

## Mr. Bryan's Chicago Letters

(Mr. Bryan wrote special reports covering the republican and progressive national conventions at Chicago, June 7 to 10, which were published by various newspapers throughout the country. The reports follow.)

### THE REPUBLICAN CONVENTION

Have you ever attended a national convention of either of the great parties? If not you have missed much. There is nothing like it on earth. The presidential campaigns, coming four years apart, give opportunity for the accumulation of party enthusiasm, and this enthusiasm finds expression at a national convention as nowhere else. The visitor sees politics at its maximum and finds in such occasions an education of real value to the citizen in matters of government. Such a convention combines national activities with the activities of all the states. Senators and members of the house of representatives are in attendance, cabinet officers or ex-cabinet officers, as the case may be, governors of states, party managers, local politicians and ward bosses, and with these mingle the members of clubs, marching to the music of numberless bands.

Each candidate has his headquarters and about each of these headquarters are grouped special friends and workers, who run hither and thither rounding up the delegations. The claims of favorite sons are pressed, as are the larger claims of candidates with a national following.

All national conventions are interesting and instructing, for they present man as he is in a crowd, which is very different from man as he is alone. The republican convention at this time is likely to be unusually exciting for two reasons. First, because the party, defeated after a sixteen years' lease of power, manifests an intense desire to win. This alone would insure the raising of the temperature of the convention to white heat. But there is a second cause of scarcely less influence—namely, the renewal of the contest which four years ago resulted in the division of the party. For a while after 1912 it looked as if the progressives were slumping back into the regular organization; the elections in 1913, 1914 and 1915 indicated that the Roosevelt following was becoming almost a negligible quantity, but under the stimulus of his personal leadership the ranks of the progressives are growing and, with the growth, there is an aggressiveness which will give spice to the convention.

At this time the chances seem very much against Colonel Roosevelt's renomination. All the arguments ordinarily used seem to stand in his way. His nomination would violate the third term precedent, which until 1912 was supposed to be revered by our nation. He bolted the party in 1912; can those whom he defeated then so soon forgive him? Then, too, he has taken so radical an attitude on matters connected with the European war that he would seem to have alienated all but the extremists. In the matter of increasing the army and navy appropriations he has gone far beyond the bulk of the party, so far as they have expressed themselves, and he has boldly advocated universal military service, a policy new to the point of being revolutionary. Is it possible that he can fit into a time like this when the politicians of his party are looking for a compromise candidate who can heal the divisions of the past and reunite the party? It would look impossible but for the fact that Mr. Roosevelt has in the past successfully disregarded so many well settled rules.

The sentiment seems to run strongly towards Justice Hughes. His supporters regard him as the logical candidate; he has high character, official standing, great ability and ample experience. The "stand pat" element of the party which will control the convention, has confidence in Mr. Hughes, and the progressives can find reasons for accepting him, his advocacy of the primary being the basis of his popularity with them. For these reasons he seems to be the most attractive compromise candidate, but he does not appear as strong as he did a few weeks ago. His boom started too soon. Without his fault he was projected into the political arena by his supporters and, as was natural, has aroused the opposition of those whose interests he menaced. His chief claim to favor was that he would be popular with the progressives, but within the last two or three weeks they have

been compelled to find fault with him in order to justify their support of Colonel Roosevelt. Now the fight seems to be between these two, and this may make it necessary to pick out another man as a compromise candidate, Burton or McCall for instance.

If the "stand pat" element of the party could have its way it would nominate Mr. Root, but he is probably the one man whom the progressives would oppose more bitterly than any other.

The situation has enough uncertainty in it to delight both the speculator and student of "men in the mass." The prophets are prophesying and there is no limit to predictions. The very strength of men is shown to be their weakness and the obscurity of men is dwelt upon as a source of strength. The war horses are being objected to because of their records, and the dark horses are being entered, commended because of their lack of prominence, or because they have not excited special opposition.

The platform does not come in for as much attention as the candidates, and it is not likely to become the cause of dissension. Whatever may be said on the new issues that have arisen there are two planks that are sure to be found in the document when it is ready for publication. One will "point with pride" to everything that the republican party did before it went out of power, and the other will view with alarm everything that the democratic party has done since it came into power. However much the delegates may differ over the relative merits of candidates, there will be unanimity of sentiment as to the necessity for the immediate return of the republican party to power—in which respect this convention will not differ in its partisan attitude from former conventions of both parties.

W. J. B.

### DISTINCTIONS OF FOUR YEARS AGO DISAPPEAR

Chicago, June 5.—There is a noticeable lack of enthusiasm as compared with the republican convention of four years ago. The claims of candidates are not presented as aggressively as were the claims of President Taft and ex-President Roosevelt, the rival candidates in 1912. The tone is different.

At the last convention each side was asserting its claims to the control of the party machinery; each side was insisting that it was voicing the sentiment of the party. It was a conflict,—one of the most memorable in our political history,—between men who felt that the life of their party depended on the success of their efforts. Each side was afraid that the other side would kill the organization, the standpatters by refusing to meet the needs of the hour, the progressives by a surrender of what Mr. Taft's friends called republican conservatism.

Today the distinctions of four years ago have disappeared, and there now seems to be no material difference between the programmes of the two sides so far as they relate to issues or platform phraseology.

The password now is "hungry" and it will open any caucus door. The politicians are hungry for the offices from which they were separated by the democracy's return to power. They are for the candidate "who can win," and against anyone whose nomination would, in their opinion, jeopardize party success. They are reinforced by the candidate for the United States senate and congress and for state and local offices. These aspirants realize that in a presidential year much depends upon whether the tide is with the party or against it. A division in the party would be felt all the way down, while harmony would be of immense advantage to every candidate.

The special interests also are hungry. For the first time in many years they have found the atmosphere at Washington chilly and uninviting. "The old home isn't what it used to be"; the lobbyists who visit Washington now are as watchful as wild ducks toward the end of the shooting season. The special interests are not willing to take any chances; the candidate who desires their support will have to show them that he is available. These two elements, the hungry politicians and the representatives of the hungry, favor-seeking corporations, are sifting out the claims of candidates and have not as yet announced their choice.

There is a third factor which enters into the

calculations here, namely, the fact that the progressives are hungry also,—they want to return to the republican party and will seize upon any reasonable excuse offered. They were responsible for the overthrow of the party's nominee four years ago, and they are not likely to assume responsibility for a democratic victory this year. They would like to see Colonel Roosevelt nominated, but his nomination is not necessary to secure their support. Any good republican will do, although the enthusiasm with which they will support him will depend somewhat upon his attitude toward the progressives in the past. There are, of course, a number of progressives who are more interested in consistency than in success, and who would rather have the party make an unsuccessful fight for a progressive candidate and platform than see the reactionary element in the party return to power. There are some progressives, too, who are sanguine enough to believe that Colonel Roosevelt could win if nominated, in spite of the fact that he has alienated every outside element to which the party could appeal, as well as a large number within the party. These enthusiasts, however, are not likely to control. There is too much at stake. The big interests are divided in allegiance between the Taft and Roosevelt wings of the party, and they do not look with favor upon any proposition that threatens the reunion of the party. They will counsel charity and toleration on both sides, and their counsel is quite sure to prevail.

Today the drift is toward Hughes. His friends claim that he will have more votes on the first ballot than all of the favorite sons combined. This claim, of course, is not conceded by the other candidates, but the number of delegates pledged to him seems to increase in spite of the fact that he is now receiving the attacks which are generally directed against a growing candidate. Senator LaFollette is the choice of the radical reformers, but there are very few of them in the convention. Senator Cummins has a following among his neighbors, but the republicans are not looking to the west for a candidate this year. Senator Burton has a considerable personal following, and his friends claim that he is the second choice of more delegates than any other candidate; ex-Vice-president Fairbanks has an earnest support and Senator Weeks' workers are in evidence, but the Hughes boom seems to be the overshadowing fact.

This is the situation as it appears now, but after making the rounds of the headquarters and getting the forecasts from each, I can appreciate the favorite utterance of one of the cautious statesmen of the last generation: "I will not predict."

W. J. B.

### STANDPAT REPUBLICANS CONTROL CONVENTION

Chicago, June 6.—The pot is boiling, but it is not boiling over. The situation seems unchanged; indications still point to Hughes. There is no break so far in the ranks of the standpat republicans who are in control, and no progress is being made by the Roosevelt followers. The progressive leaders are doing their best to work up enthusiasm but it does not penetrate the body of delegates who are here to pick out the candidate.

A business men's meeting was held at the Garrick theatre at noon today at which a number of Roosevelt speeches were made to an enthusiastic audience. J. Ogden Armour presided. Alexander H. Revell pictured Mr. Roosevelt as the only candidate who gives expression to the "true American spirit." Mr. Kellogg Fairbanks praised Colonel Roosevelt as the one man who could put the country in a state of preparedness for war.

Congressman Gardner added his endorsement of Roosevelt as the only candidate who knew what to do and how to do it. Mr. Gardner painted a dismal picture of the future unless the party nominates and the country elects the ex-president. The main features of the picture were "Twenty million soldiers in Europe demobilized," "Industries Prostrated," and "Countries bankrupted." To his imagination this country offers the only prize in sight for these fatigued troops representing governments without credit and nations without industries upon which to build credit. Mr. Gardner is expecting this country to be invaded unless his candidate is put in charge of the government, and the government is immediately put in a state of preparedness.

Other speakers represented Mr. Roosevelt as the only candidate who could insure the election of a republican senate to support a republican president. All the speakers dwelt upon the importance of charity, forgiveness, and toleration,