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## THE GREAT A. P. A.

Its Policy and Power in This Country Very Fully Defined.

Ex-President W. J. H. Traynor Gives His Views on the Order and its Principles.

The following are extracts from ex-President W. J. H. Traynor's article in the June number of the *North American Review*, under the title of "Policy Power of the A. P. A."

The American Protective Association, or as it is more generally known, the A. P. A., is now in the tenth year of its existence. No organization in the history of the American republic ever had so spontaneous a birth, so remarkable a career, so radical an effect upon American politics, or has been the subject of such general interest and friendly and adverse comment as this association, while no institution has been so widely misrepresented or misunderstood.

The American Protective Association is neither a religious body nor an institution adverse to the religion, *per se*, of any person, sect or faith. It was organized, neither to oppose the religious dogmas of any ecclesiastical corporation, nor to direct, dissect, maintain or destroy theology, old or new. While I am fully aware that the opponents of the association, and those who, though not opposing, are uninformed, assert to the contrary, and while I am also aware that the indirect expressions of individual members of the order here and there have occasionally given color to such expressions, the constitution of the association does not, nor does the ritual or secret work of the organization warrant any such conception of the purposes of the order, or any such construction of its principles.

It would be superfluous to introduce

in an article of this kind the specific reasons leading up to the founding of the order, more especially as they have been discussed at some length in previous issues of the *North American Review*, or to introduce arguments pro or con. The reasons advanced by the founders of the order for its institution were, practically, upon the following grounds:

1. That the spirit of the national constitution was being violated in various ways by certain persons and bodies in the United States.
2. That certain members and sections of the national government were in connivance with the said violators.
3. That the conditions governing our national immigration were such as to weaken our democratic institutions and form of government, and to substitute therefor a system of government not in harmony therewith.
4. That the immigrant vote, under the direction of certain ecclesiastical institutions, has become so dominant a factor in politics as to virtually control it.
5. That this domination has resulted in political prostitution, corruption and favoritism of the worst kind.
6. That the great majority of the American people, while painfully cognizant of the sinister and degrading results of these conditions, and desirous of amending them, were either ignorant of any efficient means of counter-organization or fearful of the injury to their personal interests at the hands of their powerful and organized opponents.

The current history of the period to which I refer must answer the question whether the projectors of the American Protective Association were right or wrong in their assumptions.

Although in effect the efforts of the organization were directed against an institution nominally theological, they were intended to antagonize only those sections of the institution which were political as well as theological, or subversive of the principles of the national constitution and the laws and statutes of the land. Nor was the association formed for the mere purpose of combatting what its founders con-

sidered the unpatriotic attitude and politically demoralizing influences of any one or more theological bodies in particular, but rather to erase from our national statutes all legislation which had been enacted in opposition to the constitution, and to erect a barrier of legislative enactments between the church and state that should be eternal, and prevent a recurrence of those conditions which, at that period, threatened to exalt the *ipse dixit* of the ecclesiast above the sovereign will of the people, and render the state subservient to the interests, will and caprice of the church. The A. P. A., then, was founded, not as an organization specifically hostile to any existing institution, but rather as the exponent and champion of a principle to be maintained against all antagonistic influences, existent or prospective, whatsoever.

While there existed, and still exists, several religious sects whose principles materially conflict with the principles enumerated in the national constitution, and which, if permitted to obtain, would result in a union of church and state, with the church the dictator, it is not strange that the founders of the A. P. A. should have selected that sect as the special object of their antagonism whose past record was least reconcilable to American conditions and which most strongly indicate, through the authoritative past and current utterances of its representatives, an intention to pursue in the future that policy which had been so subversive of liberty of conscience and person in other days, and whose strength, organization and ability of self-assertion rendered it the most dangerous to that sovereignty of the people which the signers of the Declaration of Independence endeavored to secure and perpetuate. The immense growth of the order from efforts comparatively insignificant, indicate that, while not openly expressed, or practically demonstrated before, the sentiments of a large portion of the thinking public were identical with those expressed in the principles of the organization. For the first two or three years the growth of the order

was practically spontaneous, indicating that the movement was neither a craze nor the conception of cranks, but the spark of consequences, which fired a train of circumstances laid by corrupt legislators and self-seeking ecclesiasts and their adherents through a course of many years. It is not surprising that a sect so tenacious of its principles, the assumed rights of its head and the antiquity of its institutions, as the papists of the United States, were in no mood to brook any abridgement of the privileges which the perfection of their political organization had secured to them, more particularly as they (the Irish papists especially) had been the dominant and courted element in the politics and government of the nation for many years. Their reprisals for the political opposition of the A. P. A. took the form of the deadly boycott—politically, personally, socially and in business. This boycott was prosecuted all the more harshly from the fact that the boycotters were composed for the greater part of the most illiterate element of the nation. Nearly every member of the A. P. A. who made himself prominent in the movement found himself ruined politically, and consequently only a small percentage dared brave the storm that inevitably followed membership in the order. These conditions led to the enforcement of absolute secrecy, both as to membership and place of meeting. The daily press, which was almost unanimously adverse to the movement, took special pains to hold the order up to public odium, while the two dominant parties used every effort to crush an organization which it soon became palpable to both they could not use without seriously disarranging their own machinery. This was the period when the order was too weak to meet the forces of their opponents openly without the certainty of defeat. It was the period, too, when the acts of the order were almost entirely defensive and absolutely negative.

Following this came the period of construction and organization, when the administration applied itself to the adjustment of its political machinery, and began to make the principles of

the organization known through many states. In a large number of our important cities the seed thus sown produced great results, and councils numbering 3,000 in membership were to be found in our large cities. Then followed a series of sharp, decisive political victories for the order, which surprised the oldest of political campaigners. The order still pursued its negative policy, using its influence against the candidate with a bad political record, and it is but doing the organization simple justice to state that the Protestant candidate whose record was bad fared no better than a papist of the same stripe. The result, however, was undeniably creditable, both to the order and politics generally, and undoubtedly served to elevate the latter.

Between the years 1890 and 1893 the initiated membership was scattered but sparsely through less than twenty states, but it was a period of undoubted health and usefulness, from the fact that affiliation with the order was rather a disadvantage than an advantage, and it attracted to its ranks the disinterested almost exclusively. The year 1893, however, showed such remarkable success for the order in the political field that the conditions changed, and ambitious politicians suddenly awoke to the realization that baptism in A. P. A. water was attended with pleasure and profitable political consequences.

In the two years that followed the order planted itself firmly in every state and territory in the Union, and was instrumental in overturning the entire political machinery in fourteen states. With these victories commenced a general policy of active aggression.

The opening of the Fifty-fourth congress demonstrated the power of the organization as no event had previously done. Nearly 100 members of the house of representatives were elected, pledged to support the principles of the order, while several members of the senate were elected under similar conditions. Many accepted the principles of the order as the means of obtaining A. P. A. votes, and lost no time in repudiating those principles

when their political interests suggested it. However, in no instance was a representative elected as a member of the A. P. A., but as a member of one or the other existing political parties. Hence, he was only secondarily a member of the organization whose principles were considered injudicious, even if not politically pernicious, by all parties who were compelled to cater, more or less, to the Catholic vote. Thus he stood in the position of a man with two masters, the one promising material, the other moral punishments. It is eminently to the credit of those who have maintained their obligations to the order entire. The aphorism that half a loaf is better than no bread has exercised a most pernicious and enervating influence upon the organization in many sections—pernicious because it has paved the way for compromises with those acts of the old parties which the order was organized most strenuously to resist; enervating, because it leads to the suggestion that the least of two evils is itself good. It should have been the unfaltering policy of the association to maintain the position of endorsing no political candidate who was unprepared to pledge himself openly to the principles of the order, and, as an alternative, to place an independent candidate in the field, even in the face of inevitable defeat—defeat under such conditions being infinitely preferable to a victory so questionable, and involving such serious consequences to the order, as in many cases it has. Some Democrats and Republicans may be found in the order who joined it for the purpose of destroying it. The American Protective Association is the strongest and purest political force the western world has ever known. It grew from the parent stem of pure motives and patriotism. It is intensely human, and therefore very imperfect. Yet, imperfect as it is, there is nothing like it in the world. It holds the political balance of power in the United States, and influences at least 4,000,000 votes.

Finally, it should not be forgotten that 95 per cent of the members of the order are Americans first, A. P. A.'s next and elements of party last of all.