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The Man, or the Platform?

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THE MAN, OR THE PLATFORM?

BY SENATOR M. S. QUAY, OF PENNSYLVANIA ; SENATOR G. G. VEST, OF MISSOURI ; REPRESENTATIVE C. A. BOUTELLE, OF MAINE ; REPRESENTATIVE J. C. BURROWS, OF MICHIGAN ; REPRESENTATIVE W. L. WILSON, OF WEST VIRGINIA ; AND REPRESENTATIVE C. D. KILGORE, OF TEXAS.

SENATOR QUAY :

THE Man, or the Platform ? Personality, or Principle—which is more potent in national politics ? Should party fealty depend upon the character of the candidate rather than upon the issue he is put forward to represent ?

These are the questions suggested by the topic you furnish. They are broad, historically considered, but as they concern the politics of the United States to-day they may be briefly and readily answered.

The conventions of the great political parties at Minneapolis and Chicago next month will present to the electors two candidates for the Presidency. They will also place before the people their statements of belief and opposing theories of legislation and administration. The candidate successful at the election will be charged with the duty of administering the office of Chief Executive so as to carry out, wherever practicable, the principles enunciated by his party simultaneously with his nomination.

Thus, once in four years is presented to our people a choice not only between men, but between policies of government. The relative importance of either varies with the year, almost with the hour. It is affected by domestic industrial conditions, by commercial affairs and prospects, and by foreign relations. Practically then the relative value of the Man and the Platform fluctuates with the changing political conditions. The battle of 1884 was a contest of personality. Issues were obscured by flights of missiles aimed at the character of the candidates, and the result was believed by many to have been determined neither by the strength of the batteries of abuse nor the accuracy of the artilleryists, but by skilful jugglery with the ballot-boxes of a limited and thickly populated portion of a single State.

The campaign of 1888 was preëminently one of issues rather than of candidates. Abuse was practically eliminated, and the preference of voters for either candidate was a far less important factor than was the sense of voters upon the question of protection to American industry. Upon this the Republican party won, though the Democratic candidate was weighted by the fact that his campaign was an effort to make him his own successor. Somewhat in line with the anti-third-term idea is a theory—plastic as yet, but tough and indurating to conviction—of the impolicy of attempting a Presidential reëlection. Owing to the enormity and the antagonisms of the corporate and material interests of the country, the clash of disappointments and resentments in personal ambitions, and the almost exact equipoise of parties, the retention of a President, no matter how wisely and impartially and skilfully (politically speaking) he may have discharged the duties of his high office, is difficult, and the Democratic candidate would certainly have been much stronger in 1888 had he not been elected in 1884. If there was any perversion of the ballot in 1884 there was none at the pivotal points in 1888. Personal factors in this campaign were the unassailable character of the Republican candidate and his marvellous faculty for discussing, day after day, great and varying public questions in speeches all differing in form and without an error of treatment or blunder of expression.

The campaign of 1892 will again be conducted upon principle rather than personality. This is demonstrated in advance of the conventions by the varying prospects of at least two of the aspirants for the Democratic nomination, which rise and fall as

the financial issue promises to become more or less prominent in the platform of that party. The Republican candidate will represent a definite industrial policy already framed in law, and a currency of stable value in domestic and foreign transactions.

The other question, that of party fealty, ought never to arise, because the party organizations ought to be so sensitive to public opinion, and so wisely led by those influential in council, as never to evolve a candidate unworthy of his cause. When the question is raised it is always unfortunate, not merely as affecting practical results, but as diverting the attention of the masses from policies to persons. Such a campaign is one of prejudice rather than education. However, as party organizations have wrought since Presidential nominations have been made by national conventions, there has been no occasion when voters ought not fairly to base their choice of parties upon platforms rather than upon candidates.

M. S. QUAY.

SENATOR VEST:

IT WOULD be an ideal republic in which parties, candidates, and voters were influenced entirely by a desire for the general good.

It is not pessimistic, however, to admit that the time will never come in a country controlled by popular suffrage when platforms will not be framed and candidates selected with the leading purpose of carrying elections. Nor will higher civilization, with increased wealth and luxury, bring a change for the better. More expensive methods in private life and growing governmental patronage will furnish greater temptations to sacrifice convictions and principles upon the altar of expediency.

The art of constructing a political platform so as to suit many interests and opinions, exposing as little surface as possible to the fire of an enemy, is with conventions an important feature of partisan management; but the public generally has come to regard these quadrennial manifestoes much as it does railway notices to the effect that "Passengers will not stand on the platform when the train is moving;" or, in other words, it believes that the party will pay little attention to its platform after the canvass.

This statement may seem harsh and exaggerated, but it must be confessed that the facility with which parties have constructed

and disregarded platforms in the past justifies the opinion that political exigencies will be equally potent in the future.

It does not follow, however, that in every instance where a party has disregarded its platform the motive has been vicious or corrupt, for in a new and rapidly developing country where conditions and issues are changing constantly, there can be no fixed and immutable policy declared by any organization that should certainly govern its action in every contingency. This is especially true in a large degree as to economic questions and the details of administration; for what might be demanded by the highest patriotism in certain environments would with changed conditions become "midsummer madness."

It is easy to understand, for instance, that in our early history patriotism may have advocated the encouragement by Congress of infant industries; but when these infants have become not only full grown, but exacting and oppressive veterans in their demands for governmental partnership, the system of encouragement once necessary must be regarded as unjust and wicked discrimination.

Modified and qualified as just stated, the fact yet remains that political platforms have steadily deteriorated in their influence upon voters until the platitudes of which they are usually composed must be looked upon as the traditional accompaniment of a convention, occupying in public estimation the same relation to a canvass as the brass bands and torchlight processions which are expected to attract the citizens' attention, although they may not affect his judgment.

Parties, however, and their machinery are absolutely necessary to popular government. They elicit free discussion and insure vigilant inquiry, with legitimate criticism as to public measures and men. To denounce party organization as an unmixed evil is like decrying fire and water because they often cause disaster.

Nor is it true that parties are divided only upon the question of controlling official patronage.

Between the Democratic party and its opponents have always existed, and will always exist, radical and fundamental differences in regard to the constitutional grants of power, especially those affecting taxation and revenue, which must always align the mass of intelligent voters on one side or the other. No platform is necessary to this result.

The fundamental and irreconcilable disagreement between those who insist that the constitution embodies certain specific grants of power from the States to the federal government, the limitations of which, fairly construed, must apply to all public questions, and those who believe that the general-welfare clause of the constitution permits the federal authorities to do anything which they believe necessary, began with the convention which framed the federal constitution and will continue to the end.

It may be safely assumed from the nature of the controversy and the history of past political contests, that heredity of opinion, sectional feeling, or deliberate investigation and honest conviction, will cause a majority of voters to act constantly with one of the two great parties.

Between the opposing forces stands that large body of voters known as Independents and Mugwumps, who profess allegiance to neither party, and whose action must decide the evenly balanced contest.

With them, platforms and political history amount to little, or they would be found acting with those who are regular soldiers under a party flag.

It is useless to deny that party bonds are more easily broken than they were, and that the personality of candidates is becoming more potent. The number is fast increasing of voters who prefer in the candidate courage and honesty to high-sounding declamation in the platform. Of course when the platform announces principles and policies which commend themselves to the judgment and conscience, and the candidate's character gives assurance that he will adhere to these principles and policies, the path of duty is plain. When, however, the platform is acceptable, but the candidate lacks the essential attributes of honesty, courage, or ability, a very different question is presented to the voter.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the party which offers an unworthy candidate must pay the penalty by losing popular respect and confidence.

The strength of republican government is in the honest instincts of the people, and it is impossible to convince an honest voter that it is his duty to support a man for office whom he believes to be dishonest or incompetent. The trickster may for a time deceive his constituency, but the man who deals

fairly, sincerely, and courageously with public questions will always in the end command popular respect and confidence. He may be often mistaken as to his duty, and be sometimes called upon to oppose heresies which have many adherents, but the people by intuition will at last reject the demagogue and cling to one whom they believe to be candid and courageous.

It is also worthy of remark that no platform can embrace all the questions which may arise in the rapid development of a great country but fairly beginning its career as a nation, and the people are justified in believing that the best guaranty of safety to the ship of state is having at the helm a brave and honest pilot.

The political history of our country shows that the idols of the people have not been our most accomplished statesmen, but men whose courage and patriotism were questioned only by party rage. Jackson and Lincoln had neither the majestic character of Washington, the varied knowledge and culture of Jefferson, nor the eloquence of Clay and Webster, but the people, with that unerring instinct which is better than the learning of all the schools, trusted them implicitly.

G. G. VEST.

THE HON. C. A. BOUTELLE:

AS THE object of elections under our form of government is to secure the most satisfactory representation of the wishes of the people in the administration of public affairs, it seems natural that more importance should be attached to the declarations of principle and policy in behalf of which appeals are made to popular support than to the individuality of candidates who are put forward as the exponents of the doctrines or ideas of the supporters, and who may often be comparatively little known by the great mass of voters.

The fundamental fact that our political system is based upon the competition of parties representing distinct theories or practices of government, and not upon the contests of factions devoted to the fortunes of individual chiefs or leaders, seems to render it inevitable that, under ordinary circumstances, the average voter should be governed more by the declarations of public policy to be inaugurated or maintained than by his impressions as to the personal characteristics of the candidates.

I think this tendency is clearly shown in the history of our most important Presidential elections. In 1860 the name of Abraham Lincoln had become hardly more familiar to the country at large than his homely features, the likenesses of which were so curiously scanned after his defeat of the famous William H. Seward in the Republican national convention. It was the clarion cry of "Free soil for free men!" that aroused the marching legions of that victorious campaign, and the enthusiasm of the liberty-loving people identified the standard-bearer with the inspiring challenge of the platform: "*We deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individual to give legal existence to slavery in any territory of the United States!*"

Who can doubt that four years later, when the great President had become better known, but when the spirit of faction was strongly aroused against him, the victory at the polls was far more largely influenced by the issue joined between the parties than by all that was said or thought of the personal qualities of the candidates. The loyal sentiment of the nation rallied to the support of the President, *because* his party declared against any basis of peace except unconditional surrender, and had called upon the Government "to prosecute the war with the utmost possible vigor to the complete suppression of the Rebellion." Not even the candidacy of the distinguished soldier who had but recently been the idolized chief of the Union armies, and who vainly sought to throw his military prestige into the scale as an assurance of patriotism, could save the Democratic party from the popular rebuke which overwhelmed the authors of a platform that pronounced the war a "failure," and demanded immediate overtures for peace, three weeks after Farragut had thundered through the gates of Mobile Bay, almost at the very hour when Tecumseh Sherman was marching into Atlanta to split the Confederacy wide open, and when Grant and Sheridan were tightening their death-grip on the throat of the Rebellion, in Virginia.

With principles so vital and momentous at stake, the most conspicuous personalities were dwarfed in comparison, and the people followed not a leader, but the gleaming banner of a beloved and imperilled country, to the defence of which they were summoned by the dauntless proclamation of the Republican party.

So, in 1868, while the renown of the foremost military hero

of the war was undoubtedly an important aid to the party that nominated General Grant, the Republican success was still more largely due to public approval of the demand for "equal suffrage for all loyal men in the South," and the pledge that "the national honor requires the payment of the public indebtedness in the uttermost good faith to all creditors." The denunciation "of all forms of repudiation as a national crime" struck the popular chord of integrity, and met with quick response from a people who had shed their blood as freely as they had contributed their money to uphold the national honor.

In 1872 the unexpected nomination of the famous Protectionist, Horace Greeley, by a convention of "revenue-reformers," followed by a reluctant indorsement by a Democratic national convention, involved such incongruity that the framing of a distinctive party platform was impossible, and a disastrous defeat resulted from the attempt to secure the election of one of the ablest, and in many respects one of the most excellent, men in public life, as the Presidential candidate of a party whose doctrines and policies he had for many years mercilessly ridiculed and denounced.

In 1876 and 1880, it will be remembered, after making all allowance for the popular interest in the candidates, that the serious contentions of the two campaigns were over the planks of the respective platforms. In the former year the Republicans insisted upon redemption of United States notes in coin and a tariff in the interest of American labor, while the Democrats denounced the protective tariff and demanded the repeal of the Resumption act. In 1880 the Republicans won again on a platform reaffirming the principle of protection and declaring the "complete protection of all citizens in all their privileges and immunities the first duty of the Nation." The Democrats declared for "a tariff for revenue only," and denounced as "the fraud of 1876-7" the very tribunal which they had so earnestly invoked.

In 1884 the nomination of Mr. Blaine brought into the foreground of a Presidential canvass the most brilliant and powerful individuality in American politics, and there can be no doubt of the remarkable enthusiasm created by his famous tour of the Northern States, in which his unequalled versatility and personal magnetism were so potently employed in behalf of his party. But Mr. Blaine's fame and his marvellous hold upon the Republicans

of the country were based upon the fact that he had become so widely recognized as the most fearless and trenchant champion of the cherished principles of Republicanism, and he was supported as the embodiment of the platform on which he stood. I have my own opinion as to the result of that Presidential canvass and the methods by which it was reached, but, without going into that collateral discussion, I think I may safely assume that no one will claim that popular interest in the personality of Mr. Cleveland was a principal factor in the Democratic success in 1884.

In 1888 Mr. Cleveland's renomination gave his party the benefit of such prestige as attached to the first Democratic administration since 1861, and the selection of General Harrison by the Republicans gave them a candidate from an illustrious family, who had rendered gallant service in the field and made an excellent reputation during his term in the United States Senate, but no campaign was ever fought more directly upon the principles of the party platforms than that in which the Democratic President was defeated in his own State and beaten by sixty-five majority of the electoral votes, in spite of the suppression of popular suffrage in the solid South. No stronger evidence of the popular interest in the party creeds could be found than is furnished by the discussions of the last Presidential campaign, in which the Mills Tariff Bill was made a leading issue by its indorsement in the Democratic, and denunciation in the Republican, platform. The same feature is conspicuously demonstrated by the fact that the publication of Mr. Blaine's famous interview, in which he criticised President Cleveland's message and expounded the Republican doctrine just prior to the 1888 campaign, exercised a greater influence upon the canvass than the personality of either of the distinguished Presidential candidates. I may add that the declaration of the Republican national platform in favor of temperance undoubtedly saved to that party many thousands of votes that it would otherwise have lost.

My conclusion is, that the declarations of the principles and policies of the parties will, in this year's campaign, as in the past, have greater influence with the voters than the individuality of candidates. Of course this view is predicated upon the condition that the candidates shall be fairly acceptable and representative men; for, while I believe the American people have more regard

for principles than for individuals, I am equally sure that the nomination of an unmistakably bad man for the great office of President of the United States is a dangerous experiment for any party. The people may be deceived, but they will not knowingly elevate to the chair of Washington and Lincoln any man unworthy of the respect of his countrymen.

In this age of telegraphs and fast mails the people think, and know what they want, and will declare in their respective platforms the policies they desire to have carried out. The Republican party will confidently make its appeal for an honest ballot, an honest currency, and a tariff that will protect American labor and develop all the resources of our magnificent country. On that platform it will not fail to place a candidate worthy of the public confidence. On all these doctrines the Democrats must join issue unequivocally; or the evasion will condemn them. No party can dodge or straddle the leading issues this year, and while the silver question has found Mr. Cleveland tongue-tied in Rhode Island and Mr. Hill dumb in the Senate, the party platform must speak out as the Democratic House has spoken, and the candidate will be judged by the party and the platform.

Believing that the avowed principles of the Republican party furnish the soundest basis for the prosperity of the American people, and having faith in their intelligence and patriotism, I look forward with confidence to the rendering of their judgment between the two great parties, wherever that judgment can be freely and fairly expressed.

C. A. BOUTELLE.

THE HON. J. C. BURROWS:

IN A government like ours, resting on free and popular suffrage, it is not only the right, but the duty of the citizen to vote. His ballot is his voice, and the ballot-box the only medium through which he can make it effective on questions of public policy, and secure their crystallization into law. Even this, however, must be done by indirection. This is from necessity a representative government. At stated intervals public servants are chosen by the whole body of the people to speak and act for them in the conduct of governmental affairs. The candidates for these official positions both in the State and in the nation are usually selected

through the instrumentality of party organization, and so become the representatives and exponents of party principles and purposes.

When party candidates have been selected and political creeds promulgated, the intelligent and honest voter will identify himself with that political organization which most nearly represents his views on questions of governmental policy. Of course the first duty of the voter, who has a just conception of the obligation he owes to society and the State, is to thoroughly and conscientiously examine every question upon which he is called to pass judgment, wholly free from all partisan bias, and reach a conclusion with sole regard to the public weal. Too many voters, especially young men, determine, or rather drift into, party allegiance first, and settle their political convictions afterwards. A necessary prerequisite to intelligent partisanship is intelligent investigation and well-grounded judgment touching matters of public concern.

Parties never make issues—issues form parties and so crystallize individual thought into political action.

The voter having previously determined and settled his creed of political faith, it becomes his duty to identify himself with that party which stands committed to the policy he approves. In no other way can he hope to give effect to his views on public questions.

This is a government by parties springing from the people, and the individual citizen must speak through party organization, or not at all. To this end the body of the people composing political organizations select delegates to a national convention, empowering them to promulgate the party's platform and nominate the party candidate to be supported thereon. This platform is supposed to embody the dominant views of the adherents of the party, and the opinions of the candidate selected are presumed to be in harmony with the party's declaration of principles. If the platform contains a clear and unequivocal declaration of party faith and purposes touching all matters of political controversy, and the candidate in his letter of acceptance, or otherwise, fully indorses the principles of the party as therein set forth, the voter, if his views are in harmony with the candidate and the platform, can give to such a party conscientious and vigorous support.

But it may sometimes happen that a large and respectable

minority of the party are not in accord with the party platform in some of its material declarations, and the party nominee is known to hold opinions contrary to those embodied in the party platform. In other words, the platform may represent the controlling thought and policy of the party, while the candidate is known to be in harmony with the views of the minority. In such case the voter may be at a loss to determine his political action.

Party managers, however, usually contrive, when great and serious differences divide the rank and file of the party, to construct a platform in such doubtful phrase as to make it susceptible of an interpretation to suit either faction of the party, and thus hold the party adherents in line. If, however, a serious difference exists between the adherents of a party and its candidate, both party and candidate will, in their desire for success, seek to cover up that difference by obscurity of language. The absence of clear statement, either by the party in its platform or the candidate in his letter of acceptance, is conclusive evidence of intentional deception. In such a case, neither the party nor the candidate can have the slightest claim upon the allegiance of the voter. Language of doubtful meaning in a party declaration or by a candidate upon a question sharply at issue is not to be tolerated by a self-respecting people. Obscurity of language on important questions of public policy is conclusive evidence of dishonest purpose, and is of itself sufficient reason for distrust of a party or its candidate or both. The clearest possible statement of party faith is due from a party and its candidate, and only such avowal can command the respect and support of the honest voter.

But let it be supposed that the party in its platform makes unequivocal declaration touching vital issues of national concern, and the nominee is known to hold views opposed to such declaration, the question arises, Which should exert a controlling influence over the voter in determining his political action—the platform, or the candidate? In the first place it is difficult to conceive of any party, actuated by an honest purpose, nominating a candidate known to be opposed to its declaration of principle in any material part as embodied in its platform; and it is equally incomprehensible that a candidate can be found so lost to all sense of personal honor as to accept a nomination on a platform with which he is not in full accord. But, if such a condition were possible, it would carry on its face such an expression of dupli-

ity as ought to drive the honest voter from all affiliation with that political organization. It would justly forfeit the confidence of the voter both in the party and its candidate. Somebody is to be deceived. If the principles of the party as announced in its platform are to be carried out in contradistinction to the views of the candidate, those who voted for the candidate rather than for the platform are to be betrayed; while, on the contrary, if the views of the candidate are to control, then the voter who sustains the party by reason of its platform is to be deceived. Thus, in either event, a portion of the voters will surely be betrayed. Under such circumstances, if there is a party having a platform and candidate in harmony, and they are both in accord with the views of the voter on the vital questions at issue, the intelligent and honest citizen will identify himself with such a political organization, whatever its name or his own previous political affiliation.

If, however, the voter lacks the moral courage to wholly sever his connection with such a party, then it becomes material to inquire which should determine his vote—the platform, or the candidate. Unquestionably the platform. Party principles as expressed in party platforms, and supplemented by party power, are stronger than the convictions and purposes of any one man, and in the end will surely prevail. The candidate, whatever his personal judgment, will not be able to withstand the solicitations of his party, upon whose support he must depend for future political preferment. He may be ever so determined, party and personal considerations will prompt him to find a way to his party's support and the abandonment of individual purposes. The platform of a party, representing the convictions and judgment of the majority of the party adherents, will certainly prevail over the convictions of the candidate who is under the strongest possible temptation to come to and agree with the controlling element of his party. Under these conditions, the voter should look alone to the platform in determining his political action.

J. C. BURROWS.

THE HON. WILLIAM L. WILSON:

IT TOOK fifty years of party contests in the United States to develop the existing machinery of national conventions for nomi-

nating candidates for the Presidency, and for setting forth, by way of formal platform, the principles, professions, and promises of the party.

This does not imply that previous campaigns were lacking in definite issues or were devoid of partisan heat and bitterness. It is doubtful if we ever had more rancor in our politics than in the Jacksonian era, when, in addition to the burning issues that excited and divided the people, the strong personal antagonism of candidates aroused like feelings among their supporters.

Mr. Van Buren was the first Democratic candidate nominated by a national convention, but not until his second candidacy, in 1840, was a platform of party principles also made part of the work of the convention. As we read this first official statement of principles made by representatives of the party thus assembled, we find it a clear, honest, and reasonably explicit statement of fundamental Democratic faith, and of the attitude of the party to the great controversies of the day.

But the first Democratic candidate with a platform was ingloriously routed by a candidate who ran without the aid or incumbance of any platform, and whose supporters, although kindled with an enthusiasm never equalled in any of our national campaigns, could not have united on any common ground, except that of hostility to the administrations of Jackson and of his successor and political heir, Van Buren.

It is clear then, from a review of our Presidential canvasses, both before and since 1840, that a party platform is not a necessary equipment for a political battle, and that great issues may be clearly understood and vigorously fought over without being put into any definite and official formula.

But as long as our system of national conventions continues, we shall have both a candidate and a platform from every great party, and it will not be easy to say whether the one or the other should be most regarded by the patriotic voter in determining his political action.

It may be laid down as a rule that no voter ought to support a party whose programme as to great questions he does not approve, or to vote for a Presidential candidate whose personal and political integrity he does not believe to be above reproach.

When, however, one reviews the platforms issued during the past twenty-five years by national conventions and finds them

so full of boastful rhetoric and insincere profession, so untrue and sweeping in condemnation of political opponents, and, in the light of experience, so little trustworthy as to promise and pledge, he is obliged to conclude that party platforms alone are unsafe guides for determining his political action at the polls.

The position of our great historical parties on almost all main issues is determined for them, not so much by their resolutions in national convention, as by their past history, their traditions and the general beliefs and feelings of their members, so that these quadrennial platforms are often of no special significance, except as they amuse us by their artful dodging on inconvenient temporary issues, and their efforts, by virtuous protestation, "to pander to the better element." Nevertheless, there are times when party platforms become matters of vital controversy, which bring on heavy battles within the party ranks, or even result, as with the Democratic party in 1860, in their temporary disruption. It is precisely at these times that both the platform and the candidate become exceedingly important. Whenever the people are in dead earnest as to important public questions they will not tolerate any juggling with them in platforms, and they choose leaders more for their merits than for reasons of expediency. In less earnest times, the "dark horse," or the unknown candidate, who has few party antagonisms and a brief or colorless public record, is often taken as a stronger runner before the people than a real party leader.

Yet the preference for such a candidate in itself shows the desire to escape the criticism upon the man which a better-known personality or more conspicuous public record might bring into the canvass. Conceding, however, on the basis of these general and obvious remarks, the importance of a party platform, and the duty of every party to deal in frank and sincere utterance, I believe that the man is, in the long run, more important than the platform: first, because the great parties, as a rule, occupy well known positions on public issues, and, secondly, because in the character and ability of the candidate, we find the best pledge of the party's sincerity and professions.

No rarer good fortune can befall a political party than to find or develop a truly great leader. By such a great leader I mean a man who, to the capacity of leadership, adds the sincerity and intelligence to lead in the path of patriotic and party duty. It

is not possible to exaggerate the worth of such a man to his party and to his country when important questions arise that cannot safely be committed to universal suffrage for immediate, off-hand decision. It is at just such dangerous crises that ordinary politicians and ordinary leaders refuse to tell the people disagreeable truths, are eager to flatter their ignorance, and are only anxious to find out where the people want to go, regardless of the ultimate effect on party or country.

The most thoughtful student of politics in our day has truly said, that the danger to democratic institutions comes when vital questions are submitted to popular decision that it requires tension of thought to understand and some self denial to submit to their correct decision.

Any long divergence between "democratic opinion and scientific truth as applied to human societies" involves serious disaster.

If, at such vital time, some leader who has a strong hold on the respect and confidence of his party uses that respect and confidence to save it from temporary delusion and serious error, he does it a service that a myriad of mere party managers could never accomplish. Moreover, a true leader has an influence on the *morale* of a party that can come from no other source. "How quickly," says Mr. Bagehot, in his "Physics and Politics," "a leading statesman can change the tone of a community. We are most of us earnest with Mr. Gladstone; we were most of us *not* so earnest in the time of Lord Palmerston. The change is what every one feels, though no one can define it. Each predominant mind calls out a corresponding sentiment in the country; most feel it a little. Those who feel it excessively, express it excessively; those who dissent are silent or unheard."

It becomes patriotism to strengthen the respect of the masses for such a leader, and to encourage their confidence in his faithfulness to their true interests, because it is chiefly when they are prone to go wrong, or are most exposed to error in their decisions, that this confidence comes to their rescue, and saves them from the penalties that invariably follow political as other misdoing.

If it be said that I am giving undemocratic prominence to mere leadership, I answer that even under universal suffrage we must take men as they are and with the training which they bring out of the past. The Democratic party to-day, and hence-

forward, has no more urgent political duty than the education of the people to the honest and capable performance of the work of self-government, and I am but repeating a truth as old as Christianity, and even older, when I say that, in the education of the masses, the life of the teacher is more catching than his tenets.

In the ages and countries of the past, military heroism was the prime virtue of citizenship, as the chief duty of the citizen was to defend the life and liberty of his country from foreign enemies. In our own land, and under free institutions, the prime virtue of citizenship is the civic heroism that, in the defence of true political principles, makes light of personal sacrifices, and does not hesitate to withstand the clamors of the people, the *ardor civium prava jumentium*, when it is necessary to save the life or liberty, good name or prosperity, of the country from the vital mistakes of its own people.

Let us do what we can to develop this type of heroism, and, wherever we find it in robust existence, to clothe it with such popular confidence and official trust that it need not waste itself in vain sacrifice, but inure to the safety and permanent good of the country.

WILLIAM L. WILSON.

THE HON. C. D. KILGORE:

A POLITICAL party, according to Edmund Burke, is "an association of men united for the purpose of promoting by their joint efforts the public welfare upon principles about which they agree." Political parties do not exist except among a free people, and they are essential to the preservation of free government and constitutional liberty.

The principles professed by a party, and upon which it seeks public favor, by modern usage find expression in party platforms. Such platforms declare boldly on such principles and policy as have the united and enlightened sanction of the party—cautiously on such as are not yet baptized fully into party fellowship.

In the year 1800 a congressional caucus gave to the world the first party platform known to American politics. It was an able and forceful presentation of the political creed of Mr. Jefferson, luminously defining the rights of the citizen, and accurately interpreting the delegated powers of the Federal Government and the reserved powers of the State Government. He was chosen

President of the United States as the great exponent of the principles of the party he had founded. From 1800 to 1844 contests for political supremacy were conducted without any formal promulgation in party platforms of the political principles upon which the battle was fought, though the canvass was in each case made, and candidates were elected, on issues clearly defined and well understood by the people. The successful candidates of that period were each an issue in himself more potent than all the platforms that could have been devised.

Party conventions do not create, but merely advance, policies and principles. These are greater than men and parties and platforms,—are immutable and ever-living. They are as well understood by the people before as after a convention has named its candidate and announced its platform. The candidate is in many instances predetermined by public expression, and the convention only ratifies the popular choice, and avows his opinions as to the polity of the government and the policy and principles upon which it should be administered. If either Mr. Sherman, or Mr. McKinley, or Mr. Cleveland, or Mr. Carlisle should be nominated, without any announced platform, and be elected President, there would be no doubt in the minds of the people as to the principles and policy which would prevail, and no man would have to inquire of his neighbor, or “read it out of a book,” in order to be enlightened on the subject.

Public men and public measures are so closely identified that any representative man of high character, strong intellectuality, and pronounced convictions on great public questions, with the inspiration of a courageous statesmanship, stands before the country as the embodiment of the well-known fundamental principles of the party to which he belongs. Such a man, as a candidate, combines all the elements of strength, and he can command the zealous and enthusiastic support of his own party and of many conservative men of all parties—platform or no platform.

A political party may be united on well-understood vital principles, and may be, and frequently is, wide apart on important questions of policy. In such cases it is slow to pronounce on a specific policy which has not secured the sanction of the great body of the party, and the failure to declare satisfactorily on some such question will not repel voters who are mainly in accord with

the principles expressed in the platform and represented by an acceptable candidate. They are won by the great governing principles to which they yield assent, partially or entirely, and if a clean, brave, able, patriotic man and statesman leads the fight, the people will stand by him though the platform be not acceptable in all things.

The people are strongly wedded to a pure and aggressive policy vitalized by a lofty regard for principle and clean methods. They are, as a mass, loyal to that leadership which tends to elevate and purify the politics of the country. They believe that principle ought to be placed high above spoils; that a political party ought to be conducted so as to advance the principles which it professes and which give it life; that the government ought to be administered in the interest of the public welfare and in accord with the principles and policy about which they agree. They have an idea that a party has a higher and nobler mission than the mere achieving of success, that it may distribute public plunder to those who have public favor.

No platform, however binding, can impose any restraint on the cunning, corrupt politician or the meandering, unscrupulous spoilsman. He employs methods which have a tendency to debauch the people, and perpetually menace liberty and good government.

The history of Presidential contests demonstrates, with fairly conclusive force, that the personality of the candidate has more to do with success than any declaration of principles contained in the platform. The people will support with enthusiasm a candidate for President whose character and standing command their admiration, though the platform does not meet the sanction of their judgment.

Nominate a man well and widely known to be the exponent of the purer and better principles of free government, the embodiment of all the elements of a progressive, enlightened, and courageous statesmanship, able and upright, of clean, direct, and honorable methods, and whose greatness stands confessed in the confidence of the people, and a vast army of patriotic voters will flock to our ranks, and success will unfailingly reward our fidelity to principle.

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