

great propositions of improvement of government were pledged by the recent democratic platform, and almost a like number were pledged by other party platforms. We have work to do that means the preservation, the conservation, and the development of human life, of human energy, of human health. We have before us the great problems which mean the development of this vast country, and we should have the machinery of government by which to respond with reasonable promptitude to mature public opinion, but the rules of the senate have been such as to prevent action, to put the power in the hands of a small faction or of a single individual to obstruct, without reason, and to prevent action by congress. I favor the right of the majority of the senate to control the senate after giving every reasonable freedom of debate to the opposition, so that the people of the country may have both sides of every proposition. But I am strongly opposed to the minority veto, or to a single senator obstructing and preventing the control of the senate by the responsible majority.

In a short session of congress the senate will appropriate a thousand million dollars in less than 350 working hours. Each working hour means the appropriation of \$3,000,000 of the hard-earned taxes taken from the labor of the American people. Every two minutes the senate averages an appropriation of \$100,000 of taxes, and yet, instead of addressing itself to a comprehension of the necessity for such taxes, for such expenditure, a single senator, or a small faction or a minority, may detain the senate for hours and for days and for weeks while great questions of public policy wait, leaving the senate to be thus distracted by filibustering tactics, discussions of immaterial or trivial matters, reading of worthless papers and statistics, last year's almanac—in a deliberate obstruction of the majority by the minority.

EXTREME DIFFICULTY IN OBTAINING LEGISLATION THAT IS CONFESSEDLY OF VALUE, EVEN WITHOUT A FILIBUSTER

Mr. President, before a bill can be passed that is desired by the American people, no matter how worthy, it must first be carefully drawn, submitted to the house of representatives and by the house submitted to a committee, and almost invariably such a bill is sent from the committee of the house to the executive department for a report; and when the report comes in it is considered in the committee, and finally and usually, where the majority desires the bill passed, it will be reported back to the house—abundant opportunity having been thus given to discover its weak points or defects.

When it goes to the house it takes its place upon the calendar and awaits the time with patience when it can be taken up on the calendar.

It must be read three times in the house, it must be printed, it is discussed in the house, and, finally, if after having passed every criticism and scrutiny it be approved by the majority of the house, it is signed by the speaker and finds its way to the United States senate. When it reaches the senate it is again sent to a committee, the committee further considers it, and, finally, if a majority favor, it is reported back to the senate to take its place upon the calendar. And many a good bill has died on the calendar in the senate because of a single objection to it—what might be called the private right of veto by an individual senator. If at last it is permitted, by consent, to come before the senate and does not excite any prolonged debate, it may become a law by reason of a majority vote of those present. But if anywhere along the line of this slow, deliberate procedure any serious objection is raised by a minority, or by a senator, either can by dilatory motions, by insisting upon hearings, by making the point of "no quorum," by using a senator's right to object and demand the regular order, by using his position to ask reconsideration and a rehearing, or, perhaps, an additional report from the executive department, and then demanding hearings in the executive department while the report is delayed, and in a thousand other ingenious ways a single senator, much less a faction or willful minority, can make it almost impossible to pass a bill of great merit. For three years I have been trying to pass a bill to establish an improved organization of the bureau of public health and have been unable to get any action, for or against, by congress. I only refer to this as an example of many meritorious measures which have never been acted upon, and for which there is a powerful matured public sentiment urgently insisting upon action.

The senate of the United States has rules for its conduct that make it almost impossible to get a bill through, except by unanimous consent, where a resolute minority is opposed to the passage of the bill. Under the so-called privilege of "freedom of debate," a group of senators can hold up any measure indefinitely by endless talk in relays and by the use of dilatory motions, moving "no quorum," moving to "adjourn," moving to "take a recess," moving to "adjourn to a day certain," reading for an hour or so from Martin Chuzzlewit or Pickwick papers, moving a point of "no quorum," moving to "adjourn," moving "no quorum," moving to "adjourn to a day certain," moving to "take a recess," moving to go into "executive session," and reading a few chapters of Huckleberry Finn—and this puerile conduct is dignified by the false pretense of being "freedom of debate," when, in point of fact, it is nothing of the kind. It is the minority veto under the false pretense of freedom of debate, under the ridiculous pretense of freedom of debate, under the contemptible and odious pretense of freedom of debate.

It is not freedom of debate. The minority veto is a denial of freedom of debate. A man in charge of an important bill is driven to refrain from debating the bill, because he would be playing into the hands of the opponents of the bill who are trying to kill the bill by exhausting the patience of the senate by endless volubility and unending dilatory motions.

This thoughtless rule of unlimited freedom of debate was adopted in 1806, when there were 34 senators, who met together to discuss their common affairs in courtesy and good faith, when only a very few bills were brought before the senate. They had no conception that unlimited freedom of debate really meant a minority veto. Now that the senate has 96 members, representing 90,000,000 people, when its interests are of the most gigantic importance, when its modern problems of stupendous consequence are demanding prompt and virile action, when hundreds of important bills are pending, this hoary-headed reprobate rises up and strikes a posture of inscrutable wisdom and admonishes the world not to touch this sacred principle of unlimited "freedom of debate." The venerable age of this foolish precedent shall not save it from the just charge of imbecility and legislative vice.

The power to obstruct the will of the people by the senate rules is the last ditch of privilege. In the house of representatives the party in power with its majority is carrying out the will of the majority, permitting reasonable debate and wide publicity to the views of all members. But in the senate, while we have reorganized the committees and have made important improvements in the rules, there still remains the point of unlimited debate, of irrelevant debate, of dilatory motions, whereby the minority can still prevent the action of the majority placed in power by the people. The United States senate is the only place where the people's will can be successfully thwarted, and here it can be obstructed and denied by delays, by dilatory motions, by irrelevant debate, and unlimited discussion.

The new majority of the senate is honestly pledged to the people's cause, and they must carry out their pledges if they wish to retain the approval of the people of the United States.

I am in favor of majority rule.

I am in favor of making the national will immediately effective.

I am in favor of the senate of the United States having the opportunity to do the things required by our great nation.

I am opposed to the minority veto.

I am opposed to the discouragement of honest discussion by the invitation to minority filibuster which this rule of unlimited debate invites.

I am opposed to legislative blackmail, which this rule of unlimited debate encourages, for we have all seen the senate consent to appropriations and important amendments to important bills which ought not to have been made, but which were made rather than jeopardize the bill by the endless debate of a senator proposing and insisting on an amendment.

The minority veto permits the majority to be blackmailed on the most important measures in order to conciliate the unjust demands of the minority. The time has come to end this sort of unwieldy parliamentary procedure with its train of evil consequences.

I believe in the freedom of debate. I invite the freedom of debate, but liberty is one thing and gross abuse of liberty is another thing. Freedom of debate is a valuable principle, worthy of careful preservation, for the majority is often instructed by the minority; but freedom

of debate is one thing, and uncontrolled time-killing talk and unrestrained verbosity used to enforce a factional veto is another thing.

The amendment to Rule XIX which I have proposed does not prevent reasonable debate by any senator, but it does permit the majority, after due notice, to bring a matter to a conclusion whenever it has become obvious that the debate is not sincere, but is intended to enforce a minority veto.

Senator Vest, December 5, 1894, well said:

That these rules "coerce the senators in charge of a bill into silence."

That "with the people of the United States demanding action we have rules here that absolutely prevent it."

That these rules "facilitate parliamentary blackmail."

That the history of the senate is full of important amendments being put upon important bills, "under the threat that unless placed there the debate would be indefinite and almost interminable."

This rule has brought the senate of the United States into disrepute, has greatly diminished its influence, has given it the reputation of being an obstructive body; and many men have been led to believe that the senate was coerced and controlled by a corrupt minority. Certain it is that if a minority can exercise the veto, the corrupt interests of the country could well afford commercially to promote the election of men to the floor of the senate, so as to obstruct legislation to which they objected.

It is the result of these very rules which has led the people of the United States to demand by a unanimous voice the direct election of senators, so as to bring public pressure of the sovereign people on individual members of the senate, and compel them to respect the wishes of the people, under penalty of retirement from public life.

And I venture now, Mr. President, to seriously and solemnly remind every senator upon this floor, who votes against this provision, who votes against majority rule in the senate, who votes against a reasonable control by the senate itself of its own deliberations, that he will have to answer for such vote before the people of his state, who will in the future elect the senators by direct vote of the people and who will nominate them by direct vote of the people. And the senator who by virtue of any precedent or prejudice opposes in this body the free right of the majority to rule will invite defeat by the majority of the people in his own state who surely believe in majority rule and will resent the support of minority rule by their senators on this floor.

I have no fear of majority rule. I never have been afraid of majority rule. The only thing we need to fear is the rule of the minority by artifice and by wrongdoing. And I say frankly to my colleagues from the south that the black-and-white scarecrow of the force bill is a ghost for which I have no respect. We are entering a new era of majority rule, which will deal justly and generously to rich and to poor alike, and with equal generosity, justice, and mercy to men of the black race, as well as to the men of the white race, or to any other race. We need have no fear of majority rule.

Mr. President, I wish it to be clearly understood that my demand for a change of the rules of the senate is not at all due to the idea that the adoption of such a rule is necessary in order to pass the tariff bill or any other particular bill pending or to be brought forward. My reason for this demand is that I think the welfare of the nation requires it; that the right of the American people to a prompt redemption of party promises is involved. The right of the American people to have their will expressed at the polls promptly carried out I regard as an imperative mandate from a nation of 90,000,000 people, and I think that a senator who stands in the way of that mandate falls to perceive his duty to our great nation, and that he should not be surprised if the majority, who will in future nominate senators and elect senators, will hold him to a strict account for a denial of the right of the majority to rule.

I remind the senate that in three years over 30 living senators who opposed the wishes of the American people for the direct election of senators have been retired by the people.

PARTY PLEDGES

The democratic party makes certain pledges to the people and appeals to the people for their support upon these pledges and promises to be performed; the republican party does likewise; yet

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