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Mr. Bryan's Speeches in Convention on the Illinois Contest

Below will be found the speeches made by Mr. Bryan in support of the minority report presented by him in the Illinois contest. Mr. C. D. Caspar, the Nebraska member of the credential committee, gave Mr. Bryan his proxy in this contest and Senator J. S. C. Blackburn of Kentucky, C. L. Wood of South Dakota, T. A. Ball of Missouri, E. E. McCausland of Wisconsin, D. C. Heyood of South Carolina, J. J. Fitzgerald of Rhode Island and Win. Buckholz of Oklahoma joined in the minority report which recommended seating the contestees in the Sixth, Tenth, Eleventh and Eighteenth districts and recommended the seating of the contestants in the Second, Third, Ninth, Twelfth, Fifteenth, Sixteenth, Twenty-first, Twenty-third and Twenty-fifth districts. The minority also recommended the seating of Hon. Edward F. Dunne of Chicago and Hon. Silas Cook of East St. Louis as delegates at large in the place of Hon. John P. Hopkins of Chicago and Hon. Benjamin Cable of Rock Island.

In the argument reference was made to the petition signed by eight hundred and seventy-two of the thirteen hundred and twenty-one of the delegates to the Illinois state convention. The petition reads as follows:

"Whereas, The state democratic convention of Illinois, held at Springfield, June 14, 1904, disregarded democratic precedent and ignored the rights of the democrats of various congressional districts through their duly chosen representatives, and

Whereas, Acquiescence in such a violation of democratic principles would injure the party in the state and therefore interfere with its legitimate progress, and

Whereas, The presiding officer of said convention by arbitrary and unfair rulings and by refusal of roll calls on all questions, excepting on instructions for president, prevented the delegates from giving expression to their wishes and the wishes of their constituents,

Therefore, I, the undersigned, having been a duly elected delegate to said convention, join in petitioning the democratic national convention and the democratic national committee to seat and recognize as delegates to the democratic national convention only such persons as received a majority of the votes of the legally elected delegates as cast in caucus of their respective congressional districts, at said state convention, as shall be shown by evidence presented in proper form.

I also respectfully petition that the following delegates at large be given seats in said democratic national convention: Hon. Edward F. Dunne of Chicago, Hon. A. M. Lawrence of Chicago, Hon. Samuel Alschuler of Aurora, Hon. Silas Cook of East St. Louis. Signed, Delegate.
From County, Illinois.
Postoffice address

In support of the minority report Mr. Bryan said:

Mr. Chairman: I move to substitute this minority report for the majority report in the Illinois contest, and I ask a separate vote on the delegates at large and the district delegates. In order that both sides may be heard, I ask that fifteen minutes on a side be given for the discussion of the merits of the contest.

The Temporary Chairman: Gentlemen of the convention, you have heard the motion made by the gentleman from Nebraska. The chair is advised that later on the gentleman will renew his motion in a different form. The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska to speak in favor of the motion he has made.

Mr. Bryan: I want to open and close.

The Temporary Chairman: The chair will give each side equal time. The gentleman from

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Nebraska supporting the affirmative has the right to open and close the debate. The chair will mark the time which the gentleman takes on his first speech, and will ask him afterward to state how much time he wants for his second speech, and will give the sum total of the time occupied by his two speeches to the other side in the middle.

The chair now recognizes the gentleman from Nebraska (Mr. Bryan).

Mr. William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska: Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Convention: I came to this convention in the hope that we would be able to agree on a platform and on candidates, and have nothing to stir up feeling or arouse contention. (Applause.) I still hope that we shall be able to agree upon a platform that will represent the sentiments of all of us, so that we can present it to the country as the platform of a united party. (Applause.) I will go further than that. I still hope that we shall be able to present to the country a ticket behind which we can stand as a united party. (Applause.) And, I regret that I am compelled to come in at this time and present a subject upon which your votes will be asked. But, if there is one democratic principle more fundamental than another it is that the majority has a right to rule. (Applause.) If you destroy the binding force of that principle, there is nothing that can hold a party together. (Applause.) It is because I want the democratic party to stand on the Jeffersonian principle of majority rule that I present the minority report in this case. (Applause.)

In the state of Illinois the majority was not allowed to rule. (Applause.) That convention was dominated by a clique of men who deliberately, purposely, boldly trampled upon the rights of the democrats of Illinois. (Applause.) The evidence shows that no band of train robbers ever planned a raid upon a train more deliberately or with less conscience than they did. (Applause.) And the men who planned it and who carried it out, have the audacity, the impudence, and the insolence to say that, because they certified that what they did was regular, you can not go behind their certificate. (Applause.) If that is good law in a democratic convention, it ought to be good doctrine in a court; and if it is good doctrine in court, then the only thing train robbers will have to do in the future is to make a report of their transactions, and certify over their own signatures that it was a voluntary collection taken up for religious purposes, and deny the right of the robbed to go behind the returns. (Applause.)

They tell you that the law of the party in Illinois permits the state committee to present the chairman, and they deny the right of the convention to override the wish of the committee. Such a rule would be undemocratic if in force for such a doctrine would permit a past committee to fasten itself upon a new convention and dominate a new set of delegates. (Applause.)

But, my friends, that is not the law, for two years ago John P. Hopkins, the same chairman of the same committee, presented the recommendation of the committee and asked a vote upon it and submitted the committee's recommendation to the convention. Two years ago he recognized the right of the democrats in the state convention to elect their temporary chairman. This time he did not dare to do it, for if he had done it he would have been repudiated by the convention there assembled. (Applause.) The minority presented a minority report, or wanted to, but the chairman of the committee, Mr. Hopkins, brought Mr. Quinn up to the convention platform, and handing him the gavel said that he was the chair-

man of the convention, and Mr. Quinn, seizing the gavel, began his rule of unfairness, tyranny, and despotism. (Applause.)

Then they had a sub-committee of the state committee put on the temporary roll the delegates whom they wanted, but when the credentials committee brought in a minority report they refused to consider it and refused to allow a vote upon it. And yet, in spite of the fact that that convention was not allowed to act upon the credentials of its own members, was not allowed to decide upon its own delegates—in spite of all that, the committee did not unseat enough, for more than half of the men actually seated by the Hopkins committee have signed petitions asking that the contestees be sent home and that democrats who represent the people of that state be substituted for them in this convention. (Applause.)

In the hearing before the committee it was asked, "Why did they not present a minority report from the committee appointed to select delegates at large?" There was a contest in that committee; there was opposition to Hopkins and Cable; but why should they expect a minority report to be voted upon? Why should they expect it, when the chairman had already held that a minority report was only advisory and could be put into the waste basket, and need not be acted upon? They are estopped to ask why a minority report was not filed.

They made no attempt, they declared no purpose to substitute delegates for the delegates selected by the various districts. We admit in the report that if they had legally substituted other men for the men selected by the districts, they might have done so, but it must be the act of the convention. The convention never attempted it; the convention was not asked to do it; and the evidence shows that the resolution which is a part of the record and upon which they rely was never introduced and was never passed, but that it is a fraud pure and simple, presented here in defense of their claim. (Applause.)

Now, my friends, what is the duty of this democratic convention? These democrats of Illinois are not like the democrats of the south. Down south the democrats have all the local offices, and they can reward their workers for their loyalty to the party. Up in Illinois there is a strong republican majority and the democrats of Illinois, in many parts of the state, at least, are struggling against overwhelming odds; they are actuated by love of principle, not by hope of office.

But, what will you tell those men? Will you endorse the action of that convention? Will you approve the methods employed? If they had a majority of the convention, why did they not permit roll calls? Would they deny the opposition that right if they had had the votes to control by fair means? Men do not do wrong, as a rule, unless they think it is necessary to do so to carry out some object, and the only ground upon which you can decide that these men did wrong unnecessarily is to decide that they were so perverted in conscience that they did wrong from choice rather than from necessity. (Applause.) Their whole conduct shows that their purpose was conceived in sin, brought forth in iniquity and carried out to the destruction of democratic hopes in that state.

Give the democrats of Illinois something to hope for. Do not tell them that when they go to a democratic convention, they must go armed as to war, prepared to fight their way up to the chairman of the convention. Let the republican party stand as the representative of physical force, if it will; our party stands for government by the consent of the governed. (Applause.)

What could they do? They could either resort to force and risk the killing that would result, or, it is said, they could bolt. Yes, three-fourths of the convention could have walked out and left