

Republican Insurgents Ready for War

Republican insurgents at Washington have prepared for war within the republican party by organizing the National Republican League. The declaration of principles are signed by nine republican senators, six republican governors, thirteen members of the house and a number of distinguished reformers. Officers were chosen as follows:

President—Senator Jonathar Bourne, Jr., Oregon.

First Vice President—Representative George W. Norris, Nebraska.

Second Vice President—Governor Charles E. Osborne, Michigan.

Treasurer—Charles R. Crane, Chicago.

Executive Committee—Senator Moses E. Clapp, Minnesota; Senator Joseph L. Bristow, Kansas; Representative E. H. Hubbard, Iowa; Representative Irvine L. Lenroot, Wisconsin; Representative-elect William Kent, California; Gifford Pinchot, Pennsylvania; George L. Record, New Jersey, and the president, vice president and treasurers, members ex-officio.

DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES

The declaration of principles follows:

"We, the undersigned, associate ourselves together as the National Republican League. The object of the league is the promotion of popular government and progressive legislation.

"Popular government in America has been thwarted and progressive legislation strangled by the special interests which control caucuses, delegates, conventions and party organizations and through control of the machinery of government dictate nominations and platforms, elect administrations, legislatures, representatives in congress and United States senators and control cabinet officers.

"Under existing conditions legislation in the public interest has been baffled and defeated. This is evidenced by the long struggle to secure laws, but partially effective, for the control of railway rates and services, the revision of the tariff in the interest of the producer and consumer, statutes dealing with trusts and combinations based on sound economic principles as applied to modern industrial and commercial conditions, a wise, comprehensive and impartial reconstruction of the banking and monetary laws, the conservation of coal, oil, gas, timber, water powers and other natural resources belonging to the people and for the enactment of all legislation solely for the common good.

"Just in proportion as popular government has in certain states superseded the delegate convention system and the people have assumed control of the machinery of government, has government become responsive to the popular will and progressive legislation been secured.

"The progressive republican league believes popular government is fundamental to all other questions. To this end it advocates:

"The election of United States senators by direct vote of the people.

"Direct primaries for the nomination of all elective officials.

"The direct election of delegates to national conventions, with opportunity for the voter to express his choice for president and vice president.

"An amendment to state constitutions providing for the initiative, referendum and recall.

"A thorough general corrupt practices act.

"The league will co-operate with progressives in the several states and wherever acceptable will render assistance in promoting the organization of state leagues.

"Whenever requested by any progressive state league or by progressive leaders in state legislatures, the national progressive republican league will aid in the preparation of appropriate bills and resolutions and will furnish speakers and literature in support of legislative action upon the propositions enumerated in the five numbered paragraphs set forth in the foregoing declaration of principles."

This is signed by the following:

United States Senators—Jonathan Bourne, Jr., Oregon; Albert J. Beveridge, Indiana; Joseph L. Bristow, Kansas; Norris Brown, Nebraska; Albert B. Cummins, Iowa; Moses E. Clapp, Minnesota; Joseph M. Dixon, Montana; A. J. Gronna, North Dakota; Robert M. LaFollette, Wisconsin.

Governors—Chester H. Aldrich, Nebraska; Joseph M. Carey, Wyoming; Hiram W. Johnson, California; Francis E. McGovern, Wisconsin; Charles E. Osborne, Michigan; W. R. Stubbs, Kansas.

Congressmen—Henry Allen Cooper, Wisconsin;

William J. Cary, Wisconsin; C. R. Davis, Minnesota; E. H. Hubbard, Iowa; G. N. Haughen, Iowa; Irvine L. Lenroot, Wisconsin; C. A. Lindberg, Minnesota; Victor Murdock, Kansas; E. H. Madison, Kansas; E. H. Morse, Wisconsin; John N. Nason, Wisconsin; George W. Norris, Nebraska; Miles Poindexter, Washington.

Other Signers—Ray Stannard Baker, Massachusetts; Louis A. Brandeis, Massachusetts; Charles R. Crane, Illinois; Frank L. Dingley, Maine; James R. Garfield, Ohio; Hugh T. Halbert, Minnesota; Francis J. Heney, California; Frederick C. Howe, New York; Fred S. Jackson (congressman-elect), Kansas; E. Clarence Jones, New York; W. T. Kent (congressman-elect), California; George S. Loftus, Minnesota; William L. LaFollette (congressman-elect), Washington; Gifford Pinchot, Pennsylvania; Amos Pinchot, New York; James A. Peterson, Minnesota; George L. Record, New Jersey; Gilbert E. Roe, New York; W. S. U'Ren, Oregon; Merle D. Vincent, Colorado; William Allen White, Kansas.

BOURNE MAKES STATEMENT

Senator Bourne, president of the league made the following statement in regard to its organization and purposes:

"The declaration of principles of the national Progressive Republican League speaks for itself. While its membership is confined to those who believe the republican party, represented by progressive republicans, offers the most encouragement for the establishment of these principles, there is not a purpose to make it a political organization in the sense of promoting the political fortunes of any man or men. The enactment of legislation carrying out the program is its sole purpose, and it stands ready whenever acceptable to assist democratic, as well as republican legislatures to secure such legislation.

The league will at once enter upon an aggressive campaign. State legislatures will be organized and upon request furnished with bills literature and speakers. Permanent headquarters will be maintained for carrying on the work.

"Precise uniformity of legislation in the different states is not to be expected. Account must be taken of the conditions in each state as to the details of the legislation to be urged, the object being to insure popular government in the end.

"Membership in the National Progressive League consists of those who have signed the declaration of principles and constitution and of those who may hereafter be elected by a majority vote of the members.

"I expect to devote my entire time to the work of the league so far as my official duties will permit. The league will be a permanent organization, and its founders have made their plans for a continuance of its work for a number of years."

MUDDLED OVER THE INITIATIVE

From a friend comes a New York Tribune editorial on the initiative and referendum, with the remark that, "as of course you know, the eastern papers don't know anything about the movement, but they catch up isolated items and make the most of them." That statement is true, but it is a very pertinent question, Why don't the eastern papers inform themselves about the initiative and referendum when the information is so easily obtained?

The Tribune does not oppose direct legislation, yet it has its doubts as to the practicability of the method in any of the large states where, it says, "the people fall below those of Oregon in average intelligence, and lack the Oregonians' zest for self-government." But what reason is there for saying that intelligence is bounded by state lines? And who would have thought in the days of machine corruption in Oregon, just before the day of the initiative and referendum, that Oregonians had anything of a "zest for self-government?"

Noting the recent Illinois vote of 447,908 for the initiative and referendum to 128,398 against it, in a total vote of less than 700,000—showing that six out of every seven voters recorded themselves upon the question, and that the majority in favor of adopting the Oregon method was overwhelming—the Tribune asserts that "if the experience of Oregon is to be a guide, Illinois will have to hedge about the initiative and referendum with a variety of limitations," because

Oregon voters had thirty-two measures to vote on at the last election; and the conclusion is drawn that "with the diversity of population and variety of interests in Illinois it is easy to imagine that an unrestricted initiative and referendum would make voting a day's work." Hence the Tribune concludes that "properly limited and hedged about so that only a moderate number of propositions of enough importance really to interest the voters can go on the ballot, the initiative and referendum may prove of use, though this is yet to be demonstrated."

Now what could be more pleasing to the interests than to have the people's power of initiative and referendum "properly limited and hedged about?"

Whatever limit might be set, a legislature owned by the interests could easily submit the full quota of measures with unimportant questions, and the people would be shut out. Or, if the number of initiative petitions were limited, the interests themselves could have the requisite number of petitions ready to be filed for the next general election immediately after an election, and again the people would be shut out.

Moreover, who would determine the question of "enough importance really to interest the voters?" A commission appointed by the legislature, a committee of the legislature, or, peradventure, a commission appointed by the governor at the request of the interests?

And why the desire to put political handcuffs and balls and chains on the people? Is not the increasing demand for the initiative and referendum due to the long-continued misrepresentative character of public servants? Are restrictions upon the people a cure, or even a palliative, for the evils of a government that is "republican in form" and plutocratic in substance?

It may interest the Tribune and other papers to know that nineteen of the thirty-two measures on the Oregon ballot last November were on the ballot because the legislature had failed to do its duty. It may be of further interest to know that the time required for voting the whole Oregon ballot—candidates and measures—was from two and one-half to six minutes. Is it not worth while for a citizen to spend six minutes, twelve or twenty-four minutes one day in two years to get what he wants at the ballot box and to refuse what he does not want? And isn't that as true of Illinois and New York voters as of Oregon voters.—W. G. Eggleston, in The Public.

A WORD TO REFORMERS

Don't compromise in advance. Don't try to please opponents of reform. Draw the bills as the reformers want them; it is time enough to compromise when you find you have to. If you start out compromising you will have to compromise still more before you get through. Take the initiative and referendum, for instance, Reformers like the Oregon form; the opponents of the initiative and referendum will attack it at various points. There are three things that opponents may be expected to do. They will not attack the principle—the time is past for that, but they will want to make the per cent for the petition as large as possible; they will want to limit the number of propositions to be submitted at one time and they will insist that a majority of all the votes cast at the election be required for adoption.

The first objection is the least important, for while the percentage required in Oregon is good it is not a vital matter just what percentage is required. The second objection is more serious for if a limit is fixed the special interests can rush in enough unimportant propositions to exclude those that they object to. The third is most serious of all. It gives the opponents of reforms the benefit of all the ignorant, the careless and the indifferent. Why should the opponents of reform be given this legal advantage? Why hamper the people when they try to legislate for themselves.

A plurality elects when we select a governor and members of the legislature to act for us; why should not a plurality pass a law by direct legislation? If those who vote for the proposition outnumber those who vote against it that is enough. Let the submission of the proposition be thoroughly advertised, then let the law assume that those who do not vote are willing for the matter to be determined by those who do vote. That is much more reasonable than to count those not voting as if they voted in the negative.

This is the most important point to be guarded: Insist that only a majority of those voting on the proposition shall be required.