

THE NEW YORK WORLD'S PLAN FOR 1908

The New York World calls upon the democratic party to nominate for president in 1908 Governor John A. Johnson of Minnesota. The World's Johnson boom was introduced by a statement written by Governor Johnson and telegraphed to the World as follows:

"The commercial and industrial development of this country has reached a point where the proper adjustment of right has become the question of the hour. The present unrest of our people is evidence of the determination shared by all that the fundamental principles of this government shall be maintained. These include the dignity of labor, equality before the law, the equal enforcement of the laws and entire absence of special privileges. Great corporations, especially those exercising at least some of the powers of government, must come to the realization that they are as amenable to the law as is the individual citizen. The trust problem is still to be solved; but, while searching for the complete remedy, we can at least withdraw from their grasp the special privileges they have enjoyed under a high protective tariff. It must be apparent that our present tariff, while mainly responsible for the existence of the trusts, is, in addition, a tax upon the masses for the benefit of the few. The farming of taxes in France, before the revolution, was no more iniquitous than is our present tariff system. 1908 will be a memorable year for the struggle of equal rights and American ideals; the year will see tariff reform accomplished or well under way, for if the present congress does not at the present session make substantial reductions the people in November will elect those pledged so to do."

One of the World's ardent supporters is J. C. Hemphill, editor of the Charleston (S. C.) News and Courier, and long one of Mr. Bryan's most bitter assailants. Mr. Hemphill telegraphed to the World this statement:

"John A. Johnson's declaration in the World rings like the blast of a trumpet. There is no mistaking where he stands. He has struck the keynote of the next national campaign and chosen the ground upon which the fight between the people and predatory wealth and power must be fought. While the president and his backers are dodging the only real issue of the next campaign, and while Mr. Bryan and his followers are speaking in riddles about the issue of the campaign, this strong, true man from the far northwest gives the command upon the only issue on which the democratic party can go to battle. Johnson's voice rises above the clamor and confusion of tongues, the mean, little politics of present-day leaders, the cheap deceptions of demagogues and the dishonest plans of Mr. Roosevelt and his supporters for delay in righting a great national wrong and challenges the enemy to war. He has made the issue of the next presidential campaign, and there is none but he to lead the democratic party to victory. Will Mr. Bryan stand aside? Not if he can help it. But the fate of the party is in the hands of the party. It is Bryan and defeat; it is Johnson and victory."

The Kansas City Post, a paper that has long shown marked hostility to Mr. Bryan, cordially approves the World's suggestion and in a three column editorial printed on its first page, says:

"John A. Johnson, governor of Minnesota and aspirant for the democratic presidential nomination, has given to the country his views on the tariff. His utterances ring with the spirit of true democracy and show splendid grasp of the most troublesome problem that has ever beset the American people. They have been well received by the democratic press throughout the country and especially in the east and south. Mr. Bryan has been twice nominated for the presidency and twice defeated. Say what you will, there is a lack of enthusiasm and fighting force with a loser for a leader. This sentiment is ingrained in human nature, and no amount of oratory or bombast can eradicate it. It has been said of Mr. Bryan that he is 'glorious in defeat,' and it is true, but democracy is tired of its place in the 'also ran' class. One modest victory is more to be desired than a score of thumpings and maulings, however superbly they may have been received. Isn't it time to withdraw our heads from the clouds and look conditions fairly and squarely in the face? The cry of the politicians is that Mr. Bryan is the only man who can restore the old-time democratic majority. If this is true, by all the gods at once, let it be Mr. Bryan and gag every mouth that would dare suggest another name.

But can he do it? His past performances offer but scant earnest for the future. Prior to the recent election in Kentucky, Mr. Bryan went to the front in that state for the democratic ticket. The people listened and applauded, but the results fail to show that they did much else. Kentucky is in the republican column today. If he could not save Kentucky, normally democratic, what could he hope to accomplish in New York, Ohio, Indiana or New Jersey, not to mention such states as Minnesota and Wisconsin? The Post is committed to no man for the democratic nomination. Johnson, Harmon, Gray, Hoke Smith, Culbertson, these and a dozen others that might be named are all of presidential size. But in the name of common sense, let calm reason and judgment have an inning. Democracy should adopt a strong, unassailable platform, based on democratic principles, and find a man to fit it. Any other course must and will be suicidal."

The Richmond (Va.) Times-Dispatch printed this leading editorial:

"A northern democrat, whose name has been mentioned prominently in connection with the presidential nomination, recently said to a Virginia democrat that the forthcoming action of the Denver convention was already 'cut and dried.' By this he meant, of course, that William J. Bryan was already nominated; and it goes without saying that the platform will be agreeable to Mr. Bryan. There are those who say that Mr. Bryan will defer to the wishes of the convention, but that is not Mr. Bryan's political habit. In 1900 he gave notice in advance that he would not accept the nomination unless the platform should contain a free silver plank, and all the pleading of the leaders who saw him in person did not move him from that position. But no matter what sort of a platform the Denver convention may promulgate, if Mr. Bryan is the nominee voters will read into it the pet doctrines of that distinguished gentleman. A party platform, no matter how well it may be worded and phrased, is an inanimate thing; it is the candidate who gives it life. If Mr. Bryan is nominated, his record will be the platform, and he could not get away from it if he would; and he would not if he could, for Mr. Bryan is no recanter. What of the result? Twice has Mr. Bryan asked the people of the United States to elect him to the presidency, and twice has he been defeated. Is he more popular now than he was in 1896, or in 1900? Read the view, published elsewhere, of Mr. L. J. Coppage, a former Virginian, now residing at Crawfordsville, Ind.: 'The possibility of a national democratic success,' says he, 'depends on the support of the independent or conservative vote in the doubtful states of the north or middle west. The party has gained no national election since the war, except by the aid of a large vote from this element.' Very true, Cleveland won in 1892 because he carried the solid south, the democratic states of the north and the doubtful states of the west. Bryan carried some western states which Cleveland did not carry, but he lost the states whose votes counted and he lost the democratic states of the north. We do not see how it is possible for him to do better in 1908. As Mr. Coppage again says, 'with Bryan as the candidate and with the doubtful or objectionable things for which he stands in the platform, the republican majorities of 1896 and 1900 will be duplicated, and the democratic party further discredited. Similar warnings come from all parts of the country. Many even of Mr. Bryan's devoted followers have no hope of his election; and still the cry is Bryan and bust. Very well. If it must be, let Mr. Bryan again put his unparalleled popularity to the test—and finish up the work of destruction which was begun in 1896, and let the party make its sacrifice in his behalf complete.'"

The Washington correspondent for the Minneapolis Journal, who has all along kept in close touch with any sentiment hostile to Mr. Bryan sent under date of January 1 the following dispatch to his newspaper:

"The secret of the New York World's interest in Governor Johnson of Minnesota, as a presidential candidate, is to be found in the fact that the democrats of that state are strongly anti-Bryan. They bolted him openly in 1896, Tammany leading the way, and they gave him but perfunctory support in 1900. Today they are prepared to do all that they can to prevent his nomination at Denver, and perhaps Champ Clark is not far wrong when he says that they will again make sure that the electoral vote is

given to a republican if Bryan should be nominated this year.

"As an outward and visible sign of this inward and virulent dislike for Bryan, witness the effort made in New York to bring Lieutenant Governor Chanler to the front. That effort has not been an unqualified success, for a variety of reasons, chief among them being the fact that Chanler is merely a rich man's son, without a record in public life, and made lieutenant governor through one of the accidents always happening in politics. Still, he is a pretty good fellow, as good fellows go, and it might be a good thing to put him on the tail of the ticket, provided some strong western man can be found to head it.

"That strong western man, in the opinion of the anti-Bryan democrats of New York, is Governor Johnson, and hence the support which he is receiving in that state, regardless of Chanler. The World, in working up a Johnson movement, is merely reflecting the prevailing democratic opinion of that state, nothing more and nothing less, for it is realized that no democrat can go into the White House without the New York electoral vote. That vote Bryan, it is conceded, can not hope to get, but Johnson might get it, with Chanler's help in second place on the ticket.

"The World played up Governor Johnson's letter very prominently in its Sunday paper, and printed it again Monday morning in connection with the several columns of interviews secured by wire from prominent democrats. The World in its queries asking for the interviews called attention to the Johnson statement of Sunday morning, and asked that the replies be directed to that statement. The editor of the News and Courier of Charleston, S. C., was the only one interviewed who came out openly against Bryan and in favor of Johnson, but all of them said they agreed with Johnson that the chief issue of the campaign should be the tariff.

"This New York support comes to Governor Johnson without solicitation. Indeed, he did not even suspect that it was coming. The World, and the democrats behind it, do not care for Johnson aside from the fact that he seems available for the purposes of a fight against Bryan in the convention. They would take up another man as readily as they have taken up Johnson should such a man possess the advantages which Johnson possesses. Mr. D'Autremont of Duluth and his supporters, will probably not agree with this statement, but that does not mean that the statement is not absolutely true.

"For more than a year the anti-Bryan men of the democracy have been looking for some Moses to lead them out of bondage to Bryan. For a long time it seemed that the search would be fruitless, and it is too early to say now that it is to be successful; but the discovery of Governor Johnson brings the first suggestion of hope. That there will be an effort on the part of the anti-Bryan men to unite on Johnson, provided he should be willing, seems now to be apparent. How it will result nobody knows, nor can know for the present. The Bryan strength in the convention will come from the old free-silver states of the Rocky mountains, from the southwest, and from scattering states in the great middle west. The anti-Bryan strength is in New England, some of the old middle states, and presumably in the states of the old south, along the south Atlantic and gulf coasts. The question of crystallizing that opposition and putting it into working shape is one involving many difficulties. The task, however, is not insuperable. Everything will depend on the way in which the case is managed—on the energy and skill with which the anti-Bryan people get to work.

"The fight, as was pointed out in these dispatches on Sunday, will be for uninstructed delegations from all these anti-Bryan centers, and should it result in preventing Bryan from having a majority of the Denver convention then the way will be open for Governor Johnson or for some other man who is supposed to be conservative in principles. There has been more or less talk of Judge Gray of Delaware, of former Secretary Olney and of other men who were closely identified with the Cleveland wing of the party during Cleveland's second administration. None of these men, however, can be nominated, in the opinion of men here who are trying to keep in touch with the situation, for they stand so close to Cleveland as to draw all the fire that would be directed against that gentleman himself were he a candidate. In