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...THE VALUE OF CONSTANCY...

The Baltimore News in a post-election issue has the following to say in regard to Mr. Bryan's consistency:

The comprehensive statement made by Mr. Bryan of his position, and of his views as to the proper course for the democratic party to take in the future, is marked by the strength and clearness that have usually characterized his leading utterances. It is marked, also, by that quality of cast-iron immobility which evidently forms an ineradicable part of his code of political conduct. Whatever his motive, whatever the calculation or absence of calculation that may be at the bottom of this characteristic of Mr. Bryan's political record, it is one that is distinctive of the man and that differentiates him, we believe, from any other notable political leader, either in American or in English history. Mr. Bryan may add new principles or purposes to his repertory, but the process of subtraction does not exist for him. Once an advocate of a given course always an advocate of it—this would seem to be a fundamental maxim with the Nebraska leader. Whatever may happen to other men, to parties, to the nation, to the world, as regards the status of silver, in William Jennings Bryan there must be no variation, neither shadow of turning. He was for silver in 1896, he was for it in 1900, he was for it in 1904, and he will be for it, he tells us once more now, to the end of the chapter. And as it is with silver so it is with banks, so it is with the newly acquired doctrine of state ownership of railroads, so it is with everything.

There are two ways, and, so far as we can see, two ways only, of accounting for this most remarkable phenomenon. Against other political leaders, from Gladstone down, inconsistency is the most familiar of charges; in the case of Mr. Bryan alone is there occasion for the accusation of consistency carried to a point so extreme as to amount to something abnormal, something offensive to a wholesome political instinct. Of this singular circumstance, there are, as we have said, two possible explanations. One is that Mr. Bryan is a man of such austere virtue as absolutely to ignore practical considerations which the most high-minded of his contemporaries and of his predecessors have recognized as entitled to determinative weight in the shaping of their political course. The other is that Mr. Bryan, whether altogether deliberately and consciously or not, has acted from the outset upon the feeling that his hold on his following is bound up with his reputation for inflexible adherence to the cause his championship of which first made him a national figure, and to which, in his first campaign, he vowed undying allegiance. That it takes remarkable firmness to adhere to such a position, even if it be one adopted in large measure upon an intuitive calculation of its strength, must be admitted; but it is not a kind of firmness which calls for unalloyed admiration, or which is adapted to the making of the kind of party leader or the kind of statesman that is needed by the country.

Why should Mr. Bryan change his position upon the questions which he has discussed? There is an old saying that "wise men change their minds, but fools never." This is always quoted to justify a change of opinion, but it is a mistake to infer that wise men are the only ones who change their minds, or that a change of mind is necessarily an indication of wisdom. Motion is defined as change of place; it may mean an advance or a retreat. If a man makes a mistake it is credit-

able to him to change his mind, but if he espouses a righteous cause why should he recant? Why should he change his position simply to gain popularity?

When Mr. Bryan was elected to congress in 1890, he ran upon a platform which he wrote himself. It contained a plank denouncing the tariff policy of the republican party as "contrary to the spirit of our constitution, inimical to the best interests of our country and especially unjust and unfair to the people of the great northwest." That was fourteen years ago. Two years afterwards the democratic national platform denounced a tariff levied for the purpose of protection as unconstitutional, and the candidate who ran upon that platform carried the country by a large electoral vote and by a large popular vote. Mr. Bryan has not changed his opinion on the tariff question, but is even more firmly convinced than he was in 1890 that protection for protection's sake is merely robbery under the form of the law. The tariff is given in the ostensible interest of the wage-earners, but it is given to the manufacturer and the manufacturer is not compelled to share its advantages with the employes. Very few republicans would be willing to leave their estates to one child and trust the one child to deal fairly with the rest of the children, and yet for thirty years they have voted hundreds of millions of dollars into the pockets of manufacturers whom they have never seen and have trusted the manufacturers to deal fairly with their employes.

When the money question became paramount the tariff question was pushed into the background, and again when imperialism became paramount the tariff question was not much discussed, but the principles that underlie a revenue tariff have not changed and there is no reason why Mr. Bryan should surrender his belief in the correctness of those principles merely because the republican party has been successful in three campaigns.

Mr. Bryan's platform of 1890 condemned the giving of subsidies and bounties of every kind, and added: "our merchant marine can best be restored by a repeal of the laws which have caused its decline." He still opposes subsidies and bounties of every kind, and believes them to be a perversion of the taxing power. Why should he change his views on this subject?

His platform also contained the following plank: "We favor an amendment of the federal constitution which will take the election of United States senators from the state legislatures and place it in the hands of the people, where it belongs." He still believes in this doctrine. When that plank was written the house of representatives had never passed a resolution proposing the necessary amendment, but since that time the house has four times passed such a resolution—twice with a democratic majority and twice with a republican majority. But each time the senate has blocked the way to the submission of the amendment. More than two-thirds of the states of the union have adopted resolutions favoring this reform. The democratic national platforms, both in 1900 and in 1904 endorsed this doctrine. Is there any reason why Mr. Bryan should change his position on this subject?

His platform of 1890 also favored "the Australian or some similar system of balloting which will insure to every citizen the right to cast his vote according to his own judgment, free from corruption and intimidation." Since that plank was written the Australian ballot has been adopted in a large number of states and has been of great service to the country. Is there any reason why he should change his views upon this subject?

His platform also contained the following plank: "We are opposed to the trust in all its forms, and favor vigorous measures for its pre-

vention and suppression." This plank was written in the beginning of the anti-trust fight, the very year that the Sherman anti-trust law was enacted, and Mr. Bryan has seen no reason to change his position. He is still opposed to the trust in all its forms, and was instrumental in having inserted in the national platforms of 1896 and 1900 the declaration that "a private monopoly is indefensible and intolerable." Every year adds to his conviction that the principle of private monopoly must be eradicated. It is as absurd to permit them to flourish and then try to restrain them from harming the public as it would be to keep a lot of rattlesnakes in one's house and expect to protect the members of the family from their poison. God never made a man good enough to stand at the head of a private monopoly, and the effort which the republicans promise to make to regulate monopolies will prove a futile effort. Private monopolies must be destroyed, not merely controlled.

His platform in 1890 also denounced the force bill as "an encroachment upon the rights of the citizens and an attempt to perpetuate the republican party in power by overruling the election laws of the states;" and it also condemned the republican congressman from the Lincoln district for the support of that measure. Is there any reason why Mr. Bryan should change his views upon this subject?

His platform of 1890 said "the public domain should be preserved for the actual settlers, and we demand the enactment of a law prohibiting the holding of lands by non-resident aliens." He has seen no reason to change his views upon this question.

His platform of 1890 denounced Speaker Reed's rules as "having the intent and operation not only of overruling the rights of the minority but also of enabling an actual minority, it being a majority of the party in power, to enact legislation at the dictation of the secret caucus without deliberation or debate, thus enormously increasing the influence of a corrupt lobby." Mr. Bryan has not seen any reason for changing his views on this subject. The purpose of the Reed rule was not to enable a majority to govern, because it was not necessary to count a quorum when there were present enough in favor of the bill to constitute a majority of the entire house. A rule to prevent filibustering is a very different rule from the one providing for the counting of a quorum. In most of the states the constitutions provide for a roll-call on the final passage of a measure and require the concurrence of a majority of the members to be made a matter of record. There is no such provision in the federal constitution, although there should be. By refusing to vote a minority could compel the concurrence of a majority in legislation and the intent and effect of the counting of a quorum was to deprive the minority of this privilege, or rather right. Since the adoption of the rule many measures of importance have been passed by less than a majority, enough of the minority being counted to show that a majority of the members were present at the time. According to the new rule, one more than one-fourth of the entire house can pass a law if another fourth is present and not voting, the two-fourths, plus one, making a majority of the house. Since the adoption of the Reed rules the house has ceased to be a deliberative body, and measures are often put through without discussion and without debate, and the majority has thus been able to avoid being put on record on amendments where a record vote might be embarrassing. Mr. Bryan still adheres to his opposition to the principles involved in the rule for the counting of a quorum.

Besides containing the planks above referred to, Mr. Bryan's platform of 1890 contained a pension plank and the following plank on the silver