

Democratic National Convention Proceedings

FIRST DAY'S PROCEEDINGS

The democratic national convention for 1908 met at Denver Tuesday, July 7. The following report of the routine proceedings is taken from the Associated Press:

Denver, July 7.—The democratic national convention began its session at noon today amid scenes of stirring animation. The vast amphitheater of the auditorium was packed with 12,000 people, an ever moving intense and expectant throng, moved by patriotic airs and stirred into tumultuous demonstration as a silken portrait of Bryan was borne within the hall. It was just 12:20 when Chairman Taggart of the national committee called the convention to order. Bishop J. J. Keane of Cheyenne, Wyo., pronounced the opening invocation, an impressive plea for Divine grace on the convention's deliberations. The convention promptly perfected the preliminary organization, electing Theodore A. Bell of California as temporary chairman. The keynote speech of the temporary presiding officer started the echoes ringing and brought forth an enthusiastic demonstration for Bryan and other party idols. The appointment of the convention committees and the presentation of resolutions of respect to the memory of the late Grover Cleveland completed the formal work of the day.

Public interest was entirely in the opening session of the convention and aside from this the early part of the day brought few developments of importance as to candidates or platform. The overwhelming drift of sentiment continues toward Bryan, and the enthusiasm of the opening session only emphasized his commanding hold on the convention.

A strong cordon of police was stretched about the Denver auditorium when the delegates to the democratic national convention began to arrive at the scene of the next four days' activities. The sidewalks were roped off to assist the officers in handling the curious throngs that began to gather about the hall early in the day. Mounted police kept the streets clear for a passage way for those holding tickets.

On two of its streets fronting the auditorium great banks of snow gave a cool greeting to the visitors. From the mountain heights the snow had been brought down to this mile high level on a special train. The day was by no means hot, however, and the only effect of the snow was the novelty of an ice street scene in July.

The doors of the hall were unbarred at 11:10 o'clock nearly one hour before the gavel of National Chairman Taggart was scheduled to fall as the signal for the beginning of the initial session.

A new feature of the convention arrangements was a battery of four automatic adding machines such as banking and large business establishments use. These were provided for the tallying and speedy and accurate result of the balloting.

An oil painting of Mr. Cleveland faced the rostrum, having a position of honor second only to that of Thomas Jefferson.

A feature of the seating arrangements, new in political conventions, was the labeling of all seats. Every chair carried on its back a small placard bearing the name of the state in large black capitals with the word "delegates" beneath it. This small detail did away with much of the confusion inside, as it showed where the territory of every state ended and where that of its neighbors began and there was no good natured "scrapping" over boundary lines, as is generally the case.

At 11:30 o'clock when the hall was less than one-fourth filled, the first music of the convention crashed from the upper balcony. A splendid brass band of some sixty pieces, uniformed in costume of the western plains, blue flannel shirts, peaked hats and red bandanna handkerchiefs flying about the neck—played a series of patriotic selections to the applause of the incoming crowds.

One or two of the North Carolina men indulged themselves in a smoke, which they only interrupted when the band after playing a medley of southern airs swung into "Dixie" and then they, in common with the offenders from Virginia, forgot their tobacco, while they rose and cheered approval of the old time melody. The mass of delegates and spectators followed on as they always do when the strains of "Dixie" are heard and for a few minutes the hall rang with the shouts of delight.

National Chairman Taggart reached the convention hall at 11:45 o'clock accompanied by Temporary Chairman Bell and they were liberally applauded as they made their way to the platform. The delegates and spectators were pouring more rapidly into the hall at this hour, and there was the usual hum of confusion that always marks the approach of the convening hour.

When the Georgia delegation reached the hall it was announced that the position will be taken on the presidential nomination will be determined at a meeting to be held at 9:30 tomorrow morning. This question was to have been decided at the meeting held this morning but by unanimous action, a postponement was ordered; it was stated that the Georgia delegation would act as a unit when a decision was reached.

At 12 noon promptly Chairman Thomas Taggart of the national committee brought down his gavel with a resounding whack and called the convention to order. Cheers followed the blow of the gavel and Chairman Taggart, as soon as they had subsided, spoke as follows:

"As chairman of the democratic national committee, it becomes my pleasing duty to call this convention to order, and in so doing I can not refrain from the suggestion that in numbers, in the personnel of the delegates, in enthusiasm and in the determination of victory, it is the greatest political convention ever assembled in the United States. It is certainly appropriate that such a convention should meet in this great western city, whose citizens have shown their generous hospitality on every hand and whose enterprise and energy is attested by the erection of this magnificent auditorium.

"In this connection I desire to express the thanks of the members of the national committee to the people of Denver and especially to the members of the Denver convention league, whose unselfish and untiring work has contributed so much to this successful and happy opening of the campaign of 1908."

The Michigan delegation, which had marched to the convention hall carrying a large silk banner, bore it into the hall and were promptly ordered by the sergeant-at-arms to bear it out again. The wolverines compromised by laying it on the floor beneath their seats.

After all the delegations had been seated with the exception of Nebraska the delegation from that state made a spectacular entrance. They came marching in a solid column down the center aisle holding high a large banner of red, white and blue silk on which was painted a portrait of Mr. Bryan. Above the picture were the words "Bryan volunteers" and beneath it "of Nebraska." The sight of the banner and the march of the Nebraskans created great enthusiasm for a few minutes, many of the delegates and alternates leaping upon their chairs and waving their hats and handkerchiefs.

California followed Nebraska into the hall and vied with that delegation in the splendor of a banner in white, blue and gold which also bore a likeness of Mr. Bryan. The Californians carried palm leaf fans and small national flags which they waved in enthusiastic acknowledgment of the cordial greetings accorded them by the delegations already in the hall.

Following Mr. Taggart's remarks the secretary read the official call of the convention.

Bishop John J. Keane of Wyoming delivered the invocation, delegates and spectators rising to their feet at the request of the chairman.

The name of Theodore A. Bell was greeted with an outburst of applause as was that of Urey Woodson, the secretary. Before Mr. Bell spoke, Chairman Taggart requested that there should be no smoking in the hall. The announcement was greeted with applause.

"Gentlemen of the convention," said Mr. Taggart, as the committee of three appeared on the platform with Chairman Bell, "I take pleasure in introducing to you your temporary chairman, Theodore A. Bell."

An instant shout of applause greeted the words of the chairman and as the temporary chairman advanced to the front to deliver his address, the cheers were redoubled. Mr. Bell is about five feet ten inches in height, slender, clean shaven, brown eyed and brown haired. He was garbed in the conventional afternoon attire. His voice is clear and penetrating and he had no difficulty in commanding the close and instant attention of the convention.

The delegates were prone to applaud from

the utterance of Mr. Bell's first sentence. His manner of delivery lent emphasis to his points, and there was spontaneous handclapping at the conclusion of each of his gracefully rounded periods. Galleries, too, joined liberally in the applause bestowed upon the speaker.

Cheers mingled in the outburst of applause when Mr. Bell asserted that the democratic party would always stand unalterably opposed to a monopoly of production.

Laughter and cheers greeted the speaker's announcement that he had read deeply in the Chicago platform and he had failed to find therein anything about "republican prosperity." His sarcastic allusions to the claims of excellent management of the country made by the republicans also elicited the approval of the delegates.

As Mr. Bell approached the subject of the anti-injunction plank, the attention of the convention was quickened and his statement that the republican declaration on that subject was merely a recital of existing law called out increased applause.

Still greater cheering followed the declaration "whatever we do on this subject must be done firmly, frankly and unequivocally," and this in turn was intensified when he asserted that the injunction must not be turned into "an instrument of tyranny."

Flags and hats went up in a cloud, and voices rose in a storm of approval when the speaker asserted that the popularity of the present administration is due "to the democratic principles he has practiced."

The prediction of Mr. Bell that the convention would name the next president of the United States, and when he alluded in the most pointed manner to Mr. Bryan the roar of delight broke loose once more. Many of the New York delegates joined in the demonstration, but the majority of them remained passively in their seats. Illinois acted in exactly the same manner and while Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Arkansas, with delegations from the far west yelled and stamped in approval, the men from Georgia, West Virginia, North and South Carolina and Vermont sat silent and gave no tribute to the first unmistakable allusion to Mr. Bryan as a presidential candidate.

Mr. Bell called out another demonstration when he sharply criticized the republican party for its refusal to adopt a plank calling for the publicity of campaign contributions prior to election day. He declared the refusal of the republicans to adopt "a cash register" was a "confession of dishonesty."

The declaration of the speaker in favor of the direct election of United States senators by the people also was cheered on the main floor and in the galleries. A stand for protection against the immigration from "oriental waters" caused a renewal of the applause which seemed ever near the surface and burst forth time and time again.

At the conclusion of the speech the delegates rose to their feet and cheered Mr. Bell for some time.

At the first order of business, Mr. Bell recognized John E. Lamb of Indiana who offered a motion for a call of the states for membership on the various standing committees of the convention.

The reading clerk, when he came to Arkansas, pronounced the name of the state like Kansas and there immediately came a shout of protest from the delegation, whose members shouted back "Ar-kan-saw."

Amid laughter the clerk corrected his pronunciation.

"Indian Territory," called the clerk, "Indian Territory." There was no response. The clerk called the name a third time.

"She's married!" yelled a delegate. "I mean Oklahoma," said the clerk, and the list went up to the chairman's stand amid much laughter.

The calling of the states soon ceased and the names of the committees were sent up by the pages while other business was in progress.

The chair recognized I. J. Dunn of Omaha, Neb., to present the resolutions of respect to the memory of the late Grover Cleveland, prepared at a conference of the friends of Mr. Bryan this morning.

The convention committee on resolutions approved the Cleveland tribute as offered. Charles Bryan, a brother of the candidate, was a member of the conference.