

DEMOCRATS DOUBT BRYAN'S NEW PLAN

Government Ownership Plank Causes Them to Stop and Think.

MANY SPEAK AGAINST IT

Few Assent, While Majority Criticize the Leader's Announcement, Calling It "Raising Merry Hades," Etc.

Portland Democrats, too, are split on Government ownership and control of the railroads of the country, as proposed by W. J. Bryan in his speech at Madison-square Garden. A few agree with him that this step offers the solution of the problem. Others believe that while the curbing of the giants by the Government is advisable, the ownership and operation of the rail transportation lines would be wholly impracticable. The manifest difficulties of taking over the railroads of the country first present themselves to those who give the opinion on the subject, and the difficulty of keeping political favoritism and influence out of the service in case the Government should own the railroads is manifest to many.

That the opinion of Mr. Bryan on the railroad question is as yet only his own personal view, and is by no means Democratic doctrine or of necessity a plank in the 1908 platform, is the contention of others. Many hold to the opinion, however, that railroad regulation, and possibly Government ownership, will be the leading issue of the coming campaign. Between now and then all who were interviewed expect to hear the subject thrashed out and hope to arrive at more careful conclusions in the process.

Portland Democrats are interested in the subject and discuss it freely. There is no consensus of opinion, but many have very determined views on the matter nevertheless.

"Impractical but likely to prove popular," says Governor Chamberlain in dissecting Bryan's latest speech.

"The rate bill, if effective, will probably remove the Government ownership question from politics," says Senator Gearin. C. E. S. Wood does not favor Government ownership. "I believe in Mr. Bryan but not in his latest theory," is the opinion of Colonel Wood.

"Mr. Bryan's opinions on the railroad question do not constitute advocacy of the matter as yet," says Thomas G. Greene.

"Mr. Bryan is right," says Judge Thomas O'Day.

"The idea is ridiculous," is the opinion of A. D. Charlton, assistant general passenger agent for the Northern Pacific.

"I am opposed to Government ownership," says Jefferson Meyer. "Bryan has raised merry Hades," is Lafe Pence's quaint comment.

Mayor Lane is non-committal.

"I am not prepared to say that there should be a wholesale taking over of railroads," is R. W. Montague's contribution.

"Bryan is a little bit in advance of the times," suggests John Lamont.

"It looks to me," quoth John Montag, "as if Bryan were playing to the galleries."

"The railroad men are competent, let them operate the railroads," is H. C. Bowers' terse opinion of Government ownership.

Zera Snow says Government ownership is a chimera and that Mr. Bryan will some day find it out.

Pat Powers wants to find out first whether Bryan is Democratic nominee. If he is, Mr. Powers will favor Government ownership.

W. H. Grinnell is skeptical, George H. Thomas is sympathetic, Frank A. Spencer is opposed, and Dr. Dav. Rafferty favorable to the Government ownership idea.

The full text of the interviews follows:

Governor Gives Opinion.

Governor Chamberlain—I am not entirely prepared to answer the question of the National ownership and control of trunk lines and the state control of branch lines of railway. I think our system of federal and state governments the vastness of our territory, and the great mileage of our railroads all combined make this plan impracticable. There are thousands of people in this country, however, who are so thoroughly disgusted with the insolence and arrogance of the great railway corporations and the disposition of the managers to ignore all laws of railway regulation, that they are apt to fall in with the suggestion of Mr. Bryan, even though they differ from him as to the advisability of the scheme. Because of this feeling that is abroad, I do not agree with the so-called conservative element that the chances of nomination and election will be particularly endangered. Conditions in Germany and in Japan with reference to the government ownership of railroads cannot, it seems to me, be safely adopted as a precedent for our guidance. Unless the great railway systems of this country show a disposition in the near future to obey the laws, to stop all disposition to discriminate between shippers and give the shippers facilities to which they are entitled, I am inclined to believe the Government ownership and control of the railroads will be adopted by the great mass of people as a remedy for the existing evils.

John M. Gearin, United States Senator—Mr. Bryan's views on the Government ownership of the railroads are his own views. I do not consider that his advocacy is intended to include the Democratic platform. I think that if the present rate bill proves effective the question of Government ownership of railroads will be eliminated from politics altogether. Has he made a mistake? That's rather a hard question to answer. As a matter of fact I do not know much about that and am hardly prepared to make an answer.

Jefferson Meyer—I have not read Mr. Bryan's address. I am opposed to Government ownership of the railroads if there is any other means of handling them.

Lafe Pence—I think Mr. Bryan has raised merry Hades. We Democrats have a faculty of doing it regularly in Presidential years, but this year we varied the monotony by upsetting things in an off year. Am I a Democrat? Well, I am a good Roosevelt Democrat.

Thomas O'Day—I support Bryan in his advocacy of Government ownership of the railroads. In my opinion, if he desires the Presidential nomination he will get it. He has not made a mistake; on the contrary, his utterances have been frank and in line with the prevailing Democratic sentiment. Mr. Bryan advocates the election of United States Senators by the people. I think this right. The railroads have reached such a state that, in my opinion, the only effective way to handle them is by Government ownership. As to the effect of this utterance, it should be kept in mind that his decision on Government ownership of the

railroads are merely his own views. He has not undertaken to make a platform, but leaves that to the National Democratic convention.

Believes in Man, but Not His Theory.

C. E. S. Wood—Do I believe in Mr. Bryan's theory of Government ownership of railroads? No—but I believe in Mr. Bryan. The cause he represents so earnestly is more important than any particular theory. I do not believe in Government ownership of anything—in the sense of Government management.

But I do believe in the Government ownership of the great monopolies or highways in the sense that the private owners must operate them as trustees for the people or be thrown out by the people and others put in their place. That is to say the real power or basic power rests with the people to turn the railroads over to a new set of managers (owners) every month if the new managers show they can do better by the people than the old ones can. So the real power rests with the people, and the people and managers shall continue to own and manage or to turn them out if they violate these terms—but I think the actual management should not be a Government function. It is not any part of Government except under the socialist theory. I have great respect for Socialists as earnest, honest men aiming at a real evil but I am myself an Anarchist rather than a Socialist. Government ownership and management is Socialistic but I would take even that experiment rather than have the wealth of all industries absorbed by the railroads. The evil is plain and any effort at remedy is better than no effort—for out of effort will gradually grow a new system. To my mind Government ownership and management means a great political force and poor results. The postoffice is not in a better manner as Mr. Bryan says. I think the law of Nature is free play—but with tax-laws, tariff-laws, franchise-laws, etc., we destroy freedom and give favors to a few. The world has never seen any approach to economic freedom in anything. Land, labor, money—that is anything, I do not believe Mr. Bryan has made a political mistake because agitation of any one particular idea is not so important as the cause he champions—the cause of humanity—that men may eat a little more of the bread they earn. That the look of the dumb brute may get out of the eyes of the downtrodden masses—down trodden not of evil minded men, but by laws on the statute books giving power and privilege to a few.

John Lamont—It is not a question that I am prepared to answer. I think, though, that he is a little in advance of the times. Municipal ownership of public utilities is well enough, but for the Government to assume the responsibility of owning all the railroads in such a radical manner as Mr. Bryan proposes, is too sharp a change.

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but if persisted in is bound in time to show results.

Of course, society, with the big "S," is spending its Summer out of town. A large part of society has not yet returned, but those who are here have begun to figure on Winter gaiety. At present there is almost none of what are known as "smart set" affairs. Some one gives an occasional tea, lots of people get married, but there is none of that gaiety which delights the society editor in season.

To Be Poor is a Fad. It is a fad to be poor. If one receives an invitation to dinner, he should adorn himself in nothing more elaborate than a business suit. If he calls in the afternoon or evening, the same costume will do. The high hat has also disappeared since the fire. It is not because they were all burned, but rather because it is an index of affluence, which is regarded as a sort of sin at the present time.

A gentleman with a high hat on Fillmore street last Friday evening was conspicuous enough to draw