

from it. Consideration of the subject has been forced upon the party not by the advocates of county option but by the opponents of it. The blame primarily rests upon a handful of democratic senators who thwarted the efforts of the majority of the democrats of the senate and house to submit the initiative and referendum at the regular session. The democrats of Douglas county still further accentuated the issue when they declared against county option last summer, and the breweries and other special interests have closed all doors of escape from the issue by entering upon an organized effort to control the next state senate with a view to preventing the enactment of any legislation objectionable to the corporations engaged in the production and sale of liquor and other corporations pecuniarily interested in legislation. Those also must share the blame who refused to lend their influence to the calling of the special session which would have postponed the question of county option until after the adoption of the initiative and referendum amendment, when it could be brought up by petition and decided without causing division in the parties.

When I speak of blame attaching to certain persons who are responsible for forcing the county option question into the campaign I may be using the wrong word—perhaps I should say credit instead of blame. It may possibly be to the party's advantage to escape the discussion of national issues and to make a fight on the liquor question. It may be that the party is stronger on this issue than on national issues. If so, those who are responsible for making the liquor question the prominent question in the campaign should be credited with the advantage which they bring to the party. I shall not deserve any of the glory myself, if glory comes out of the situation, because I have tried to prevent it. Governor Shallenberger, Congressman Hitchcock and Mayor Dahlman will be entitled to divide the honors between them—I shall not attempt to state in what proportion—if the party wins a victory through the adoption of their plans.

However, as we must now meet the issue, I, like other democrats, am interested in having the party do its duty to itself and to the state. If we must have a fight on the liquor question it is important that our party shall take the right side, for the liquor question is not a transient one, and besides having economic and political features it involves a question of morals. As democrats differ in regard to the course to be pursued there ought to be free and full discussion among democrats, and I hope that differences of opinion as to liquor legislation will not be permitted to disturb the personal friendships which have grown up in our party during our harmonious co-operation.

The first thing to agree upon is that the policy of the party should be determined by the voters of the party; when we have reached an agreement upon this proposition we can then proceed to ascertain what a majority of the democrats desire.

Should our state convention take a position on county option or should it evade the question? Some say that the question of county option should be left to the senatorial and legislative districts, and that the state convention should make no declaration upon the subject. But those who think thus seem to forget that the governor must concur in legislation. He must sign or veto the bills which pass the senate and house, and since it requires a three-fifths vote in both houses to pass a bill over his veto, his position is a matter of vital importance. Is it possible that any will question the propriety of inquiring as to the views of the governor upon an important question which is to come before him? Is it possible for a candidate for governor to go through a campaign without announcing his views on a great question, upon the decision of which he will exert so large an influence? Is a candidate worthy of the confidence of the voters if he is not willing to announce his position on such an issue? And if the announcement is to be made, should it not be made before the primary rather than afterward? Since the declaration of the candidate's position would be equivalent to a platform declaration, what objection can there be to the declaration being made by the party? Is it fair to the candidate to throw upon him the burden of stating the party position on a disputed question? And is it fair to the party to throw upon it the risk of having the candidate state a position antagonistic to the views of the members of the party?

As our convention will be held before the primaries it would seem wise for the party to take such a position as it thinks right upon

this subject, and then the voters can proceed to select the candidate who is best fitted to carry out the platform.

But there are several objections to silence at such a time as this. The proposition before the state is an affirmative proposition and silence under the circumstances would be equivalent to a declaration against county option, the only difference being that by silence we would add cowardice to error.

Silence would not only be construed as an endorsement of the position taken by the liquor interests, but a policy of silence would enable the liquor interests to control our state organization, run our state campaign and put every democratic candidate favorable to county option in the attitude of opposing the party's policy. This plan may suit those who are opposed to county option, but those who favor county option can hardly be expected to give this great advantage to the opposition.

A modified form of this plan contemplates a platform pledge that the candidate for governor will sign a county option measure if it reaches him, but otherwise it relegates the entire subject to legislative districts. This plan would simply remove the possibility of a veto; it would not relieve the party of the odium of being known as the liquor party, nor would it prevent the committing of the state organization to opposition to county option. A democratic candidate could run for governor upon such a platform and spend his whole time denouncing county option, provided he concluded each speech by explaining that in spite of his opinion he would obey the platform and sign a county option bill if it reached him. Such a platform would leave him free to use his personal influence, his prestige and his official patronage to prevent the passage of the measure. I submit that the wiser course is for the party to decide what is right and then take its stand and defend it. County option is either right or wrong. It is an important issue—one that can not be ignored—and our party ought not to be afraid to define its position and to take responsibility for it.

Mayor Dahlman is the candidate of those who believe that the party should declare against county option. If county option is really wrong Mr. Dahlman's followers are to be commended for his willingness to risk his political fortunes upon the correctness of his position. He announces that if elected he will veto the county option measure; those who believe county option wrong and want a county option bill vetoed can express themselves by voting for Mr. Dahlman.

While, in my judgment, a declaration against county option would lead to inevitable defeat, still if county option is wrong, why should we be unwilling to suffer defeat? Better defeat in a righteous cause than victory by the espousal of that which is wrong or injurious to the state. And I am not sure that a policy of evasion would be any less disastrous to the party than a straight-forward declaration against county option, for evasion would mean the same thing.

There are, on the other hand, those who think that county option is right and that it should be endorsed by the state convention. I agree with those who think thus and, if I may assume to speak for them, shall briefly state the principal reasons.

First, County option ought to be endorsed because it is right. A distinction should be drawn between county option and the closing of saloons in any particular county. The question is not whether saloons shall exist in this or that county but whether the people of the county shall have the right to decide questions affecting the saloon. Either the majority or the minority must control. If the majority of the people of the county have no right to decide the saloon question for the county then the minority of the people of the county have the right to control on this subject. This is not a new question. It has appeared all through history, and not infrequently the few have controlled as against the many. There have been many forms of government in which the rights of the majority were ignored. In some cases the authority of the few has been based on force, in other cases on birth or brains, and in still other cases on money. Shall we now recognize a new oligarchy based on beer? Are we to have an aristocracy of appetite, which is to determine the saloon question for us? The democratic party can no more champion this new form of aristocracy than it could the older forms. Democrats may differ as to the wisdom of any particular measure proposed in a county, but can democrats differ as to the right of the majority to act on this subject? By what logic shall we distin-

guish between the right of the people of a city to act upon the liquor question, and the right of the people of a precinct or the people of a county or people of a state? County option simply recognizes the right of the people of a county to speak upon this subject, as the people of the town or city now speak, and as the people of the state have the undoubted right to speak. When the right of the people of a county to act upon this question is recognized in this state, as it is in many other states, the people of each county can be trusted to consider the subject and to act upon it according to the conditions to be met.

Second, The county option democrats who are candidates in the various senatorial and representative districts are entitled to the support of the state organization and to the help which they will derive from the state campaign. If county option is right those who stand for it as legislative candidates are entitled to the advantage which a platform declaration would give them. They certainly have a right to ask that the party in the state will not rebuke them openly by a declaration against county option or indirectly by an evasion of the subject.

Third, The conditions which confront us in this state at this time require immediate action. The conspiracy which has been formed between the liquor interests and other special interests to control legislation will continue until it is overthrown. More than that, it will grow stronger and more arrogant with each victory. It must be defied and defeated some time and it will be easier to do this now than later. This combination spent money in 1908, it is spending money now, and it will continue to corrupt politics until its power is broken. Then, too, we have a presidential campaign two years hence, and while national issues ought to be paramount in the present state campaign, it will be still more important that they shall be paramount in 1912. Now is the time for action. There are other reasons that may be given and other legislation on this subject that ought to be considered, but I shall discuss them within a few days.

In taking up this subject I am fully aware of the strength of the opposition that I shall encounter. We have against us the liquor interests of the nation and the favor-seeking corporations of the state are their allies. Our opponents are supplied with an abundance of money, they are unscrupulous as to methods and able to deceive a great many voters through the newspapers which they control. But I have an abiding faith in the intelligence and in the integrity of the rank and file of our party and to these I appeal. I am not a candidate for any office; I desire nothing at the hands of my co-workers; they have already rewarded me far beyond my deserts, and I am indebted to them for whatever influence I may have. This influence, whether it be much or little, I regard as a sacred trust, and I shall use it for their interest according to the light that I have. I am aware that a great many of those who differ from me on this question have no personal interest in the liquor traffic and no sympathy with its debauchery of the home, society, and the state, and I shall not allow a difference upon this subject to make me forget the support which they have given me in past campaigns. But I shall do my duty in this campaign as I have tried to do it before, and I believe it to be my duty as a citizen and as a democrat to do all in my power to save the democratic party from the domination of the liquor interests and their allies.

W. J. BRYAN.

PUBLICITY OF CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

Speaking in the house of representatives June 25, the house having under consideration the conference report on the bill providing for publicity of campaign contributions Representative Ollie James of Kentucky delivered the following speech:

Mr. Speaker: We are told by the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Norris) that both political parties favor this legislation. I know of but one way to arrive at a judgment upon what political parties stand for, and that is by how they vote when questions come up for consideration. Legislators and parties are known, like trees, by their fruit. The republican party in control in the other end of this capitol strike out the house provision of publicity before election and substitute publicity after election. How does this measure come to us? It comes amended in this way and in the last hours of the session with an approaching congressional election. And what remedy do you offer the voter, that