

# MR. BRYAN ON THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Bryan has written for the Encyclopedia Americana, now being published by the Americana company of New York, an article on the democratic party. This article gives in condensed form the history of the democratic party together with a discussion of some of the more important issues advocated by that organization, and it is reproduced in *The Commoner* by courtesy of the publishers. Papers quoting from this article will please give credit to the Encyclopedia Americana.

The concluding chapter is given in this issue.

## THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY.

In May, 1872, a convention known as the liberal republican convention was held at Cincinnati, O., and nominated Horace Greeley of New York for president and Benjamin Gratz Brown of Missouri for vice president. The platform demanded the recognition of the doctrines of equality of all men before the law, and pledged the party's support of articles 13, 14 and 15 of our amended national constitution. It favored the sacred maintenance of the public credit, opposed repudiation and insisted upon the return to specie payments.

The democrats met on July 9 at Baltimore and nominated the same ticket and adopted a platform substantially like the one adopted by the liberal republicans.

Those members of the democratic party describing themselves as "straight-out" democrats met September 3 following, and nominated Charles O'Connor of New York for president and John Quincy Adams of Massachusetts for vice president; although both declined, nearly 30,000 votes were cast for the head of the ticket. The platform declared that the Baltimore convention had betrayed the party into a false creed and false leadership, and proclaimed that the members of the "straight-out" democratic party preferred principle to power, and would not surrender those principles in exchange for offices which presidents confer. The election resulted in an overwhelming victory for the republican ticket, Grant and Wilson receiving 286 electoral votes out of 317, and a popular plurality of more than 750,000.

The nomination of Horace Greeley brought to his party a large number of influential republicans and alienated many democrats, yet the party's vote was only about 125,000 more than the democratic vote of 1868; while the republican vote of 1872 was nearly 600,000 greater than the vote of four years before.

The democrats entered the campaign of 1876 with courage and confidence. The discovery of corruption in several of the departments, and the conviction of officials high in authority, together with the panic of 1873, had broken the prestige of the republican party and caused a wide-spread demand for reform. The democratic party took advantage of the situation, and nominated as its candidates Samuel J. Tilden of New York, who had become conspicuous in reform in his state, and Thomas A. Hendricks of Indiana, who represented all that was highest, purest and best in democratic principle and purpose. The platform described the abuses of power and demanded reform in every department. Among other things, it demanded reform in the tariff, and condemned the resumption clause of 1875.

The campaign resulted in a popular plurality of 250,000 for Tilden and Hendricks. The result, however, was disputed, and charges of fraud were made in the election of several states. The situation grew so serious that congress created an electoral commission to which the whole matter was referred. This commission was composed of five senators selected by that body, five members of congress selected by that body, and the five senior members of the supreme court.

The senate being republican selected 3 republicans and 2 democrats; the house being democratic selected 3 democrats and 2 republicans, and of the judges 3 were republicans and 2 democrats.

The electoral commission thus contained 8 republicans and 7 democrats, and on every contested question the vote stood 8 to 7, each member throwing his vote so that it would aid his party.

The democrats of 1880 indorsed the principles embodied in the platform of 1876, protested against centralization as dangerous to the government, and denounced the "great fraud of 1876 and 1877 by which upon a false count of the electoral votes of two states the candidate defeated at the polls was declared to be president, and for the first time in American history the will of the people was set aside under a threat of military violence." The righting of the wrong of 1876 was declared to be the paramount issue. Gen. Winfield Scott Hancock, the democratic nominee, weakened his campaign by putting the tariff question aside as "a local issue." He was defeated, however, by a popular vote of less than 10,000, and only by 59 votes in the electoral college.

In 1884 the democrats met at Chicago and nominated Grover Cleveland of New York for president and Thomas A. Hendricks of Indiana for vice president. A platform of great length was adopted; the tariff question being the one discussed at most length. The platform contained the following plank on the money question: "We believe in honest money, the gold and silver coinage of the constitution, and a circulating medium convertible into such money without loss." This platform also contained a plank reaffirming that portion of the democratic platform of 1856, which indorsed the liberal principles of Jefferson.

The republican ticket, headed by James G. Blaine and John A. Logan, received a plurality of a little more than 20,000 in the popular vote, but Mr. Cleveland had 37 majority in the electoral college.

The democratic platform of 1888 reaffirmed the platform adopted in 1884, and indorsed the president's view on the tariff question as expressed in the tariff message which he sent to congress in December, 1887. The tariff question was made the paramount issue, and the campaign waged on this question, and resulted in the election of the republican ticket, and its candidates, Benjamin Harrison and Levi P. Morton, that ticket having a majority of 65 in the electoral college, although the democratic ticket had a popular plurality of about 100,000.

During the Cleveland administration an attempt was made to reduce the tariff, and the Mills bill received the support of the democratic members of the senate and house. The republicans, however, took advantage of the republican victory of 1888 to propose and enact a high tariff law, known as the McKinley act, taking its name from the chairman of the ways and means committee of the house. The passage of this law was followed by an increase in prices of commodities, and it became the paramount issue in the following campaign of 1892. The democratic party that year nominated Grover Cleveland for a third time, and named Adlai E. Stevenson of Illinois as his running mate.

There was a fight in the convention over the tariff plank, and as finally adopted it declared that the federal government had no constitutional power to impose and collect tariff duties except for revenue only. The trusts were denounced, and the party pledged to the enactment of laws made to prevent and control them.

The money plank of the platform was as follows:

"We denounce the republican legislation known as the Sherman act of 1890 as a cowardly makeshift, fraught with possibilities of danger in the future which should make all of its supporters, as well as its author, anxious for its speedy repeal. We hold to the use of both gold and silver as the standard money of the country, and to the coinage of both gold and silver without discrimination against either metal or charge for mintage, but the dollar unit of coinage of both metals must be of equal intrinsic and exchangeable value or be adjusted through international agreement, or by such safeguards of legislation as shall ensure the maintenance of the parity of the two metals, and the equal power of every dollar at all times in the markets and in the payment of debts; and we demand that all paper currency shall be kept at par with and redeemable in such coin. We insist upon this policy as especially necessary for the protection of the farmers and laboring classes, the first and most defenseless victims of unstable money and a fluctuating currency."

President Harrison was renominated by the republicans and Whitelaw Reid was placed upon the ticket with him. In the election the democratic ticket polled a plurality of 132 in the electoral col-

lege and a popular plurality of about 330,000. The people's party nominated James B. Weaver of Iowa for president and James G. Field of Virginia for vice president, and polled a little more than 1,000,000 votes.

During President Cleveland's second term, two questions occupied public attention, the money question and the tariff question. Congress was called together in extraordinary session in August, 1893, and the president recommended the unconditional repeal of the Sherman law. By reference to the democratic platform of 1892 it will be seen that the money plank contained a statement of the party's faith in the double standard, as well as its desire for the repeal of the Sherman act, and an effort to repeal the makeshift without restoring the double standard caused a division in the ranks of the party, but the president succeeded in securing the legislation which he desired; doing this, however, he had the support of a larger percentage of the republican senators and members than he had of the democrats.

Congressman Wilson, chairman of the ways and means committee, reported a measure which bears his name, and the bill as it passed the house was satisfactory to the friends of tariff reform, but it was emasculated by the senate, where a coterie of democratic senators refused to support it until the rates of several schedules were raised. The president refused to sign the bill, but allowed it to become a law without his signature. This bill contained an income tax, but this clause was declared unconstitutional by the supreme court, the vote standing 5 to 4. The decision was rendered at the second hearing; at the first hearing the vote stood 4 to 4, and as the ninth judge who was not present until the second hearing favored the tax, it required a change of opinion on the part of one of the judges to render the income tax inoperative.

After the passage of the tariff law the currency question again occupied the attention of congress and became the paramount issue in the campaign of 1896. The money issue was fought out in the party and the delegates to the Chicago convention were instructed to carry out the financial policy indorsed by the members of the state convention selecting them, who in turn had been instructed by county conventions. As a result of this inter-party contest, the advocates of bimetalism won a decisive victory having more than two-thirds of the national delegates.

The following platform was adopted:

"We, the democrats of the United States in national convention assembled, do reaffirm our allegiance to those great essential principles of justice and liberty, upon which our institutions are founded, and which the democratic party has advocated from Jefferson's time to our own—freedom of speech, freedom of press, freedom of conscience, the preservation of personal rights, the equality of all citizens before the law, and the faithful observance of constitutional limitations.

"During all these years the democratic party has resisted the tendency of selfish interests to the centralization of governmental power, and steadfastly maintained the integrity of the dual scheme of government established by the founders of this republic of republics. Under its guidings and teachings the great principle of local self-government has found its best expression in the maintenance of the rights of the states and in its assertion of the necessity of confining the general government to the exercise of the powers granted by the constitution of the United States.

"The constitution of the United States guarantees to every citizen the rights of civil and religious liberty. The democratic party has always been the exponent of political liberty and religious freedom, and it renews its obligations and reaffirms its devotions to these fundamental principles of the constitution.

"Recognizing that the money question is paramount to all others at this time, we invite attention to the fact that the federal constitution named silver and gold together as the money metals of the United States, and that the first coinage law passed by congress under the constitution made the silver dollar the monetary unit, and admitted gold to free coinage at a ratio based upon the silver-dollar unit.

"We declare that the act of 1873 demonetizing silver without the knowledge or approval of the American people has resulted in the appreciation of gold and a corresponding fall in the prices of commodities produced by the people; a heavy increase in the burden of taxation and of all debts, public and private; the enrichment of the money-

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