

Bryan on the Democratic Party

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raised than is required to defray the necessary expenses of the government.

"6. Resolved, That congress has no power to charter a United States bank; that we believe such an institution one of deadly hostility to the best interests of the country, dangerous to our republican institutions, and the liberties of the people, and calculated to place the business of the country within the control of a concentrated money power and above the laws and the will of the people.

"7. Resolved, That congress has no power under the constitution to interfere with or control the domestic institutions of the several states; and that such states are the sole and proper judges of everything pertaining to their own affairs, not prohibited by the constitution; that all efforts by abolitionists or others, made to induce congress to interfere with questions of slavery or to take incipient steps in relation thereto, are calculated to lead to the most alarming and dangerous consequences, and that all such efforts have an inevitable tendency to diminish the happiness of the people, and endanger the stability and permanence of the Union, and ought not to be countenanced by any friend to our political institutions."

As the names of several different persons had been presented for vice president the convention of 1840 made no nominations for that office, but advocated resolutions leaving the decision to members of the party in the various states, and trusting that before the election took place the opinion would be so concentrated as to enable the electoral college to secure the choice of a vice president."

Upon the death of Harrison, John Tyler became president, and during his term vetoed two bills, which had for their object the re-establishing of the United States bank. Tyler favored the annexation of Texas, which had separated from Mexico and had existed under an independent government since 1836. Jas. K. Polk, the democratic candidate, also favored annexation, while Henry Clay, for a third time a candidate for the presidency, opposed annexation.

"In the platform of 1844, the first nine resolutions of the platform of 1840 were reaffirmed, and new resolutions added demanding, first, that the proceeds of public lands be sacredly applied to the national object specified in the constitution, rather than distributed among the states; second, sustaining and defending the veto of the president which had "thrice saved the Americans from the corrupt and tyrannical domination of the banks of the United States," and, third, declaring for the annexation of Texas. The campaign resulted in the election of Polk and Dallas, although the majority of the electoral college was proportionately larger than the popular majority.

The campaign of 1848 was waged with Lewis Cass of Michigan and William O. Butler of Kentucky as the democratic candidates for president and vice president. The platform of 1848 reaffirmed that of 1840 and 1844, and added new planks covering new questions. Resolution No. 19 of the platform of 1848 is given below because it reiterates the democratic contention in regard to the value of self-government. It reads:

"Resolved, That in view of the recent development of this grand political truth, of the sovereignty of the people and their capacity and power for self-government, which is prostrating thrones and erecting republics on the ruins of despotism in the Old

World, we feel that a high and sacred duty is devolved, with increased responsibility, upon the democratic party of this country, as the party of the us constitutional liberty, equality, and fraternity, by continuing to resist all monopolies and exclusive legislation for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many, and by a vigilant and constant adherence to those principles and compromises of the constitution, which are broad enough and strong enough to embrace and uphold the Union as it was, the Union as it is, and the Union as it shall be, in the full expansion of the energies and capacity of this great and progressive people."

The whig candidates, however, Zachary Taylor and Millard Fillmore, were successful that year, having both a popular majority and a majority in the electoral college. In the campaign of 1852, Franklin Pierce of New Hampshire and William R. King of Alabama were the democratic nominees, and the platform reiterated the leading planks of 1840, 1844 and 1848.

The platform of 1852 also reiterated the principles laid down in the Kentucky and Virginia resolutions, and defended the Mexican war "as just and necessary." The campaign of 1852 resulted in an overwhelming democratic victory, the popular plurality being more than 200,000.

The slavery question was constantly growing in prominence, and at last exerted an influence upon every issue that arose. The position taken by the various parties in regard to the Mexican war was largely determined by the slavery views held by the members of the parties.

The fugitive slave laws of the various states also came up for consideration, and each election showed an increase in the anti-slavery sentiment. In 1856 the democratic platform again reaffirmed the principles set forth in 1840, and reiterated in subsequent campaigns. It quoted resolution 7 of the platform of 1840, and said:

"That the foregoing proposition covers, and was intended to embrace, the whole subject of slavery agitation in congress; and, therefore, the democratic party of the Union, standing on this national platform, will abide by, and adhere to, a faithful execution of the acts known as the compromise measures settled by the congress of 1850; That 'the act for reclaiming fugitives from service labor' included; which act, being designed to carry out an express provision of the constitution, cannot, with fidelity thereto, be repealed, or so changed as to destroy or impair its efficiency; that the democratic party will resist all attempts at renewing in congress, or out of it, the agitation of the slavery question, under whatever shape or color the attempt may be made."

The republican party took the name by which the democratic party was originally known, and it held its first national convention in 1856, John C. Fremont and William L. Dayton being the nominees. James Buchanan and John C. Breckinridge were the democratic nominees. They received a majority of 60 in the electoral college and a popular plurality of over 500,000. The American party led by Millard Fillmore and Andrew J. Donelson, secured only 3 electors, but polled 874,000 votes. During the Buchanan administration the Dred Scott decision was rendered, and this, while it was a legal victory for the friends of slavery, resulted in an anti-slavery agitation that inured to the advantage of the republican party.

In 1866 the conflict between the northern and southern democrats became irreconcilable, and the Charleston convention, which met April 23, having failed to harmonize the differences, adjourned without a nomination. The northern democrats met at Baltimore June 18 and nominated Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois for

president and Herschel V. Johnson of Georgia for vice-president, while the southern wing of the party met at the same place ten days later, and nominated John C. Breckinridge of Kentucky for president and Joseph Lane of Oregon for vice president. As the platforms adopted at that time represented the positions taken by the two wings of the party they will be found below:

"1. Resolved, That we, the democracy of the Union, in convention assembled, hereby declare our affirmation of the resolutions unanimously adopted and declared as a platform of principles by the democratic convention at Cincinnati, in the year 1856, believing that democratic principles are unchangeable in their nature when applied to the same subject matters; and we recommend, as the only further resolutions, the following:

"Inasmuch as differences of opinion exist in the democratic party as to the nature and extent of the powers of a territorial legislature, and as to the powers and duties of congress, under the constitution of the United States, over the institution of slavery within the territories.

"2. Resolved, that the democratic party will abide by the decisions of the supreme court of the United States on the question of constitutional law.

"3. Resolved, That it is the duty of the United States to afford ample and complete protection to all its citizens, whether at home or abroad, and whether native or foreign.

"4. Resolved, That one of the necessities of the age, in a military, commercial, and postal point of view, is speedy communication between the Atlantic and Pacific states; and the democratic party pledge such constitutional government aid as will insure the construction of a railroad to the Pacific coast at the earliest practicable period.

"5. Resolved, That the democratic party are in favor of the acquisition of the island of Cuba, on such terms as shall be honorable to ourselves and just to Spain.

"6. Resolved, That the enactments of state legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the fugitive slave law are hostile in character, subversive of the constitution, and revolutionary in their effect.

"7. Resolved, That it is in accordance with the true interpretation of the Cincinnati platform that, during the existence of the territorial governments, the measure of restriction, whatever it may be, imposed by the federal constitution on the power of the territorial legislature over the subject of domestic relations, as the same has been or shall hereafter be finally determined by the supreme court of the United States shall be respected by all good citizens, and enforced with promptness and fidelity by every branch of the general government."

The "Breckinridge platform" was as follows:

"Resolved, That the platform adopted by the democratic party at Cincinnati be affirmed, with the following explanatory resolutions:

"1. That the government of a territory, organized by an act of congress is provisional and temporary; and, during its existence all citizens of the United States have an equal right to settle, with their property in the territory, without their rights, either of person or property, being destroyed or impaired by congressional or territorial legislation.

"2. That it is the duty of the federal government, in all its departments, to protect when necessary, the rights of persons and property in the territories, and wherever else its constitutional authority extends.

"3. That when the settlers in a territory having an adequate population, form a state constitution in pursuance of law, the right of sovereign-

ty commences, and, being consummated by admission into the Union, they stand on an equal footing with the people of the other states and the state thus organized ought to be admitted into the federal Union, whether its constitution prohibits or recognizes the institution of slavery.

"4. That the democratic party are in favor of the acquisition of the island of Cuba, on such terms as shall be honorable to ourselves, and just to Spain, at the earliest practicable moment.

"5. That the enactments of state legislatures to defeat the faithful execution of the fugitive slave law are hostile in character, subversive of the constitution and revolutionary in their effect.

"6. That the democracy of the United States recognize it as the imperative duty of this government to protect the naturalized citizens in all their rights, whether at home or in foreign lands, to the same extent as its native-born citizens.

"Whereas, One of the greatest necessities of the age, in a political, commercial, postal, and military point of view, is a speedy communication between the Pacific and Atlantic coasts; therefore, be it

"Resolved, That the Democratic party do hereby pledge themselves to use every means in their power to secure the passage of some bill to the extent of the constitutional authority of congress, for the construction of a Pacific railroad, from the Mississippi river to the Pacific ocean at the earliest practicable moment."

It will be seen that both conventions reaffirmed the Cincinnati platform of 1856. It will also be noticed that the only difference between the platforms grew out of the slavery question, the Douglas platform leaving the question to the supreme court, promising to abide by its decision; the Breckinridge platform declaring that the people of a territory had the right to decide the slavery question for themselves and also declaring that the citizens of the various states had the right to settle in a territory and carry their property with them

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