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The Democratic Party's Duty

Written for The Commoner by Champ Clark

Towards the close of his heroic career it was one of the proud boasts of Saint Paul that he had "kept the faith;" a boast amply justified by the facts. We democrats should follow the example and emulate the fidelity of the great apostle, so far as in us lies. Last November we captured one of the three citadels of republicanism, the house of representatives; two remain in their possession, the White House and the senate. The only way we can reasonably hope to make a clean sweep in 1912 is to keep faith with the people absolutely by religiously fulfilling every promise that we made in order to win the house. This should be done as a matter of principle, simply because it is right. Even if we were not willing to do so as a matter of principle, then, when we remember what happened to the republicans last autumn because they failed to keep faith with the people, we should fulfill our promise as a matter of expediency.

The masses of the people of all parties are honest in their political opinions, and deserve to be treated honestly, fairly, and candidly. They are entitled to that square deal of which we hear so much and see so little. They will not be mocked. The woeful plight of the republicans is directly traceable to their broken promises and should be a sufficient warning and object lesson to us. The sin of the republican party in that regard was as scarlet, and its punishment was swift, severe, and deserved. To obtain property under false pretenses is a penitentiary offense. It's a pity that the same pains and penalties do not attach to obtaining office under false pretenses. The law not permitting the imprisonment of the republicans for carrying the election of 1908 by false pretenses, the people gave them a thorough drubbing at the polls in 1910.

We have a golden opportunity coupled with grave responsibilities. To us success, not only in 1912, but for years to come, is as easy as falling off a log, and a slippery log at that. All that we have to do is to fulfill our promises; failing or neglecting to do that, it is back to

the wilderness for us. Most assuredly we have had our quantum sufficit, more than our quantum meruit of wandering in the wilderness. Men should say what they mean and mean what they say. Normal minds dissent from the immoral dictum that everything is fair in war, love and politics.

The promises most frequently made in the last campaign were:

First, To revise the tariff down to a reasonable, or revenue basis.

Second, To abolish Cannonism.

Third, To submit a constitutional amendment providing for the election of United States senators by popular vote.

Fourth, To cut appropriations to the needs of the government economically administered.

There are other promises to which I may refer in a future article, but the four which I have mentioned were, I think, most frequently made and were uppermost in the public mind. Of the four, the revision of the tariff was by long odds the most important.

I am happy to say that democrats are already carrying out their ante-election promises. We have appointed a committee on committees. I cheerfully assisted in that reform, though it will somewhat curtail the power of the speaker. The house should be a self-governing body and not an autocracy. The establishment of a committee on committees together with other reforms in the rules wrought in this congress by the coalition of democrats and insurgent republicans has overthrown Cannonism and will, I believe, be of great benefit in securing good legislation.

At our caucus on January 19, we elected the chairman and the democratic members of the committee on ways and means, who are also to constitute the committee on committees. We did the unprecedented thing of calling a caucus of the democrats of the Sixty-second congress six weeks before the life of that congress be-

gins, for the purpose of expediting tariff reform promptly, thoroughly, and intelligently, and thereby hastening the redemption of our promises. All sorts of lurid prophesies had been indulged in by hostile papers and hostile men about how we would go to pieces at that caucus, and act the part of the Kilkenny cats. As a matter of fact it was one of the most harmonious caucuses ever held in Washington, a sort of democratic love-feast, where speech was absolutely free. There was much speech, but it was all in a good natured way. That caucus did much to puzzle and confound our enemies, also much to please and encourage democrats. So it is clear that we are keeping the faith as to reforming both the tariff and the rules.

Over in the senate, the democrats, aided by a handful of insurgent republicans, are keeping the faith by an honest and earnest endeavor to submit a constitutional amendment providing for the election of United States senators by popular vote. Of course the house will pass it with a whoop as it has done in five congresses. There never has been a sound or sensible argument advanced against that proposition. The closer every political function is brought to the great body of the people, the better for all concerned. The people can be trusted. There is something wrong with the man afraid to trust them. Such a man is a very unreliable guide, counselor and friend. Should the standpatters defeat this resolution, democratic legislatures will do the next best thing by adopting the Oregon plan until election by popular vote can be legalized by congress, which is certain to happen eventually as the sun is to rise again.

In both houses democrats are trying to enforce "economy in the public expense that labor may be lightly burdened"—the old and correct Jeffersonian doctrine.

So I report progress to the American people, confident that from time to time I can report more progress—the more the better.

The Arizona Constitution

The people of Arizona have ratified their constitution and await the approval of the authorities at Washington. That approval cannot be withheld; the constitution suits the people of the new state and does not violate the federal constitution—that is all that can be required. The people of Arizona think it good, but whether the Washington authorities like it or not they have no reasonable excuse for delaying statehood. If there is any provision in the constitution which is objectionable to the people of Arizona it can be easily removed through the initiative and referendum—what more can President Taft ask?

During the recent campaign some of the officeholders, who are about to lose their salaries; some of the corporations that do not like to be regulated, and some of the newspapers that are controlled by foreign capital assumed to speak for the president and threaten disapproval, but

it would be a reflection on the chief executive to believe that he would permit these self-appointed mouth-pieces to speak for him. Mr. Taft has read the constitution; if he had intended to disapprove it he should have said so and pointed out the parts to which he objected. It is hardly good faith—certainly not generous—to keep silent until the people speak and then withhold statehood because of personal objection to one or more provisions.

IF HE THINKS THAT ANY PROVISIONS ARE OBJECTIONABLE LET HIM POINT OUT THOSE PROVISIONS AND ASK CONGRESS TO AUTHORIZE A SEPARATE VOTE ON THOSE PROPOSITIONS AT THE TIME STATE AND LOCAL OFFICIALS ARE ELECTED.

This will give the people a chance to vote on those particular propositions, and he would hardly take the position that the people should not be allowed to have them if they desire them

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