

Told Nobody of His Impending Resignation

Following is special Washington correspondence by Leroy T. Vernon to the Chicago Daily News of Monday, June 21, 1915:

Washington D. C., June 19.—“When a man undertakes to make a fight for a principle he believes to be right, no one can make the final decision for him. If he consults his friends, they are almost certain to try to discourage him because they naturally look at the matter in the light of its possible effect on him,” said William J. Bryan today.

On three separate occasions, all of them entirely familiar to the American people, Mr. Bryan has been called upon to decide a matter of principle for himself. That he did decide for himself in each instance Mr. Bryan frankly admits. He was asked today to say whether he had consulted with friends prior to making his famous free silver speech before the Chicago convention in 1896, prior to making his speech in the Baltimore convention in 1912, which undoubtedly went far to turn the tide in that body at least away from some of the candidates for the presidency, if not, indeed, toward Woodrow Wilson; and prior to his recent resignation as secretary of state.

Mr. Bryan replied that while he always consulted his friends with regard to preliminary matters leading up to a decision in such important crises, he had never been in the habit of consulting them when the time came to make the final decision. The reasons are given in the above paragraph.

Neither Arrogance Nor Egotism

In taking entire personal responsibility for the three most monumental decisions in his political career, Mr. Bryan can not be charged with either arrogance or egotism. His entire disposition is to respect the opinion of others and to be accorded respect in return. Convinced of the righteousness of the cause he chooses to adopt, his programme has always been to place himself in the firing line and to do his utmost to persuade others that his cause is right.

In making his final decision, however, it can be fairly said that he has invariably chosen not to consult his friends for two reasons. One is that he believes a man should approach a question of principle for himself, and the other is that he prefers to avoid embarrassing his friends by taking them into his confidence in advance.

As an illustration of this point, it can be said that when Mr. Bryan began to consider the question of his retirement from the cabinet he did not consult his colleagues about it, although many of them were his close personal friends and advisers of several years' standing. What Mr. Bryan did do was to urge to the best of his ability and at every opportunity the principles for which he has long been an advocate in regard to the relations between nations.

Finally, when he came to see these principles did not enjoy the support of the president and the cabinet, largely on the ground that they were not, in their judgment, expedient for the purpose in hand, Mr. Bryan felt called upon to make one of his great decisions.

The fact that it is impossible to find in Washington a single man with whom Mr. Bryan discussed this matter in advance led to the inquiry of Mr. Bryan personally above stated. He said that when the decision was made it was communicated first to Secretary McAdoo and then to the president. No other member of the

cabinet was made aware of it until after the written resignation was in the hands of the president.

Didn't Want to Embarrass

“I felt that I could speak to Mr. McAdoo about the matter,” said Mr. Bryan. “He is the president's son-in-law, and I felt I could state my decision to him without subjecting him to the suspicion of having advised it. I did not speak to the other members of the cabinet because I did not want to embarrass them at all. I do not believe there will be any further resignations from the cabinet and I hope there will be none.”

Harking back to the days of 1896 when Mr. Bryan in one speech bounded from the ranks of the democratic party to its leadership, it is interesting to recall that his devotion to principle and his active support of principle followed lines exactly similar to those pursued in his recent retirement from official life. At that time, Mr. Bryan had reported the republican convention in St. Louis, which nominated William McKinley on the gold platform. But the reporting was incidental; his real reason for being there was to confer with the silver republicans with whom he had been associated for three years in the discussion of the silver question.

Prior to the convention, Mr. Bryan had made a number of speeches throughout the country in favor of free silver, and he was naturally intent on watching the reception accorded this subject in the republican gathering. He was among those present when a number of far western delegates marched out of that convention as a protest against the gold standard plank in the platform.

There was nothing extraordinary, therefore, in his decision that the democratic party in its national convention should be brought around to the opposite side of the monetary question, in order that the issue might be clearly drawn and the principle in which he believed thoroughly tested at the polls. That Mr. Bryan would, if he could, make a speech on the subject before the democratic national convention, his friends probably had a right to assume by what he said and did.

None Prepared for Events

None of them, however, was prepared for the spectacular events which were to follow. In fact, Mr. Bryan's seat in the convention itself was contested, and it was not until he had been seated that his right to be heard was secure. Mr. Bryan was as much surprised as any one else when Senator Jones of Arkansas sent for him to take charge of the debate on the platform.

His subsequent appearance on the platform at the psychological moment and the inspired words which he then uttered are matters of political history known to everybody. It can be said that in enunciating the principle for which he stood Mr. Bryan had little reason to believe that he would be made the standard bearer of his party to defend it. The Nebraska delegation hoped for Mr. Bryan's nomination, but recognized that the chances were very much against such an honor coming to a small western state.

Again in 1912 Mr. Bryan attended the republican national convention at Chicago as a newspaper correspondent. There he witnessed a contest over personalities rather than principles, but he was quick to seize upon an issue which, when finally presented by him to the Baltimore convention so completely upset the well laid

plans of the political leaders as to change not only the platform but the probable nominee besides.

The Fight Against Parker

Before leaving Chicago Mr. Bryan telegraphed ahead to all of the leading democratic candidates for the presidency offering to join with them in making a fight against the selection of Judge Parker for temporary chairman. This nomination Mr. Bryan vigorously protested. Even after his arrival in Baltimore, he hoped that Judge Parker's selection could be prevented and for two days labored to this end.

Only Woodrow Wilson responded, among all the candidates, in an unqualified affirmative.

It will be recalled that when Judge Parker was placed in nomination before the convention, after having declined to withdraw, Mr. Bryan himself took the platform and urged Senator John W. Kern of Indiana as a candidate against him. Mr. Kern declined, and it was then, and only then, that Mr. Bryan, believing that the principle he was fighting for was worth fighting for to a finish decided to permit his own name to be used as a candidate.

Fighting for Principle

Thus, Mr. Bryan again proved himself a last ditch fighter for principle. Then it was that the real battle in the convention began. Although Judge Parker was elected by a vote of 579 to 510, Senator-Elect Ollie James of Kentucky, who was favored by Mr. Bryan and his friends, became the permanent chairman of the convention, and just before the nomination of candidates for the presidency Mr. Bryan secured the passage of a resolution by the convention opposing the nomination of any candidate for president “who is the representative of, or under any obligation to J. Pierpont Morgan, Thomas F. Ryan, August Belmont, or any other member of the privilege hunting and favor seeking class.”

“There is not a delegate in this convention who does not know that an effort is being made right now to sell the democratic party into the bondage of the predatory interests. It is a most brazen, impudent and insolent attempt to make the nominee of this convention the bond slave of the men who exploit the people of this country,” Mr. Bryan said, in explaining the resolution. The resolution was adopted by a vote of 889 to 196. Then followed forty-six ballots and the nomination of Woodrow Wilson, who, as a result of the contest in the Baltimore convention, came to be the unqualified choice of Mr. Bryan for the honor.

Something Going to Happen

Preceding every momentous decision by Mr. Bryan there has always been an under current of feeling that “something was about to happen.” In the Chicago convention in 1896, those who knew Mr. Bryan and his ability as an orator afterwards confessed that they “felt in their bones” that some extraordinary event was about to occur.

Before the Baltimore convention met the atmosphere was charged with the “something doing” notion and Mr. Bryan was closely watched, but never betrayed what was in the back of his head until the crisis arrived.

Those who watched carefully the preliminary steps leading up to Mr. Bryan's retirement from the cabinet could not reconcile what they saw in Mr. Bryan and what they heard from others. Despite denials, official and otherwise, that Mr. Bryan would retire, the crisis was apparent, and the only question concerning it was whether Mr. Bryan regarded it as serious enough to resign. He did resign and he kept his own counsel until the decision was made.

THE PRESS AND MR. BRYAN

[I. J. Dunn, in Omaha Daily News, July 6, 1915.]

On the night of June 24th, W. J. Bryan addressed a peace meeting at Madison Square Garden, New York.

The New York World's account of the meeting, published on the front page, was that 70,000 people sought admission. Other estimates were that the crowd numbered 100,000.

Not a word of this meeting or of Bryan's address on the subject of peace, which was received with marked approval by the thousands who heard it, was published in any Nebraska daily newspaper so far as I have been able to learn, with one exception. The Omaha Bee in its morning issue of June 25th had an obscure reference to it. The World-Herald suppressed it entirely. Why did the morning papers served by the Associated press refuse to publish an account of this great meeting? Have the influences that own or control the press and news associations of the country determined that the facts as to the attitude of the masses of the American people on the question of peace or war shall be kept from the public?

The daily press generally was loud in asserting that the people stood solidly behind the president, and indorsed the tenor of the government's note to Germany, as against Bryan's position that arbitration should be offered and resorted to if necessary, in the cause of peace. This assertion has been sharply challenged. The people apparently have concluded to speak for themselves, and to voice their own sentiments regardless of the press.

This New York meeting was astonishing evidence of what the people think on this question, and strongly indicates that they do not favor a policy that excludes the principle of arbitration. Why was the effort made to keep from the people of Nebraska, the information that the citizens of New York at a great meeting, paid high tribute to the world's great leader in the cause of peace, and indorsed his views on that subject? If a similar meeting were to be held in Omaha or in any other western city, no doubt the same tactics would be pursued by the same class of newspapers, and the people in other parts of the country would be left in ignorance of the fact that such a meeting had been held, or that the people expressed sentiments contrary to those announced for them by a jingo press. Are those who subscribe for newspapers that they may obtain news, not entitled to it? Are they not to know the truth on a national issue in which all are interested, and in the determination of which the views of the masses ought to count for much?

Does it make any difference whether the real news happens to be as those who are clamoring for war would have it? Do we get what we pay for when the facts as to what the people are saying and doing on this supreme question of the hour, vital to the welfare of the nation, are deliberately suppressed?

If it were only a conspiracy against Bryan it would be a different matter. Plutocracy and its puppets have pursued the same course as to him for 20 years or more. No one expects that the newspapers who serve the greedy interests of those who prey and plunder, whether published in Nebraska or in New York will treat Bryan with fairness. It is not expected that any newspaper that receives its orders from the “interests” will hesitate to vilify and misrepresent him, regarding any issue, no matter how vital to the nation it may be, or however patriotic his conduct. While obtaining the money of their