It Was a Great Day and the People Won---but They Won in Spite of Mr. Harmon

In its issue of February 9th, the Cincinnati Enquirer printed the following news item: "I have never seen an electrocution, but I today had the opportunity of witnessing a man deliberately commit political suicide," is the way that President Herbert L. Bigelow, of the constitutional convention, last night described the performance of Governor Harmon yesterday in advising the convention to sidestep the initiative and referendum.

"And what is more," continued President Bigelow, "we have the spectacle of a man twice honored with the highest office within the gift of the people of Ohio, and given the people's favor, because he stood upon platforms that indorse the initiative and referendum, deliberately counseling against the adoption of those principles which he was chosen trustee to forward and write if possible into the laws of this commonwealth. But I want to tell you that in spite of the advice of all the governors of America, the initiative and referendum will be written into our constitution as submitted to the people. We had a test vote today, after the Governor Harmon incident, which shows that the delegates to this great body, who have demonstrated themselves to be real statesmen, will not be swerved from their loyalty to their constituents by abandoning this great principle.

"And I want to say in justice to the governor that never in my life have I ever seen such a magnificent exhibition of manly courage as I witnessed in Columbus this afternoon. Governor Harmon must be given credit for absolute honesty and sincerity of purpose in what he said to the convention, although he undoubtedly knew that his words would close the doors of the White house to him—if, indeed, the doors have ever stood ajar for him. The time has passed when the people will elect a man to the presidency of this country who can not be trusted to stand by the platform pledges upon which he is elevated into office, and who won't trust the people.

"Gentlemen, just think of the sentiment that lurks in the words of our governor: 'Let us stand by,' he says, 'and let the other fellows try the experiments, and, if they are successful, then we'll follow.' Is that the spirit that actuated Christopher Columbus to cross the sea, secured the accomplishment of the submarine cable or any of the deeds that have made men immortal in their service to fellow men? Are we to be trailers, or leaders? I am sure it will be proven that we will be leaders."

Arriving shortly after 10 o'clock last night at the annual meeting and banquet of the Federal Improvement association at the Business Men's club, President Bigelow, fresh from the fray at Columbus, immediately plunged into the attack that Governor Harmon made upon the principle that President Bigelow has fathered in this state for years. "You must excuse me," he said, "if I am flustered, for I'm fresh from the battlefield. It has been a great day, and the people have won, and they will win in spite of all the forces that are lining up against them."

IT WAS IN HIS PLATFORM, TOO

Editorial in the Columbus (Ohio) Citizen: "We favor the principle of the initiative and referendum."

That was one of the vital planks in the platform of the democratic convention which nominated Judson Harmon for governor in 1910.

Upon that platform Harmon made his campaign and asked for the votes of the people of Ohio, pledging himself to make every human effort to carry out the pledge of the party.

The people believed in his honesty and sincerity of purpose and re-elected him governor by over 100,000 plurality.

The initiative and referendum principle was then, as now, the most vital issue before the people of the state.

It offered then, as it does now, the only possible opportunity for the people to take back into their own hands the machinery of government stolen from them by privilege.

The initiative and referendum plank, above quoted was put in the democratic platform in response to a public sentiment that was almost if not quite unanimous among the rank and file of all parties in the state.

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During the nearly year and a half since Harmon's election on the initiative and referendum platform, Ohio has been stirred to its very depths in a political way.

Harmon has become an avowed candidate for the democratic presidential nomination; Taft, an Ohioan, is a candidate for presidential renomination; delegates have been elected to a constitutional convention and that convention has been organized and is now in session, with a majority of its delegates holding their seats because they either directly or indirectly pledged themselves to incorporate in the new constitution a workable initiative and referendum section.

Recently, by invitation from the constitutional convention, Governor Harmon appeared upon the floor and addressed the delegates. And then and there, this governor, this candidate for the presidency, this man who has been parading before the people of Ohio for years as a progressive who "favored the principle of the initiative and referendum," showed his true colors.

In cold blood, without warning, Governor Harmon tried his best to do to death the initiative and referendum. He said in so many words that in his judgment the principle was wrong; that the people of Ohio are not capable of self-government; that on the whole, the people of Ohio have been well governed by the politicians and corporations and have no cause to demand more modern governmental machinery.

It is not our purpose at this time to dwell upon any possible effect that Harmon's treachery to the people's cause may have upon the delegates to the constitutional convention. We are inclined to think that no self-respecting member of that convention will permit himself to be influenced by anything that Harmon said on the subject.

But we can not refrain from expressing the opinion that Harmon has fully justified every charge that has been made of Wall street influence in connection with his presidential aspirations.

Harmon stands before the people of Ohio and of the nation today as the one presidential candidate among the many of all parties, who by temperament, training and mental attitude would best serve in the presidential office the predatory interests as represented by Wall street.

He is chained to the past, irrevocably, unalterably.

If there is one progressive corpuscle in his entire circulatory system, he has never given evidence of the fact.

In the past 20 years, since Harmon left Cleveland's cabinet, the people of this country have made giant strides toward the goal of political and economic freedom, of real democracy (with a small d.)

Harmon has stood still. He is deaf to the people's demands for direct power to bring about in their own way those equalities of opportunity which are the very foundation stones of real democracy. He is blind to the signs of the times which say to all who will see that the old order passeth never to return. He is dumb except to raise his voice in warning against the awful dangers to our democratic institutions if the people are permitted to take into their own hands such powerful weapons of defense against their exploiters as the initiative and referendum.

It is possible that Harmon and the men who are associated with him in control of the democratic machine of Ohio may so manipulate things as to send a solid Harmon delegation to the democratic national convention.

But on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of progressive democrats of this state, the Citizen protests against such misrepresentation before the people of the nation.

There is just one way to make this protest effective, and that is for the progressive democracy of this state to organize and to pledge their support in every district in Ohio to candidates for delegates to the democratic national convention who will bind themselves to support a progressive for the presidential nomination.

FRANK AND CANDID

Editorial in Bucyrus (Ohio) Forum: Governor Harmon's speech before the delegates to the constitutional convention was frank and candid. It must be given full credit on these points, but it also carries with it the explanation of why the real progressives of Ohio have become convinced that they can not continue to support his presidential ambitions. The governor's ability is not in question. Neither is his birthplace nor his place of residence. What is in question is his views of public policy. These are diametrically opposed to what the progressives believe should be the policy of the government, and even for the sake of having an Ohio man for our candidate, and one whose ability we admire, we and others who hold the same progressive views with us, can not consent to support the views which the governor holds nor the policy which he would pursue if placed in the presidential office. We regret that this is true, but that does not alter its truth.

WHO WANTS HARMON AND WHY?

"Progression," published at Detroit, Mich., gives democrats something to think about seriously when it says: Have you heard any of the out-and-out progressives calling for Harmon?

Have you heard any of the "horny-handed sons of toil" hurrahing for Harmon?

Have you noticed any of the progressive papers or magazines boosting for Harmon?

Well, then, who is it that wants Harmon and why?

When the rank and file of the people are for Wilson and other progressive candidates, how does it happen that Harmon is considered one of the most formidable candidates for the democratic nomination for the presidency?

What is back of this Harmon boom?

I don't know—absolutely know, but I think I am a fairly good guesser when I say that Wall street and conscienceless, soulless, and partyless organized greed is the power behind the Harmon candidacy.

And why does big business want Harmon?

Because Harmon is in sympathy with big business or is at least supposed to be. Harmon is considered a "safe" man.

At the same time, I do not wish to say anything derogatory to the personal character of Mr. Harmon. I presume he is a good and upright citizen. So is Mr. Taft. So is Judge Parker and he was the choice a few years ago of the money faction of the democracy. So are many of the big men in big business.

When the interests that make a business of exploiting the people, want Harmon it is reason enough for the people to want another candidate. And let me warn you, progressive democrats, and remind you that Judge Parker was nominated by the bosses in spite of the popular will of the party to the contrary.

The bosses, controlled by the money power, will nominate Harmon if you don't watch out and you'd better get strenuously busy.

Eternal vigilance is the price of progression.

MR. HARMON IS HEDGING

Following is an Associated Press dispatch: Columbus, O., Feb. 17.—Declaring that under the present representative form of government the people are just as much their own masters as they would be under the initiative and referendum, and denying that in a recent speech before the Ohio constitutional convention he took a stand against the latter form of government, Governor Judson Harmon tonight quoted Thomas Jefferson as authority for his statements. Mr. Harmon said he had been misrepresented as saying that the people of Ohio were unfit to govern themselves, when he really said they had successfully governed themselves for a hundred years. His signing the measure permitting the initiative and referendum to become effective in Ohio municipalities was set forth as evidence that he is not an opponent of the initiative and referendum. That it should be given a fair trial in these cities and villages before becoming statewide, however, Mr. Harmon still maintains.

In evidence of the fact that it should be proven a success in smaller communities first the governor quoted Thomas Jefferson as saying "such a government is evidently restrained to a very narrow limit of space and population. I doubt if it would be practicable beyond the limits of a New England township."

The representative form of government was advocated by Jefferson as being "the nearest approach to a pure republic which is practicable on a large scale of population."

WILL YOU JOIN IN THE EFFORT TO INCREASE THE COMMONER'S CIRCULATION FOR 1912? TAKE IT UP AT ONCE WITH YOUR NEIGHBOR.