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James Robert Williams of Illinois

Continuing its policy of presenting the names of democrats worthy of being considered as candidates for the democratic nomination for president in 1904, The Commoner this week offers the following concerning Congressman James Robert Williams of Illinois, contributed by a personal and political admirer:

"James Robert Williams was born in White county, Illinois, December 27, 1850. He is a graduate of the State University of Indiana and the Union College of Law of Chicago, and since 1876 has been engaged in the practice of law at Carmi, Ill. From 1880 to 1882 he was master in chancery, and county judge from 1882 to 1886.

"In 1889 Mr. Williams was elected to congress to fill a vacancy, and was re-elected to the Fifty-second, Fifty-third, Fifty-sixth and Fifty-seventh congress, and is now a member of the committee on insular affairs. His congressional district includes the counties of Clay, Edwards, Gallatin, Hamilton, Hardin, Johnson, Massac, Pope, Saline, Wayne and White. This district was carved out as a republican district by the apportionment of 1901, and State Senator Chapman, republican, is charged with having engineered the gerrymander for the purpose of himself securing the congressional election. Mr. Williams' friends assert that his run against Mr. Chapman was phenomenal, and that it gives a correct estimate of the esteem and confidence felt for him by those who know him best. McKinley carried the district by 2,252 in 1900, but Mr. Williams carried it by 300. In 1892, 1896 and 1898 the district was carried by the republican candidates for state office, but Mr. Williams carried it for congress.

"In 1896 he was a delegate to the democratic national convention and seconded the nomination of Richard P. Bland for president. He was chairman of the Illinois delegation to the Kansas City convention and was selected by the delegation to present the name of Stevenson for vice president.

"He made a remarkable race in 1902 in a district gerrymandered 2,200 against him and was successful because he has the confidence of the masses. He is particularly strong with the farmers and with union labor men, and these rallied to his support. He has long been recognized as one of the strong men of his party. He has always been a democrat and steadfast in his support of the party platforms and candidates. He is of the plain people and has none of the aristocrat in his make-up. He has ability and is an incessant worker. Mr. Williams' triumphant re-election in 1902 recalls a prophecy made by Congressman Champ Clark of Missouri a few months prior to the election. Mr. Clark said:

"The republican legislature of Illinois last winter gerrymandered the state in a most outrageous fashion. A more unfair caper was never cut, but its fine scheme to disfranchise thousands of democrats bids fair to be defeated. For example, the Carmi district, which J. R. Williams, popularly known as "Bob" Williams, represents with so much ability, they gerrymandered so as to give the republicans about 2,200 majority, according to the returns of 1900, but the democrats propose to overthrow their plans and to re-elect "Bob"

with a whoop. He was renominated unanimously and with great enthusiasm, and enthusiasm is more contagious than smallpox, the measles or the bubonic plague. Consequently there is great fear and trembling in the republican camp, for Bob Williams is one of the best campaigners in the land and one of the ablest men in the congress of the United States. He is a man with the courage of his convictions. . . . He is right politically, and a republican legislature tried to steal his seat in congress by a shameful gerrymander. It is believed on all hands that he will win out. If he does, he is presidential timber."

"Philanthropy"

One of J. Pierpont Morgan's friends recently announced that Mr. Morgan was planning to build a great art museum and present the same to the American people. Speaking to a reporter for the New York World, this friend said:

"This much can be said definitely, and that is that Mr. Morgan is by nature one of the most philanthropic men in the world. He has not made his vast collections with a view to keeping them secluded for the personal enjoyment of himself and his friends, but he cherishes the ambition of making his collection the most beautiful and valuable in the world. Morgan is today the greatest art collector in the world. He has spent more money for art objects probably than the dozen other most lavish collectors in the world combined. He is a man of rare taste and expert judgment. As an art critic he has few equals, and he has gathered together hundreds of marvellously beautiful things. It is the desire of the owner of these objects that they shall be made available for the American people."

If Mr. Morgan is "by nature" one of the most philanthropic men in the world, why does he confine his demonstrations along this line to the field of art? If he thinks it the part of philanthropy not to make his vast art collections with a view of keeping them secluded for the personal enjoyment of himself and friends, and if he thinks that it is important that these objects be made available for the American people, why does he not show a bit of the same spirit with respect to the people's necessities?

Mr. Morgan is very anxious to have his art collection admitted free of duty and he has been very bitter in his denunciation of the high tariff that would be assessed against these treasures; and yet there is nothing in his brand of philanthropy to prompt him to protest against the high tariffs levied upon the necessities of life.

No one will seriously object if Mr. Morgan's friends can imagine that they find anything of the philanthropic in the greatest trust organizer the world has ever produced; but they ought not to flatter themselves into the notion that they can bring any considerable number of the American people to their way of thinking in the light of the fact that Mr. Morgan is the head and front of the most oppressive commercial system that has ever arrayed itself against the real business interests of a country.

If those "undigested securities" are causing any financial cramps perhaps Dr. Shaw could be induced to administer a few large doses of his celebrated United States Treasury elixir.

Republicanizing the Democratic Party

Mr. Thomas F. Ryan, writing in the North American Review, appeals to the southern democracy to "line up" with the reorganizers. The advice which Mr. Ryan gives is the same that is extended by all the representatives of those who would republicanize the democratic party. More interest, therefore, than attaches to the article of Mr. Ryan, will be taken in an editorial relating to that article and appearing in the Kansas City Journal, a republican paper.

Referring at large to Mr. Ryan's suggestions, the Journal says:

"We can imagine the sorry figure that would be cut by the democratic party before the people on the issues presented by Mr. Ryan. With scarcely any modification his presentation of these issues could be adopted bodily into the national republican platform without doing violence to the views of that party."

The Journal admits that Mr. Ryan is "correct enough in saying that there can be no hope of restoring public confidence in the democratic party until it supports the policies which he enumerates;" but the Journal adds:

"That which he proposes is a public confession that the democratic party has been wholly wrong on every prominent issue before the American people in the last ten years. Such a confession, of course, carries with it an open admission that the republican party has been wholly right on the selfsame issues. And the spectacle of a political party laying claim to the franchises of the people under such a set of circumstances is not an exhilarating or inspiring one, nor does it seem to warrant the hope of Mr. Ryan that such a discredited and humiliated organization can carry the country.

"Still, as Mr. Ryan shows, there is no future for the democratic party unless it republicanizes itself in the manner suggested. With the passing of years and a steady adherence to intelligent economics, sound finances, and a loftier degree of patriotism, democracy may get back into the respect of the people and earn the right to a larger participation in the affairs of government."

Reorganizers have sneered at the charge that they seek to "republicanize" the democratic party; and yet here we have one of the leading republican papers of the west saying that with scarcely any modification, the Ryan presentation of these issues could be adopted bodily into the next republican platform without doing violence to the views of that party.

Just as democrats have repeatedly charged, this republican paper admits that that which the reorganizers propose is a public confession that the democratic party has been wholly wrong on every prominent issue before the people in the last ten years.

Just as democrats have contended, this republican paper admits that such confession carries with it the admission that the republican party has been wholly right on the selfsame issues.

Just as democrats have shown, this republican paper points out that there would be no reason for the people to set aside the republican party in order to put in its place a democratic party that differed from the republican party in name only.

Perhaps these reorganizers may find consolation