

MANIFESTO.

The Omaha Ordinance For the Purification of Politics.

To the Populists of Kansas:

GREETING:—We, the central committee of the People's party of Shawnee county, earnestly desire to call the attention of the rank and file of the People's party of the state of Kansas, as well as the attention of every local and county committee of the party to certain matters of immediate and vital importance which are essential to the success of the reforms which the People's party was organized to secure.

It is a deplorable fact that the wealth producing millions of our country are bound hand and foot by class legislation, and that every department of government, state and national, is administered in the interest of organized greed and for the oppression of the people.

This is the logical result of entrusting the administration of public affairs to political parties which are only mere machines for getting office, and intent only upon securing for the managers all the spoils that can be secured by official power and patronage. Under our political system, government is just what it has been made by the dominant political parties into which the people have been divided. Hence it follows as a logical sequence that if we would reform the government, we must first reform the political machinery of the parties by which it is administered.

We can never hope to have an honest government of the people, by the people and for the people, until we have an honest political party controlled exclusively by the people, to administer public affairs. And so long as human nature remains as it is, we can never have such a political party until we exclude from all voice and vote in its management, all who presumably have any political axe to grind, and hence care more for the spoils than they do for the interests of the great mass of people who have no such objects in view.

It was to secure the organization of such a party of the people as this, that we have severed our connection with the old parties of the politicians. Had we been content with platform promises of certain measures of reform, there would have been no need of a new party. Politicians always promise anything which seems necessary to secure the votes of the people. But we have learned by sad experience that such promises amount to nothing as long as self-seeking politicians control the party machinery. It was to prevent the adoption of this fatal error by the People's party, that the convention at Omaha adopted an ordinance as a fundamental law for its government which excludes office holders and all who hold positions of profit, trust and emolument in the public service from the conventions of the party. The vital importance of this law to the preservation and perpetuation of this party of the people, in its purity as a party of reform has been strangely underestimated. Every promise made by the Omaha platform as to what measures of reform we would carry out when we came into power has been continually kept before the people, while this fundamental law of party government, which guarantees that these promises shall be kept in spirit and in truth has been strangely lost sight of, instead of being made prominent as it should have been.

The following is the ordinance as resurrected and sent to the reform press by the chairman of the national committee of the People's party on the 27th of January last. Read it carefully and bear in mind the fact that if we, the people who have no political axes to

grind, cannot manage the affairs of a political party it will be useless for us to attempt to incorporate our will into law for the management of all the affairs of government:

We, the People's party, at the outset to secure permanent control of the party organization unaffected by the interest of those in public service, do hereby, in national convention assembled at Omaha, on this 4th of July, 1892, establish this ordinance as the fundamental law of the party organization, viz:

No person holding any office or position of profit, trust or emolument under the federal or any state or municipal government, including senators, congressmen and members of the legislature, state and local, shall be eligible to sit and vote in any convention of the party, and a copy of this ordinance shall be annexed to every call for any future convention.

This Omaha ordinance excluding office-holders from conventions marks a new departure in American party politics. How often in years gone by have we been asked the question by our opponents: "If you get into power, how long will it be before you will become as corrupt as the present political parties? Your officials will desire to succeed themselves, and as soon as elected or appointed to office, they will begin to scheme and fix up the states, so as to secure their continuance in office for the spoils that may be secured thereby without any regard for the wishes or interests of the average voters who elected them."

The Omaha ordinance answers these objections by establishing a principle of party government, which excludes from any voice or vote in the management of the party all persons who hold any public office or position of profit, trust or emolument, or, in short, all persons who presumably have any political axe to grind. We hold, as a party, to this principle, that the office should seek the man, and that it is the duty of any office-holder, whether elected or appointed, to serve the whole people without regard to party, and not under any circumstances to engage in partisan political work, designed to continue himself in office.

Under the operation of this fundamental law, if honestly carried out, the People's party can never become an office-holders' or politicians' party, but will continue as a *people's* party—a party of non-office-holders whose prerogative it is to select candidates to serve them in official capacities without any interference from those who are already in office. As a people's party—a party of non-office-holders—we may make mistakes in selecting candidates for office, but we are under no obligations to defend any record that these office-holders may make. It is the individual office-holder that makes the record, and not the non-office-holding voters which secured his election. If this record is satisfactory to his non-office-holding constituents, they may consistently retain him in office indefinitely, but if it is not, they may select someone else to serve them without violating any obligation to anyone selected at a preceding convention.

Under the operation of this fundamental law which was adopted for the government of the People's party, every succeeding convention of the party may be an improvement upon the preceding convention, as it will be a new deal direct from the people who have no private, personal interest in the result, except such as they have in common with good citizens generally for the public good.

This principle of party government involves no ostracism of the office holder. He knows the terms on which he accepts office, and if he desires to retain

position, all the influences will be in favor of his making a record satisfactory to the best elements among his non-office-holding constituents. This rule protects him from the importunities of corrupt ward-healers, convention-fixers, and incompetents who demand positions of profit as pay for political services, as he will not be at the mercy of these cormorants. Placing them in office will only be putting them where they will have no voice in the management of the party, and when the great rank and file of non-office-holders come together in convention they will certainly rebuke bad appointments. Hence this principle of party government tends directly towards the purification of party politics and of our entire political system which is based thereon.

We do not hesitate to affirm that it was the absence of this principle looking to the purification of party politics which should characterize the government of any party entrusted with the administration of public affairs, that has led to our present deplorable social and economic condition as a people. We have permitted the dominant political parties of the past to drift away from the control of the people and become corrupt political machines for the oppression of the people. A brief review of the history of American politics demonstrates the truth of this proposition.

Jefferson was elected as an anti-bank candidate by an anti-bank party, and yet a congress elected by this same anti-bank party voted to recharter the same banking system against which the party that elected Jefferson had been an organized protest.

With this success of the bank over the dominant anti bank party of that time, by the votes of congressmen elected by the same anti-bank voters of the country, the people rallied as the democratic party and elected Andrew Jackson to the presidency of the United States as an anti-bank candidate. And yet the congress elected at the same time voted to recharter the same banking system against which the democratic party was an organized protest. But Old Hickory was more honest than congress, and interposed his veto.

Then the would-be money power represented by the bank, more alert than its opponents, obtained such control of the party machinery of that time that it was enabled to retain its grip by changing its base of operation. A state banking system on a specie basis was established instead of restoring the circulation of paper money to the people through congress, as had been advocated by Jefferson and reaffirmed by Jackson, Calhoun and other honest opponents of the creation of a money monopoly.

The republican party started out, as pre-eminently the champion of the rights of labor as against the so-called rights of property, advocated alike by slave-holders and money monopolists. "Equal and exact justice to all, special privileges to none," was its motto. And yet its office-holders became its party machine, and the result has been that it has established a corporate monopoly of money, transportation and natural opportunities which practically enslave all who labor. This monopoly of money and natural opportunities is in effect a monopoly of all that money will purchase or labor produce, and it was established by the republican party in direct violation of the fundamental principles on which the republican party came into power.

This result could not have been brought about if the office holders had been excluded from the management of the party, and thus have been prevented

from organizing a party machine to secure for themselves the spoils of office. These spoils under the methods of the old political parties act as a bribe to corrupt public officials whenever and wherever these officials are permitted to organize themselves into a political machine to secure office for its members.

In the organization of the People's party, the convention at Omaha adopted a law, which if rigidly adhered to will prevent the organization of another corrupt political machine to defeat the will of the people whose only object in organizing a new party was to secure measures of reform in our systems of finance, transportation and land, without any regard to past political affiliations or as to who might be elected to office.

We met with a partial success in 1892, by demoralizing the corrupt republican machine in this state. But the great battle for economic reform is yet to be fought out. We are well aware of the fact that both of the old party machines, the republican and the democratic, are a unit in opposition to the reforms which we demand. We cannot afford, even in appearance to prefer one of these machines over the other. It is enough for us to know that both are alike the enemies of the People's party. To go before the people with the argument that the democrats are better than the republicans, would be folly, as it invites defeat by over-looking the fact that both are opposed to us and equally deserving of defeat at the polls.

While we cordially welcome to our ranks every honest democrat and every honest republican, we cannot afford to have any dickerings with either of their party machines, as to a division of the spoils. The People's party is pre-eminently an organized revolt of the people against machine politics and all its methods. We cannot afford to barter principles for partisan success, but we can offer to honest republicans and democrats alike, inducements to vote with the People's party that have never been and will never be offered to them by their old parties. We present them with a system of party government which prevents the organization of a party machine to defeat the will of the average members of the party. We offer them a party which elects officers to serve them and not bosses to rule them. The non-office-holders are the employers—the officials are their employees.

Ours is emphatically a *people's* party. A party controlled by its average voters. While thousands of honest citizens may not understand the economic reforms which we demand they cannot fail to understand that our system of party government will give them an opportunity to make their influence felt in favor of purity in politics and against corrupt political rings and cliques, such as no other party has ever offered them.

It is much to be regretted that our reform press and speakers have not made this fundamental law of party government, more prominent in their discussions before the public. As a vote maker among people who have not studied our economic doctrines, no measure adopted at Omaha, is so potent for good as this ordinance, which provides a method by which purity in party politics becomes possible.

The time has now come, when if we are ever to succeed as a party of reform, this must be made a prominent issue before the people. Hence we demand that the state central committee of the People's party shall answer this ordinance to the call for a state convention, and we urge that every local and county committee shall rigidly adhere to its provis-