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*Little do ye know your own blessedness; for to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labor.*

*Robert Louis Stevenson.*

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF BOLTING

The eastern newspapers seem to think that Mr. Bryan has changed his position on the right of the voter to follow his conviction. When Mr. Bryan was editor of the Omaha World-Herald he published an editorial (issue of February 26, 1896) entitled "The Philosophy of Bolting." That editorial is hereinafter reproduced, the name of the paper referred to in the editorial being omitted:

"The ——— is very much agitated at the thought that some democrats may refuse to vote for the Chicago nominee, and it alternately castigates Secretary Carlisle for refusing to aid Senator Blackburn and silver democrats, whom it accuses of an unwillingness to support a goldbug for president. It gives more space to criticism and warning than it does to an intelligent effort to remove the cause of danger. We have reached a time when calm discussion will avail more than crimination and recrimination, and the World-Herald invites its esteemed contemporary to discuss this question: 'Is bolting justifiable, and if so, when?' The World-Herald holds that the individual member of a party at all times reserves the right to vote against a nominee of a party and to abandon his party entirely, whenever, in his judgment, his duty to his country requires it. He may abandon the party temporarily, as for instance, when an unfit candidate is nominated—this is recognized by the fact that newspapers and speakers discuss the character of candidates and point out their fitness and unfitness.

The voter may abandon his party permanently either when he himself changes his opinion upon a paramount public question or when his party changes its position. The strength of party organization is found in the fact that men do not like to repudiate a nominee or leave their party for light and trivial causes; in fact, the tendency to vote a straight ticket is so great that men require the strongest of reasons to justify desertion, and yet the right to bolt or abandon is essential unless man is to become a mere machine and unless the party machine is to become omnipotent. The desire to draw voters to the party makes the party careful to indorse

the wisest policies, and the fear that men may bolt is the most effective protection against bad nominations. Webster defines a party as: 'A number of persons united in opinion, as opposed to the rest of the community or associations, and aiming to influence or control the general action.' Agreement in opinion is the essential thing; who would define a party as 'a number of persons differing in opinion, but united in an effort to secure the offices?' The reason why abandonment of party is not frequent is found in the fact that party principles are generally permanent in character and therefore the members of the party, agreeing in opinion, work together harmoniously to carry out those opinions in legislation. The fact that a new national platform is adopted every four years is evidence that the right of the party to change its position on public questions is universally recognized, and the fact that a campaign is carried on through the press and upon the stump is proof that the right of the voter to change his party affiliations is also recognized. The party is a means, not an end; it has no reason for existence except as it enables the citizens to secure good government. When is a man justified in abandoning his party? Obviously, when he satisfies himself that some other party is a better means through which to serve his country.

"If the members of a party agree upon the important issues, difference of opinion on minor matters is of little consequence, but difference of opinion upon the questions that are for the time being paramount, always has destroyed, always will destroy, and always ought to destroy party harmony. It may be sad to contemplate the disturbance of harmony or the disintegration of a party, but until human nature is changed and our form of government abandoned such things must be contemplated. When the tariff was the main issue democrats stood together, regardless of differences of opinion upon the money question; but now the money question is paramount, and we see such a democratic tariff reformer as John G. Carlisle refusing to aid a democratic tariff reformer like Senator Blackburn in his fight against a republican protectionist, and we see a tariff reformer like Grover Cleveland carrying out the financial policy of a protectionist like John Sherman. Can a national convention harmonize the discordant elements of the democratic party? Impossible. Suppose the advocates of bimetalism control the national convention and nominate a free silver democrat upon a free coinage platform, will Cleveland, Carlisle, Olney, Morton, et al. support the ticket? Of course not. They say the free coinage of silver means individual dishonesty, commercial disaster and national dishonor, and if they believe what they say, they ought not to support the ticket, because their duty to their country is higher than their duty to their party organization. If, on the other hand, the convention nominates a gold standard democrat on a platform indorsing the gold standard, gold bonds, and national bank currency, should the nominee be supported by those who believe the gold standard to be a conspiracy of the capitalistic classes against the producers of wealth—a crime against mankind? Who says that they should? If to continue Mr. Cleveland's financial policy is to declare war against the common people, what friend of the common people would be willing to enlist in such a warfare, even at the command of his party?

"There is no compromise between monometallism and bimetalism; there is no middle ground between the issue of all paper money by the government and the issue of all paper money by the banks. There may have been a time when compromise was possible, but the question is now before the people and it must be settled one way or the other. If the question was an unimportant one it might be settled within the party and the decision acquiesced in; but it is a question that touches every man, woman and child in the nation, a question of right or wrong, a question of justice or injustice, a question of freedom or slavery. Will ——— advise its readers to silence their conscience, close their ears to cries of distress and their eyes to a misery greater than 'war, pestilence and famine,' and vote the ticket straight if the goldbugs control the convention?

"It does not dare to give that advice if it has any interest in the welfare of its readers. The democratic party can not serve God and Mammon; it can not serve plutocracy and at the same time defend the rights of the masses. If it yields to the plutocracy it ought to lose, and it will lose the support of the masses; if it espouses the cause of the people it can not

expect either contributions or votes from the capitalistic classes and from the great corporations. If the gold standard democrats control the national convention they will determine the policy of the democratic party on all questions. Will they give the people relief from corporate aggression and from the oppression of trusts? Will they make this a government 'of the people, by the people and for the people?' The ——— knows that the gold standard democrats, instead of affording the people relief, would simply carry on the government according to republican ideas. When the democratic party has gone down fighting for the right it has felt certain of resurrection, but what assurance has it of rising again if it goes down fighting against the interest of the masses? When the spirit of Jefferson leaves the democratic party it will be a corpse.

"If abandonment of party is ever justifiable the voter must determine for himself when the time for abandonment arrives. When should he decide? The proper time, if not the only time, is after the party has adopted its platform and named its candidate. Until that time he does not know whether he can rely upon it to secure the government which he regards as good and the legislation which he considers necessary. Does participation in a primary or convention bind the voter to support a policy which he considers ruinous? If he tries, through his party organization to save his country and fails, must he then take a hand in its destruction? If a great question arises, must he assume that his party will go wrong, and therefore leave it before it acts, or should he try to hold his party to the right course? If a question of supreme importance arises which threatens to divide the party, have not the majority a right to retain the party name and organization? And how can the majority be determined unless all members of the party have a right to take part in the decision? In some of the western states the goldbugs have insisted that silver democrats should pledge themselves to support the nominee before taking part in the selection of delegates. If a pledge is to be required, it should be required of those who select delegates as well as of those who act as delegates; but what organization has a right to require such a pledge?

"A county organization might require a pledge of those who are going to vote upon a county ticket, and a state organization might require a pledge of those who are going to vote upon a state ticket, but only a national organization can require a pledge of those who are going to vote upon national candidates and national questions. It would be manifestly unfair for democrats of Missouri to be required to give a pledge to support the nominee of a national convention unless the same pledge is required of the democrats of Massachusetts. Why should the democrats of the west and south agree to support the nominee of a national convention unless the democrats of the northeastern states enter into the same agreement. Has any eastern state, pledged its democrats to vote for a free silver candidate if nominated? Of course not; and yet if election returns are worth anything, they prove that eastern democrats are more apt to bolt than the democrats of the south. The eastern papers announce with great emphasis that a free silver democrat can not carry an eastern state. Is that not a declaration that eastern democrats, after taking part in the selection of a candidate, will vote against him if they do not like him? The democratic party has selected its candidate from New York, and yet some western democrats insist that the democrats of the west and south are in duty bound to support the nominee, regardless of his position on the money question, even though the nominee may, if elected, destroy the value of their products, mortgage their home to foreign capitalists and lower the standard of civilization. "The World-Herald repudiates such a doctrine and demands the same liberty, the same independence, the same political rights, for the democrats of the south and west that our eastern brethren have at all times enjoyed. Will the ——— enforce against its own readers a doctrine which it has no power to enforce against the goldbug democrats of the east? Or will it recognize the right of all democrats to a voice in the deliberations of the party, with the reserved right to abandon the party whenever the party abandons the cause of the people?"

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