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The Candidacy of Mr. Hill

The speech delivered by ex-Senator David B. Hill at the Manhattan club banquet in New York, February 22, may be accepted as a formal announcement of his candidacy before the next democratic national convention. He is certain that President Roosevelt will be the republican nominee, and Roosevelt is a New York man. He is also certain that New York will be the battle ground, and the inference is natural (though not necessary) that the democratic nominee should come from New York—and is not Mr. Hill a New York man?

But in order that his candidacy might be fairly started on its way he outlines what he considers a winning platform. It is

That Familiar Ambiguity.

fortunate for the party that the distinguished New Yorker discloses his plans early, although those who read the platform will observe that there is a familiar ambiguity about the planks which recalls the days when democratic platforms were made to conceal issues rather than to present them. First, as to the man. As he has not taken the public fully into his confidence we must rely on circumstances to ascertain the exact hour when the present attack of presidential fever first made its appearance. If the minority had secured control of the Chicago convention Mr. Hill would doubtless have been the nominee, for he was the spokesman of the minority and was peculiarly fitted to represent the methods employed by the gold men on that occasion. As is well known he refused to give a single word of encouragement to the democratic ticket during the campaign and as a result whatever influence he had was thrown against the party. When the campaign was over he wrote a carefully prepared magazine article assailing the democratic platform and arguing in favor of repudiating it. This article will be reproduced hereafter.

At the time the article was written the reorganizers were loudly proclaiming their determination to reconstruct the party along Wall street lines and Mr. Hill may have been deceived as to the extent of the gold sentiment. The elections of 1897,

however, showed the overwhelming strength of the Chicago platform democracy, and all talk of reorganization was for the time abandoned. It was during this lull that Mr. Hill publicly admitted that he voted the democratic ticket in 1896. It was so startling a piece of news that it was telegraphed all over the country and it has since been reported that his statement could be proved by a thumb-mark on the ticket. It is not necessary, however, to resort to the thumb-mark—Pudd'nhead Wilson's favorite form of evidence. It can readily be admitted that Mr. Hill, after doing all he could to defeat the ticket, voted for the candidates in order to give him technical membership in the party. Whether he had fully determined to be a candidate when he secretly voted the ticket, or when, after the election, he boldly attacked the platform, cannot be determined, but no well informed person will doubt that he was considering a future nomination when he admitted that in the seclusion of the booth he had solemnly

assumed his share of the terrible responsibility borne by those who voted for the nominees of the Chicago convention.

From that day on his energies were bent, not toward overthrowing the organization, but toward changing the platform. After

Emasculating the Platform.

nearly all the states had reaffirmed the Chicago platform he changed his tactics and sought to prevent any reiteration of the planks that were objectionable to him. It will be remembered that he at first protested against instructions, but finally consented to attend the convention as an instructed delegate. During the campaign that followed he made speeches, but their influence can be measured by the fact that they secured neither the votes, the influence, nor the contributions of those who are now most enthusiastic in support of his candidacy.

He is the favorite son of the reorganizing element in the democratic party; he is the special representative of those who have so completely forgotten the story of the prodigal son that they would place the parental homestead on wheels and start in hot pursuit of the wayward son, determined to compel the boy to eat fatted calf even if the husks have destroyed his taste for wholesome food.

But what of HIS PLATFORM? The following is the abstract given by the press:

We trace our political lineage back to Jefferson, who was the author of that immortal protest against British imperialism known as the Declaration of Independence. Opposition to the precepts and practices of imperialism was thus one of the cardinal principles of our party at the very inception of the government.

We should adhere to the policy involved in Jeffersonian expansion, the reasonable and natural acquirement of territory adjacent to our own. Whenever the American flag of right floats it should be as an emblem of a free government and the aegis of constitutional liberty.

Neither should tariff wars nor customs duties obstruct the path of American trade from one portion of this government to another portion. The spectacle is at present presented of Cuba relieved from Spanish oppression only to be enslaved by the United States in commercial bondage. Justice demands that these impositions shall cease. Nothing but self-interest stands in the way of tariff reform for Cuba.

The democratic party should again press to the front the issue of revenue reform. The republican principle or practice of protection is based on the right to use the powers of government for individual purposes. Our republican friends make revenue the incident and protection the main purpose of all tariff taxation.

The policy of reciprocity is and always has been a democratic policy.

We believe in a strict construction of the federal constitution as essential for the public welfare.

We believe in home rule for states.

We favor an amendment to the constitution providing for the election of United States senators by the people.

Opposition to dangerous corporate combinations of capital should continue to be the democratic position.

The Monroe doctrine, first enunciated by a

democratic president, should remain a settled policy of this republic.

We believe in hard money—the money of the constitution—and are unalterably opposed to irredeemable paper currency.

If any further enunciation of democratic policy upon the financial question is regarded as necessary in view of the existing monetary conditions, then it is suggested that a simple declaration in favor of the general principle of bimetallism furnishes a common ground upon which all can stand.

He is sound on imperialism, but the Kansas City platform is stronger, clearer and more explicit than his. His advice to

His Sudden Conversion To Reform.

press tariff reform comes with bad grace from one who as a democratic senator refused to support the only tariff reform measure passed since the civil war. As his silence in 1896 contributed to the success of the most conspicuous high tariff advocate in the nation it is evident that his hostility to a protective tariff is of recent and sudden growth. As for reciprocity, republicans favor it where it will do no good, and democrats favor a tariff reform that will largely remove the necessity for reciprocity.

The "strict construction" doctrine is democratic, but it affords almost as much latitude for individual action as a plank declaring that each person should always do what he thinks is right.

It is to be hoped that the senate will act favorably upon the resolution proposing an amendment to the constitution providing for the election of United States senators by a direct vote of the people. If it does this, the only definite and specific plank in Mr. Hill's platform will present an issue already settled. The Monroe doctrine is not in dispute; it is accepted by all parties, and Mr. Roosevelt's latest message removes the question from the domain of partisan politics.

"Opposition to dangerous corporate combinations of capital is entirely too vague and indefinite.

Vague and Indefinite.

The last republican platform was stronger than that, and yet Mr. Knox is the attorney general. Mr. Cleveland was much more emphatic in his condemnation of trusts and yet he did nothing to disturb them. There is not a great trust in the country that would refuse to contribute liberally to the democratic campaign fund if the party would adopt Mr. Hill's anti-trust plank and then allow the trusts to select the candidate.

The St. Paul Globe—a paper owned by Mr. J. J. Hill, the head of the great railroad combine—has already published an editorial booming ex-Senator Hill, and the reason given for his nomination was that he could not be controlled by the corporations. This is a fair sample of corporation politics. What is a "dangerous corporate combination?" Is any party likely to declare in favor of such a thing? If not, how can Mr. Hill's platform present an issue?

But the money plank of Mr. Hill's proposed platform is the most unique one. "We believe in hard money!" How alluring such a platform would look to an artful dodger. A man could stand on that platform and advocate gold, silver, nickel or copper, and after election de-