

The Big Fight at Chicago

The Taft steam roller proved itself to be one of the best equipped political machines in history. The national committee continued to render decisions in favor of the Taft forces. After the Indiana contest had been decided in favor of the president Mr. Roosevelt issued a statement in which he said:

"The question at Chicago becomes clearer with every vote of the national committee. It is simply whether the people have the right to nominate whomever they wish for the highest office in their gift, or whether, by deliberate theft and fraud, certain machine leaders, acting in the interest of special privilege, are to be permitted to deprive the people of this right.

"By an overwhelming majority, where they have had the opportunity to express their wishes at the primaries, the plain people, the rank and file of the republican party, have repudiated Mr. Taft. Now we are face to face with the question whether the people rule the republican party or whether the party is to be ruled by the discredited bosses whom the people have themselves repudiated."

Francis J. Heney attacked several members of the national committee after they had decided in favor of Taft on California contests. He read a letter from Governor Johnson of California declining to appear before the committee for the reason that he did not think it proper to "submit to trial to the title of property by the thief who steals it." Mr. Heney said in reply to Senator Murray Crane of Massachusetts that Crane had "no respectability to lose."

Judge Ben B. Lindsey of Denver gave out the statement that Mr. Roosevelt was in favor of woman suffrage and would include it in his platform. Later Mr. Roosevelt confirmed Lindsey's statement in a newspaper interview. The decision in the California cases was resented in California. The following is an Associated Press dispatch:

Los Angeles, Cal., June 12.—When the California delegation to the republican national convention at Chicago arrived here today aboard a special train and learned that two of the delegates had been deposed by the republican national committee in favor of the Taft contestants, resolutions were adopted condemning the national committee and talk of the creation of a third party was freely indulged in.

Newspapers supporting the "progressive" wing of the republican party greeted the delegation with editorials urging them to support a third party movement if Roosevelt should not be nominated and the resolutions adopted pledged the delegates "to go the limit" against those who are putting through the anti-Roosevelt program at Chicago.

A mass meeting to protest against the "outrageous tactics" of the national committee was held at the depot here. The delegates participated in adopting the resolutions which read:

"We condemn as betrayal of trust a violation of precept of decency and honor and as an intentional assault upon the integrity of the republican party the outrageous conduct of the discredited republican bosses now dictating and controlling that committee, whereby delegates chosen by the people of their respective states, in the interest of Theodore Roosevelt, are being denied seats in said convention while their places are given to the 'hand picked' puppets, chosen by the bosses in the interest of William H. Taft.

"We denounce the acquiescence of President Taft in the program of political larceny now being carried out.

"We call on members of the California delegation to go the limit of all honorable endeavor to rebuke the tactics of which we here complain * * * and urge them to fight first, last and all the time for Theodore Roosevelt, a progressive ticket and the progressive cause."

Meyer Lissner, chairman of the republican state central committee, when asked what he thought about the possibility of a new party answered:

"All I will say is this: We are going to Chicago as progressives and we won't take anything but a progressive platform and a progressive candidate."

On June 12th, Mr. Roosevelt gave out a statement in which he said: "In Arizona, Mr. Taft's national committeemen acted with great frankness on their view that the introduction of the point of politics is an unwarranted impertinence calling for rebuke by the national committee. The case turned on the single county of Maricopa. The county committee of that county

has the option of selecting delegates to the state convention or of calling a primary to give the people the right to vote. At a meeting of the county committee all the Roosevelt men, joined by two of the Taft men, ordered a primary to be held throughout the county. A minority of the county committee held a rump meeting and selected Taft delegates to the state convention. At the primaries the Roosevelt delegates were elected by a vote of 950 as against less than twenty-five for Taft. The national committee, acting on Mr. Taft's theory that this ought not to be a government by the people, treated the fact that the voters had themselves been given the right to say who their delegates should be, as a result refusing to seat the delegates elected by the voters.

"In Kentucky, the Taft-Bradley forces were guilty of grosser frauds than anywhere else in the country. There was no form of rascality which it was not clearly proved before the national committee that the Taft men had resorted to in order to get Taft delegates. Hundreds of affidavits were filed with the national committee showing where men had been over the state with Taft badges and paid \$2 apiece for votes for Taft, and showing that in certain counties Roosevelt majorities were counted out by the county committee, who were postmasters or federal officeholders. Where, in spite of the methods, the Roosevelt men still had a majority, the Taft men bolted, and the national committee promptly recognized the rump convention.

"In the Eleventh district the theft of the delegates was perhaps more flagrant than elsewhere. The Taft men of the national committee first voted down seating the Roosevelt delegates by thirty-three to nineteen. Immediately afterwards, on the motion of Mr. Vorys, it seated one Taft and one Roosevelt man. This decision was on its face preposterous. It was a frank admission that the Taft members of the national committee, not being quite willing to steal two men, were willing to and actually stole one.

In California, the action of the national committee was perhaps not morally worse than it has hitherto been, but it was just a little more flagrant. Here, I can contribute out of my personal knowledge to the history of what was done. The progressives of California had control of the legislature and party machinery. Under the primary law, then existing in California, which had been passed by the old republican machine before Governor Johnson came into power, the progressives could have obtained all the delegates without resorting to a primary. This was, of course what they would have done if they had been willing to act like the Taft-Barnes machine of New York, the Taft-Amalgamated copper machine in Montana, the Taft-Kealing machine in Indiana, and the Taft-Guggenheim machine in Colorado. The temptation was very strong to take the delegates without raising a primary.

"I have before me the list of thirty-seven Taft national committeemen who have thus presented Mr. Taft with two delegates stolen from the people of California by the national committeemen at the request of the henchmen of Mr. Patrick Calhoun. The list offers interesting reading and it is curious to see Mr. Brooker of Connecticut and Mr. Crane of Massachusetts, Mr. Nagel, Mr. Taft's personal friend from Missouri, behind Mr. Penrose, Mr. Franklin Murphy, Mr. Powell Clayton, Mr. Mulvane of Kansas and A. M. Stevenson of Colorado.

"These thirty-seven national committeemen have robbed the immense majority of republicans of California of their rights. Then there comes fourteen who represent the republican states, every one of which has repudiated Mr. Taft at the primaries this spring, with the exception of Massachusetts, which, however, repudiated Mr. Crane, the man through whom the vote of Massachusetts has been registered in favor of the theft of the two delegates in question from the people of California. There remain but seven men from the republican states, and of the seven states in six no primaries were held this spring and the republican voters had no chance to express their wishes.

"Those men who are endeavoring to wreck the republican party by trying to pack the national convention with men not elected to it as delegates are men just repudiated by the republicans of their own states, whose official position in the republican party comes to an end within one week.

"I don't for one moment believe that the convention will ratify this action by the national

committee, for to do so would be to betray the cause of the people, to be false to the fundamental principles of good citizenship and of American democracy and to wreck the republican party."

The Roosevelt forces put up such a strong fight in the Missouri contest that the national committee did not carry out its purpose to give all those places to Taft. A bitter fight was made in the committee and the Roosevelt men were greatly encouraged by the victory.

An effort was made to bar from the committee room Francis J. Heney, the famous prosecutor, who was there on a proxy on the ground that Heney was a democrat. He denied the accusation and the motion to exclude him was voted down.

On the evening of June 14th Colonel Roosevelt announced to the newspaper men that he would leave immediately for Chicago accompanied by members of his family and other friends. He departed for the scene of the convention. Near Albany, N. Y., a big boulder was rolled on the track and his train was brought to a halt, although the engine was injured by running over the rock. Three boys were arrested charged with having rolled the stone on the track.

At Chicago the Taft men awaited the coming of Mr. Roosevelt and they said that the unprecedented action would only help Mr. Taft.

Three Oklahoma delegates, one a United States marshal, and of course, a Taft man, had a fight just outside the republican national committee room. They were separated before any serious damage was done.

One section of the Associated Press report follows: Tarrant and Brown, the Taft delegates from the Ninth Tennessee district, were seated by the committee without a roll call, the Roosevelt men voting "no." A roll call was refused on a substitute motion to seat the Roosevelt delegates.

"This is a case of plain stealing," shouted Heney again.

Members of the committee shouted, "Sit down," "order."

"Plain stealing; plain stealing," shouted Heney again.

"We can't be scared by the hooting of an owl," shouted one member.

"Tell us about Abe Ruef," called another.

Heney continued to shout "plain stealing," and was answered with catfalls and derisive laughter.

Mr. Heney's remarks were made when he said he wanted to "explain his vote against seating the Taft delegates in the Ninth Tennessee case.

"Abe Ruef would be ashamed to do what you are doing here," Mr. Heney said, replying to a remark by Committeeman Chubb of Florida.

"Give us some more," called one member.

"I'll give you another whenever I have the chance," declared Heney.

A letter written by Charles Banks, one of the negro Taft delegates-at-large from Mississippi, to Director McKinley, of the Taft headquarters, announcing that he would support Roosevelt and was returning "the money placed in my hands at your suggestion to defray the traveling expenses of some of the delegates from Mississippi," was given out by Senator Dixon, manager of the Roosevelt campaign, and created a sensation in political circles.

The letter was unaccompanied by explanation from the Roosevelt managers, further than that "Senator Dixon received at Roosevelt headquarters the following copy of a letter sent to Hon. W. B. McKinley." Mr. Banks and his associates on the Taft delegation-at-large were seated by the national committee against the protest of the Roosevelt contestants from the state.

The letter alleged to have been written to Mr. McKinley by Banks in part:

"In keeping with my suggestion of yesterday, I am returning to you herewith the money placed in my hands at your suggestion, to defray traveling expenses of some of the delegates from Mississippi. It is apparent that someone connected with your campaign has been continually trying to discredit me before the country and with my people for some time.

"When I was in Washington a few weeks ago, looking after the new federal court bill, from Mississippi and called at your headquarters, your assistant, without any suggestion from me whatever, brought up the matter of expenses for delegates from that state. I told him then and there, in your presence, that so far as I was concerned I would not accept any expense money for me whatever.

"You then proposed that I take enough for