

# The Independent.

VOL. XV.

LINCOLN NEB., FEBRUARY 25, 1904.

No. 40.

## The St. Louis Conference

Work Begun at Denver Approved—National Convention Called.

En Route Wabash Train, St. Louis to Council Bluffs, Feb. 24, 1904.—(Editorial—Correspondence.)—The reform forces of the United States will on the 128 anniversary of the birth of our republic, meet in national convention at Springfield, Ill.

This is the unanimous action of both national committees, after two days and two nights of spirited discussion. That this discussion was heated and acrimonious at times, goes without saying. Populists always have been—and always will be—Independent thinkers, upon whom the yoke of discipline (as that term is commonly understood) is galling. They have been sneeringly referred to by politicians in other parties as a party with no leaders and every man a statesman—and the charge is essentially true. For while populists are not slow to recognize the superior ability of men like Thomas E. Watson, former Senator Allen and others, and to give great weight to their counsel and advice, it is yet a fact that these men are not "leaders" in the sense that they do the thinking for their entire following.

Hence, any populist gathering lacks that smooth, cily movement which is the delight of the machine politician. It is bound to be more or less stormy. The steel and flint are sure to come together with fire-producing force.

Add to these propensities, the further fact that this was a meeting of two heretofore antagonistic wings of the people's party, represented by men on either side who have been scathing in their utterances regarding the other, and you have the situation at St. Louis.

The average populist has a pretty well developed bump of suspicion, which ordinarily keeps him on the alert. And this being an extraordinary occasion, it is not amiss to say that this bump was worked overtime at St. Louis.

But, after all is said and done, I believe that every populist in both committee meetings was inspired by an earnest wish to do that which would ultimately bring about relief for the great common people, the wealth-producers of this glorious country of ours. The local conditions prevailing in the different states naturally gave different viewpoints, and quite as naturally gave rise to a clash of opinions as to what would really best promote the ultimate success of the people's party, and through it the genuine prosperity of the wealth-producers.

I confess that for a time, when the storm clouds of dissension were lowering, and it seemed inevitable that the people's party could not be reunited, my own bump of suspicion got to working a double shift. It seemed that two or three men in the allied people's meeting were determined that no reconciliation should take place. Yet when these men after being whipped in the fight of their lives for what they believed was the best course to pursue, accepted defeat philosophically and joined hands in making the call and address—well, I compelled that "chronological protuberance" to suspend operations.

About sixty members of both committees were present. Among the "fusionists" were E. Gerry Brown of Massachusetts, J. H. Calderhead of Montana, Dr. I. D. Burdick of Indian Territory, Edmisten, Tibbles Weber and myself from Nebraska, Dr. and J. H. Cooke of Missouri, Adam Hanua and John Medert of Indiana, and some others whose names escape my memory now. Lett rs of regret were received from practically all of the national committeemen not present. A few were pessimistic, but most of them felt that the present uncertainty and chaos in the political world is the darkness which portends the dawn of a brighter day for the hosts of wealth-producers now being robbed by organized greed by means of monopolistic special privileges. A considerable number believed it the part of political wisdom to defer holding the national convention until after both old parties have had theirs, and thus be enabled to take advantage of conditions then existing. This might

be called the northern viewpoint.

Among the prominent "mid-roaders" present were Colonels Mallett and Park, and James W. Biard of Texas, Judge A. H. Livingston, Paul J. Dixon, James H. Hillis, H. Barkis, and Nat. G. Eaton of Missouri, Jo A. Parker of Kentucky, Judge Samuel W. Williams and A. G. Burkhardt of Indiana, Col. Felter and A. C. Barton of Illinois, L. H. Weller, J. R. Norman and S. M. Harvey of Iowa, W. S. Morgan of Arkansas.

Most of these men quite naturally saw things through southern spectacles. I am telling no secret damaging to the cause of populism when I say that the populists of the south are discouraged. They are practically disfranchised along with the negro. They may vote and vote, but the election machinery is in the hands of men who count and count. No one can tell by examining an election abstract how many populist votes were cast.

The men responsible for this state of affairs call themselves "democrats." They are "leaders" of southern democracy. With notable exceptions, they represent the same plutocratic interests as do the republicans in the north. And the republican party of the south is a fac-simile of the J. Sterling Morton-Dr. Miller brand of democracy in Nebraska before Bryan committed the (to them) unpardonable offense of actually winning an election to congress.

Just as Dr. Miller and his conferees earnestly desired a little democratic party in Nebraska, which should be their very own for trading purposes with the republicans, so do the leading republicans of the far south deprecate any attempt to make their party an actuality in government there. To wrest control from the democrats would mean a party big enough to get away from their ownership.

Practically all the mid-road populists of the south were former democrats. The causes which made them populists still exist, and they very naturally view with suspicion any man who claims the name "democrat," and this suspicion goes out to populists who have co-operated with genuine democrats in the north.

Accordingly, it was to be expected that the "mid-roaders" would oppose any action of the committees which would give plausible grounds for suspicion that the national convention might be used to promote the interests of the democratic party. I can't

blame them for that. Even in Nebraska where men who are the salt of the earth call themselves "democrats," and the party as a whole is dominated by such men, there are many old bourbons who despise a populist as they would a venomous reptile, and nothing but the hope of winning by populist aid prevents an open expression of that feeling.

Hence, one can imagine something of the feeling between populists and democrats in the south. And a good deal of the past bitterness between the two populist factions has come about because neither side would try to look at the situation from the other's viewpoint. Undoubtedly on both sides the desire to triumph over the other has caused populists to be led astray by the casuistry popularly attributed to the Jesuits—that "the end justifies the means." I believe that neither wing can truly show a clean bill of health for that committee meeting at Lincoln in 1900 when the "split" occurred. I believe men in both factions were guilty of practices unbecoming a populist.

But that is a closed incident now. We should forgive, even if we can't forget it. As Morgan of Arkansas said to me last night, "We were acting under the pressure of entirely different motives. You in the north were fighting for immediate success. We in the south were fighting for the preservation of our party—there was no immediate success in sight for us."

But let us not dwell too long in the past. Association for the past two days with that prince among American gentlemen, E. Gerry Brown of Massachusetts, has given me a tinge of his fatalistic coloring, that "what is to be will be." Even those homely, old-fashioned sayings that "the mill will never run with the water that's passed by," and "there's no use crying over spilled milk," substantiate his philosophy. No man knows what might have been—but has a right to guess; and as there is little profit in guessing, unless it will help us in the future, why indulge in it?

Well, when the meetings began, we in the New St. James and they in the Southern, a little informal talk brought out the fact that we preferred to hold the convention at Indianapolis or Springfield on July 7, and a conference committee, consisting of Messrs. Brown, Calderhead and myself, was appointed to confer with a like sub-committee from the mid-roaders. They sent over Judge Will-

iams, Col. Felter and Col. Park.

Mr. Brown, in our behalf, tentatively named St. Louis as the place, date, July 7. Judge Williams named June 14, but had no decided preference between Indianapolis or Springfield, as I remember it. It soon developed that the real hitch was on the date. Col. Park felt in honor bound by the Denver agreement to stand out for a convention before either of the old parties, and from that time on gave the most stubborn resistance to any change. Assurances that there would be no indorsement of either old party ticket did no good. His honor was pledged to hold our convention first, and by the living God he'd stand by that.

All that the majority of the mid-roaders wanted was to be certain that when the people's party holds its convention it will put a populist ticket in the field and not indorse the candidates of either old party. The date was not essential, so long as independent, straightforward action could be reasonably assured. It was pointed out that a convention held June 14 might be manipulated into nominating, say, William R. Hearst, and this used as a club to compel the democratic convention to nominate him. Col. Park wasn't worried over such a contingency, and even admitted that he wouldn't feel hurt if we should nominate a ticket June 14 which would be acceptable to the democrats. When told that such would be identical with the much abused "fusion" in Nebraska, he simply shrugged his shoulders and stood pat.

In our committee Tibbles and Edmisten had been a party to the Denver agreement as to time, and they suggested at first July 5 and afterwards July 4 as the date in order to live up to that agreement, so far as concerned the democratic convention—and there wasn't much danger that we should indorse Teddy—or the other fellow who might happen to down him.

It wasn't very long until Judge Livingston, Col. Mallett, Judge Williams, Barkis, Eaton, Col. Felter and a number of others were willing to compromise on the Fourth of July; but Jo Parker, Paul Dixon, Col. Park, Morgan, Weller, Burkhardt, and others still stood out for June 14. Finally the mid-road committee agreed to Springfield, July 4, but demanded certain certificates of good character from us, which we good-naturedly gave over Gerry Brown's vigorous protest, willing to have peace at any price even to the extent of doing the manifestly absurd act of certifying under our own hand and seal our good intentions toward the cause of populism.

This done, the mid-road committee named A. G. Burkhardt as temporary chairman of the convention and reported to our committee. That caused an explosion in our camp. Populists have—as it seems to me—an unreasonable prejudice against the practice of allowing the national committee to suggest the name of a temporary chairman. It always has looked to me that suggesting a temporary chairman is no more "machine" politics than fixing the representation. But the prejudice exists—and there's little use arguing about it.

Here again Gerry Brown and a number of others protested vigorously; but after some discussion it was decided to concede the point and name the temporary secretary. I was named as the victim. We drew our resolution "recommending as temporary chairman, A. G. Burkhardt of Indiana," etc., and reported to the other meeting.

Mr. Burkhardt immediately denounced the whole thing as a damnable scheme of the fusionists to swallow them whole without the usual formality of greasing them behind the ears—or words to that effect—and absolutely refused to act.

Then hell broke loose for a season. A motion was made to reconsider the action choosing Springfield, July 4. The vote was taken during a period of intense planetary disturbance—if our down-east astrologers will permit me to refer to their

### A CHILDREN'S "ELECTION."

Prof. Wangemann Comments on the Result of Chicago School "Election."

Editor Independent: A teacher in one of our public schools lately asked for an "election" to determine the "best or greatest or most popular person." Here is the count: Lincoln 14, Washington 11, McKinley 6, Roosevelt 4, King Arthur 3, Joan of Arc 3, Queen Victoria 2, "My Father" 3, "My Mother" 3, King Solomon 1 and Elsie Dinsmore 1; 51 votes.

It is safe to say in analyzing the ballot that the votes for "My Father," "My Mother," and Elsie Dinsmore were the only true "personal" indications of a reasonable, discerning judgment. The others are merely mechanical reflex reactions of the gray brain tissue of these children, impressed with the "virtues" of King Arthur, Solomon and the rest. Impressed by outsiders, such as the teacher, text-books waving bunting, etc. The children really have no conception of Joan of Arc, for instance, nor of the real Lincoln.

I mention this "play election" merely as an illustration of the fact that "grown-ups" often act just like "children" with whiskeys. Does the average voter use "his" own individual judgment? or does he not rather rely on "others" to tell him what is "best" for him? What "argument" is in a torch procession—or a "gunshot slogan" or a "tin-pail" for intelligent Americans? Still such foolishness

wins out—brings results and boodle, too.

The teacher conducting that kid election proudly referred to the fact that none of the children had (by its vote) declared either Rockefeller or Schwab or Morgan or Vanderbilt as the "best or greatest person."

That is readily explained. Our children do not "know" these gentlemen. The text-books of our public schools mention the deeds of "old" knights like King Arthur, but do not contain, as yet, the tales of the "modern" knights and American "kings."

Such tales would be neither good Sunday school literature, nor exactly the sort of deeds, which even the most case-hardened machine republican in Nebraska would like to put before his own son as worthy of innocent admiration and as a modern standard example of "virtue."

Standards of morality change, you know. It's time enough for the kids to absorb the "golden calf" standard when ready to vote as told. Later on—you know.

In the meantime, it tickles me that one of the little voters had the sense to vote for Elsie Dinsmore. There's the making of a true American in that kid!

A. WANGEMANN Ph.G., Consulting Chemist. Edgewater, Chicago, Ill.