent history, the suggestions of the notorious "Bankers' Circular," "That capital can better secure the profits of labor under freedom than under slavery by controlling the volumn of currency."

Or the implied threat of the popular after dinner orator, in his statement that "fifty men have it in their power to stop every wheel of industry and communication in the country." If so, how long before ten men or five can dictate terms to the nation?

Or study that more infamous suggestion of the organ of Wall Street, "That the American farmer may as well be content to let capital own the land, and submit to a system of tenantry." Thus already are the minions of the money power looking forward to the time when they may have in this land the infamy of absentee landlordism and a servile tenantry, a la Ireland.

X This danger was not a trifle to Lincoln who foresaw its first indications in his last days.

In California and in other portions of our country the ownership of vast estates of land by single individuals has come to be a great injury to the interests of the masses. Two or three men practically control the State of California. As soon as the immense wealth in few hands begins to purchase and control large estates of land, this evil will become unbearable unless controlled, and the welfare of the tillers of the soil protected by law. In England, Scotland and Ireland it is not unusual for single families to own a whole county or more of land. From large portions of these huge estates the peasantry have been driven away to make way for deer parks and shooting grounds. In all these great holdings the tillers of the soil are reduced to a hopeless state of tenantry as degrading as slavery. Under the present conditions in this country, within the next few years millions of acres of land will pass into the hands of money monopolists and thousands of American farmers will be reduced to tenants—the first step towards serfdom—unless controlled by very radical legislation.

One of the first steps in class legislation was the enormous and unnecessary benefits given the National Banks, which has taken hundreds of millions of dollars from the producing classes, and helped build up a money power and the spirit of monopoly that is now master of the nation and which is in danger of eventually extinguishing the great middle class of independant producers, which has been the strength and glory of this republic.

A great cry has been raised against a new party composed largely of the farming and laboring classes, that if successful they will resort to "Class Legislation for their own benefit. As if class legislation of the most iniquitous kind had not held sway for the last twenty-five years in favor of money monopoly and the liquor traffic, and against producers and the moral welfare of the people.

It will require long study and much special legislation to get back to any approximate justice to these most essential interests. It is a thousand fold safer and better for legislation to favor the classes whose labor produces our wealth than to discriminate in favor of the wealth absorbing class, whose shrewdness will always enable them to secure more than their just proportion of the world's wealth. The prosperity

and moral welfare of the great middle class is the hope and glory of the nation. The enormous accumulations of the money power is one of this republic's most immanent dangers. While the inhuman LIQUOR TRAFFIC securely entrenched in partnership with our national treasury—government departments used to help extend its curse world wide, while its chief organ, published under the very shadow of the Capitol, complacently says: "The present administration has done all we could ask to favor the traffic," is an infamy and a danger inexpressable.

Where shall we land if the drift of the last years be not turned back by an uprising of the great moral and producing class, and that very soon, or the graphic picture of "Caesars Column" will yet be the reality of the coming century.

Let no alarm be entertained in regard to class legislation born of a revolution against present conditions. Never yet in the history of the world has any nation been injured or destroyed by legislation in favor of its laboring, producing, or moral elements. But the path of history is thickly strewn with the wrecks of nations gone to ruin through the corruptions of wealth in the hands the few.

All the fears of "class legislation" in favor of the prosperity and moral welfare of the masses is but the shadowy mirage of nothingness glimmering in a perverted vision.

\*8—If the government had control of the telegraph service we could have a better service at less than one-fifth the present cost. So of Postal Savings Banks, both of which have proved of great value to the people of other countries, and would have been adopted here but for the lobbying power of monopolists.

\*9—It is notorious that under the existing degradation of our civil service that the time and attention for the first year of every administration, state and national, is almost wholly occupied by the clamor for favors, by the horde of office seekers. And the claims for office are not pressed on account of fitness for the position; but for what they have done or can do for the party. Every man elected to an office of any influence must often compromise his judgement by recommending to place those who are not adapted to its duties, or risk losing his prestige in his party. Thus is the whole system, a damage to our civil service and an irreparable injury is being done to popular government.

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