THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1896

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CHAPTER I

SEEDS OF POLITICAL DISCONTENT

The 1896 presidential campaign is one of the most unique in the history of American politics. For years there had been a feeling of discontent among many of the people and since neither of major political parties took steps to alleviate their grievances there were murmurs of revolt within the membership of both parties. Southern farmers had passed through the era of reconstruction and were once more demanding their old status in the government. The West and Midwest had expanded rapidly since the Civil War and they, too, were clamoring for a greater voice in the government. Thus with the seeds of discontent sown, it was obvious that a political crisis was in the making. But in order to understand the forces of the agrarian rebellion which came to a head in 1896, it is first necessary to examine the basic issues of the period.

Following the Civil War, both major parties looked to Eastern public opinion for their platform and paid little heed to the demands of the Western and Southern farmers. During this period, however, the settling of the West was continuing at a fast pace and political power was shifting westward with the settlers. This was disclosed by the eleventh
census in 1890 when it was found that "the seat of power has at last been transferred from the seaboard to that great intramountane region between the Alleghanies and the Sierras." Thus for the first time, the people of the Middle West held in their hands the power to control elections if they could be united into a single voting unit. As the major parties continued to ignore the pleas of the West, the stage was set for a third party rebellion which would lead to a realignment of political interests.

The Populist movement, like the Greenback party which had disintegrated after its fusion with the Democratic party in 1874, was essentially an agrarian rebellion against the industrial element. The possibilities of such a movement were suggested in the election of 1890 when the Farmer's Alliance elected two senators and nine representatives. This work of the Alliance was not representative of a major party however, and some definite party organization was necessary if the movement were to assume national importance. In Omaha in 1892, this was effected and the People's or Populist party came into existence when nearly thirteen hundred delegates from all parts of the Union "flocked to the convention to take part in the selection of candidates"

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1 Congressional Record, 51st Congress, 2d Session, XXII, 1882.

for President and Vice-President and to adopt a platform for
the new party.*3

The year 1892 was an excellent time for the entrance of
a third party. The constant expansion of industry since the
Civil War had practically exhausted the available supply of
credit. In the treasury no surplus remained and a deficit
was in the offing. Overproduction caused widespread financial
distress and with both parties ignoring the agrarian demands
for an expansion of currency, the time was ripe for a third
party movement.4

The People's party, as the name implies, gained its
strength from the common people. With the Southern farmer
heavily burdened with debt, Middle Western farmers, plagued
with the same problem plus a running battle with the railroads,
found an immediate ally in the South and with the Farmer's
Alliance already active in the field, the party started with
a good following. The Populists also planned to include
labor in its ranks but was unable to arouse their following
to any large degree. Such men as Samuel Gompers, head of the
American Federation of Labor, refused to allow the union to
be drawn into the political arena and while the Knights of
Labor did offer to support the Populists, its power had waned

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*3 Solon J. Buck, The Agrarian Crusade, p. 142.
*4 Harold R. Bruce, American Parties and Politics, p. 127.
by 1892.\textsuperscript{6} Thus most of the laboring element voted with the
major parties or diverted to the Socialists instead of the
Populists. In failing to get the support of labor, the
People's party had lost what might have been one of its larg-
est followings and labor, through continued inability to unite
politically, lost an ally who could have been of great help.
All was not lost, however, for the silver miners of the West
united with the mine owners to support the movement after the
coinage law was revised in 1873. It should be noted, though,
that the support of the miners was concentrated in a geograph-
ical area that would have ordinarily been favorable to the
Populists.

The failure of the Populist party to attract real labor
support left the party primarily an agrarian party and a
sectional party, but in aligning the farmers with the silver
interests, it offered the key to uniting the people between
the Sierras and the Alleghanies.

The Populists ran James B. Weaver for the Presidency in
1892, and to the dismay of the two major parties, he polled
over a million popular votes and had twenty-two electoral
votes from six states.\textsuperscript{7} Equally important, however, were
the five Senators and ten Representatives who were sent to
Congress by the party. In thirteen states the Populists had

\textsuperscript{6}Mary Beard, A Short History of the American Labor
Movement, pp. 105-106.

\textsuperscript{7}Buck, op. cit. p. 181.
polled first or second place and Weaver had gained popular votes in all states. The major parties were thus faced with a protest movement of national proportions and possibilities that demanded consideration.

Four years later, however, the Populist party committed a capital political blunder by misjudging the future course of the Democrats and Republicans. In 1896, a convention was originally set for February in order to get a candidate into the field first. At the last moment strategy was changed when the leaders of the party decided that neither major party would adopt a silver plank and the Populists could thus profit by waiting and adding the silver members of the other parties who would be forced to bolt. What might have happened had neither party adopted a silver plank is a matter for conjecture. As it was, the Populists were left with no candidate and were themselves divided.

Perhaps the major contribution of the Populist party was the silver plank of its 1892 platform. In part, it said, "We demand free and unlimited coinage of silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to one." This plank was to become a major issue of the campaign of 1896.

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10 John D. Hicks, The Populist Revolt, p. 350.
For years prior to 1873, the United States had maintained a bi-metallic standard. Both gold and silver were legal tender for all debts and were coined at the rate of sixteen ounces of silver to one ounce of gold. The discovery of gold in California, however, placed enough gold in circulation to alter its value and sixteen ounces of silver became worth more than one ounce of gold; thus silver was no longer offered for coinage. During the Civil War, practically all of the coinage had disappeared. To meet the emergency, Congress authorized the issue of paper money. By the end of the war, the greenback and national bank note currency was almost the only currency in circulation. Congress was not satisfied with this state of affairs and in 1873 passed a law revising the coinage lists. This law made no provision for the coinage of silver and for this reason, came to be known as the "crime" of 1873.11 It is quite possible that Congress had no intention of slighting silver for since no silver was offered for coinage, no provision for it was necessary at that time.

It is possible that silver as a circulation medium might never have been missed had not the price of silver begun to decline shortly after the law was passed. During and after the Civil War, new silver mines were opened in the West.

Following the war, with the completion of the transcontinental railroad in 1869, a steadily increasing stream of silver found its way into the channels of trade. With production continually rising, the inevitable drop in prices began. Since prices were down, the Western silver miners would once more have profited from coinage at the old ratio. They were therefore quick to demand that silver be restored to its former status.\textsuperscript{12}

During this same period, production of gold was almost at a standstill and when called upon to carry the burden that had previously been borne by both gold and silver, it was only natural that the value of gold should increase.\textsuperscript{13}

Oddly enough, it was at this time that the nation was expanding and the value of its currency rising. The agrarian elements who depended upon banking interests to lend them money until their crops were harvested began to see that their debts, contracted in a period of cheaper currency, would on collection in expensive money, net the lender a handsome profit.\textsuperscript{14} When the silver interests demanded re-monitization of silver, the farmers saw in this a method of inflating currency and lowering their debts and the "crime" was out.

\textsuperscript{12} Fredrick L. Paxson, \textit{Recent History of the United States}, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{13} Lauck, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 19.
\textsuperscript{14} Hicks, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 304.
Between 1873 and 1892, several acts were passed for the purchase of silver but all acts called for only limited purchases. Furthermore, Democratic and Republican administrations alike, still following the leadership of Eastern financiers, kept as much silver out of circulation as was possible. This had the dual effect of failing to increase the amount of money in circulation and continuing to displace the treasury's gold supply.15

Slowly as the dollar continued to appreciate, the people of the West and South brought increasing pressure on their congressmen to cause the recirculation of silver. Thus, it became political suicide for these political leaders to support the gold standard. With Eastern gold standard interests dominating party policies of both major parties, it became apparent that many party leaders would find it impossible to continue in their parties and a revolt was in the offing.

Second in importance to the silver issue was the tariff issue. Here however, there were definite lines of issue between the two parties by 1896. The Democrats generally supported a low tariff; one that had the sole purpose of raising money to finance government operations. Many of the members of the Democratic party, particularly the farmers, felt that with a tariff they were protecting American business

and were paying for that protection with dollars from their own pockets. They therefore demanded a drastic revision downward. Not so the Republicans. To them the tariff was a vital campaign issue by the 1890's. The Republicans had aligned themselves with the business and commercial interests in the period of economic reconstruction following the war and the election of 1888 had demonstrated that the business interests were willing to pay for continued high protection by generous contributions to party funds. That campaign had also demonstrated that labor could be frightened into support of high tariff measures by tales of the danger of competition with European pauper labor and by threats of curtailed employment.16

With the Democrats of the 1890's favoring free trade or a tariff for revenue only and the Republicans favoring a high or protective tariff, it would seem that some decision would be reached. The period from 1875 until 1897 is an unusual period however. It is marked by a balance of political forces. "As the Republicans held the Senate for eighteen years and the Democrats held the House for sixteen, each could as a rule exercise a legislative veto."17 Thus, even though the Democrats by 1888 were committed as a party to a lower tariff,

16 Louis M. Hacker, and Benjamin B. Kendrick, The United States Since 1865, pp. 80-84, 94. See also, Stefan Lorant, The Presidency, A Pictorial History of Presidential Elections, From Washington to Truman, pp. 403.

17 Edward M. Sait, American Parties and Elections, p. 257.
little change was made in the tariff laws, but it was obvious that the tariff was becoming an issue of increasing importance.

Another issue which was to come to a climax in the election of 1896 was the split between the Cleveland wing and the Western wing of the Democratic party. This split had its beginning shortly after Cleveland took office for his second term. As has been mentioned, much of the silver which had been purchased after 1873 was withheld from circulation. Thus by the time that Cleveland took office on March 4, 1893, the treasury had less than one million dollars over the minimum which was believed necessary for sound operation.\(^\text{18}\)

Indeed, it was reported that President Harrison and Secretary Foster were "...watching the dollars in the Treasury with unconcealed anxiety, and hoping against hope that March 4 will come without an actual crash."\(^\text{19}\) It was therefore little surprise to anyone that a severe financial crisis developed shortly after inauguration day.

As the man in office, Cleveland was blamed for the shortage and was called upon to rectify the situation. This he proceeded to do by calling a special session of Congress for the sole purpose of repealing the silver purchase acts.\(^\text{20}\)

\(^\text{18}\)Government experts and financiers believed a minimum treasury reserve of $1,000,000,000 necessary for financial and economic stability. See Harold Underwood Faulkner, American Economic History, p. 553.

\(^\text{19}\)Nation, LVI(1893), 150.

\(^\text{20}\)Robinson, op. cit., p. 234.
As soon as the special session met, it became obvious that the repeal, if it came about, would not be accomplished by the Democrats alone. Many of the Democrats were in sharp issue with the President on this matter and had not Speaker Charles F. Crisp, himself a silver-Democrat, given the bill all of his support and influence it is doubtful if the measure would have passed at all. As it was, the bill was shoved through the House three weeks after its introduction by a sectional and bi-partisan vote coupled with considerable outside pressure.21 In the Senate the measure was delayed until the last of October when a final passage was gained by compromise. Confidence in the country's financial integrity, however, had been restored with the vote of the House. Although a leading financial journal called the action of the lower body the "...turning point of the whole financial crisis of 1893; confidence was restored as if by magic..."22, such optimism proved unwarranted. Before the panic in financial circles could be alleviated, Cleveland was forced to make a financial deal with J. P. Morgan and other New York bankers for the building up of the gold reserve in the treasury. This in turn brought an avalanche of protests from the agrarian element of the party who accused Cleveland


of selling out the Democratic party to predatory Wall Street financiers.23

In his effort to end the financial crisis, Cleveland was successful. It was true that a depression followed the crisis, but the panic had passed. Thus Cleveland was able to exert his leadership on the first issue of his tenure but in doing so he had alienated the agrarian silver wing of his party and driven the opening wedge that was to split the party in the next election.

In 1894, Cleveland again lost party following by sending federal troops against the Pullman and railway strikers in Chicago. This strike began when the company's employees in Pullman, Illinois, stopped work following a cut in pay. Soon they were joined by sympathy strikes. The strike spread into Chicago where mobs in the suburbs burned cars and destroyed other private property.24

At that time, the governor of Illinois was John P. Altgeld, a man who held great power in the Democratic party. As governor, if he wanted the strike stopped, it became his duty to call out the state militia. This Altgeld refused to do and when Cleveland announced that he was sending troops to Illinois, Altgeld answered with a long telegram denouncing government by injunction and protesting the sending of troops without a previous state request. Cleveland

23Faulkner, op. cit., pp. 553-554.
24Ford, op. cit., p. 207.
sidestepped the issue by replying that the troops were being sent to protect the United States postal equipment, and law and order was soon restored.25 Thus again Cleveland had successfully completed positive action, but in doing so he had incurred the displeasure of one of the most powerful men of his party, nor had he endeared himself with labor.

There were other issues during Cleveland's last term which cost him the support of his party. Such things as the failure of the party to effectively settle the tariff issue, and the handling of the marches on Washington hurt his standing in the party, but the silver fight and the Chicago strike seem to stand out as the most damaging. Actually it is much easier to understand the work of Cleveland if we accept a statement of Woodrow Wilson regarding him. To Wilson Cleveland seemed "...more man than partisan, with an independent executive will of his own;...exercising his powers like a chief magistrate rather than a party leader."26 Indeed, several times when President, he was called upon to choose between party and policy and each time he chose policy. Such a course of action, while possibly advantageous to the nation could only lead to ruin of the political party of which he was leader.


26 Woodrow Wilson, "Mr. Cleveland as President.", The Atlantic Monthly, LXXIX(1897), p. 289.
CHAPTER II

DISCIPLINE AMID DISCORD

The Republican National Convention of 1896 met in St. Louis on June 18 amid a strong feeling of party harmony. Two days later, a standard bearer, whose nomination had been assured since the winter of 1895 was given the official sanction of the convention. Furthermore, a platform which had been determined before the convention met was accepted by that body. Thus, had it not been for the fight which Senator Teller of Colorado put up over the money plank, there would have been little to arouse the delegates' interest during the three days the meeting was in session.

Actually the convention of 1896 was the culmination of work started as far back as 1888. The delegates of that year had witnessed spectacular dissension caused by the political ambitions of several of the party bosses. Out of this discord Benjamin Harrison emerged as a dark horse and was subsequently elected to the presidency. But to some of the delegates of 1888 the impromptu trades at the last moment by the regional bosses pointed only too plainly to the fact that the realm of politics was still an uncertain profession where too much was left to chance.1

1Herbert Croly, Marcus Alonso Hanna, His Life and Work, p. 149. See also, Josephson, op.cit., p. 639.
It was at this time that a momentous change in party politics took place. Properly identified, the change can be dated from the emergence of Ohio's political businessman, Marcus Alonzo Hanna, on the national scene. "Uncle Mark", as some of his popular friends affectionately called him, began life as the son of a prosperous wholesale grocer. From his father he acquired the keen business instincts which were later to make him one of the most wealthy men in the nation. It was therefore only natural that his early training should be directed toward the monetary goal of learning "to get and to keep." In the years that followed, Hanna gained business experience and became a man who fought his commercial rivals with any means at hand without asking or giving quarter. Nor did he confine himself to the conquest of a single industry, for there was no enterprise that he would not enter if he saw in it the prospect of sufficient gain. Soon his enterprises included shipping, mining, banking, manufacturing and even a newspaper and a theatre.

It was during an unsuccessful attempt to add a system of street railways to his interests that Hanna learned that the grant of franchises depended upon political connections. The experience, though unhappy, was enlightening to him for it opened up a whole new world of possibilities. Here was a way in which he could legally protect his many enterprises.

2 Peck, op. cit., p. 470.
3 Josephson, op. cit., p. 641. See also, Croly, op. cit., p. 472.
Through the proper legislation, he could not only protect, but spread his power into broad fields. Therefore, much as he had acquired seamen for his ships and tellers for his banks, he added aldermen, mayors, and congressmen to his interests purely in the manner of business.  

Slowly and persistently, Hanna became a leading political power in Ohio. Unlike other businessmen who waited until their patronage was requested, Hanna took the lead in advancing upon the politicians themselves with substantial offers of help. He naturally passed from the role of contributor to the solicitor and, since he had the confidence of his fellow businessmen, his success was far more marked than that of the local political leaders. Thus with more and more of the political war chest under his control, his influence grew until he was the dominant personage in Ohio's election campaigns and political party life.

Hanna's rise to political power came amidst a rising tide of demand for government control of business. In 1887 the Interstate Commerce Act was passed and three years later Congress accepted the Sherman Anti-Trust Act. For the first time business men and workers alike realized that the huge corporations dealing in interstate trade could be legally controlled by the Federal government. To business men this

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4Peck, op. cit., p. 471.
5Josephson, op. cit., p. 643.
revelation presented new problems. It became obvious that the only way to protect the prevailing system of trusts and monopolies was to prevent the original passage of such laws.6 Thus Hanna's political interests became projected into the national scene, and the "Warwick of Ohio", as Hanna had come to be known, spread his influence rapidly into the Midwest area in which his business enterprises were concentrated.

To the public, the Hanna of this time was presented in varying caricatures. Many cartoonists of the opposing press pictured him as:

...a beetle-bowed Irish bully, clad in a suit checkered with dollar marks, smoking a big cigar, drinking out of a dark whiskey bottle, and driving his heel into the prostrate, writhing skeletons of proletarian women and children.7

Hanna was further described as a cruel employer and a greedy monopolist whose only idea of political action was "to go out and buy somebody."8 Another item of his personality that cost him the support of many voters was his frankness in expressing the feudal notions of his economic class. In effect, he was said to have believed, "Some men must rule; the great mass of men must be ruled. Some men must own; the great mass of men must work for those who own."9 Another example of his frankness can be found in a letter written in

8Nation, LXXXVII, (October 8, 1908), 328.
1890 to David K. Watson, the Attorney-General of Ohio. In this letter Hanna said, "You have been in politics long enough to know that no man in public life owes the public anything."10

To be sure, not all of Mark Hanna's dealings were of the unscrupulous variety. There was the time when a woman who had inherited a house from her father was about to lose the place because of the foreclosure of a mortgage. Hanna, learning of this, commissioned a lawyer to purchase the property. At that time, money was scarce and the property would have brought little; therefore, Hanna held the house until its value had appreciated considerably whereupon he sold it at a substantial profit. After retaining only the small mortgage investment, the money was returned to the woman who was never told of Hanna's contribution to her welfare.11

There were other examples. During political campaigns, Hanna had a strict rule that no public announcement of any considerable donation to a charitable cause would be made until after the results were in.12 Such acts as these, when they became known, gained him the respect not only of his friends but of enemies as well. Thus a man who for years had been his political rival, and who, but for Hanna might have been president, was able to describe Hanna as, "bright, cheery, generous,

kind, strong, and ever ready to practice self denial, especially when it involved the preferment of a friend."13

As noted, Republican party politics underwent a momentous change following the convention of 1868. The object of this change was to take the element of chance out of party activities. To accomplish this objective the party machinery was reorganized and old outdated devices were discarded in favor of machinery more fitted to the Age of Big Business. As set up under the leadership of Hanna, the new machine merely rolled over all opposition, crushing it as it went. Thus the tactics gained the title of "steam roller."

Hanna had made his national political debut in the convention of 1888 in which he supported the candidacy of John Sherman. The Ohio political boss, who already exhibited ambitions as a future president maker, was particularly observant of ambitious party hopefuls at this national convention. His observations led him to believe that one such prospect, Joseph B. Foraker, then Governor of Ohio, was rather fickle for the higher honors which Hanna hoped to someday arrange. On the other hand, a prominent member of his group Congressman William McKinley displayed his good discipline when he refused to allow his name to be considered as the dark horse candidate. Thus since Foraker had proved unsatisfactory and McKinley had proved that he understood party

etiquette, Hanna decided that his work thereafter would be
directed toward elevating McKinley to the Presidency.14

From many standpoints, Hanna's choice was a good one. McKinley, as a native of Ohio would be acceptable to all
sections of the country and his selection would thus be in
tune with the shifting population. Furthermore, his personal
appearance was ideal; his face was the "statesman's face, un-
wrinkled, unperturbed; a face without vision but without
guile."15 To many voters, this appearance was appealing as
was his manner of conducting himself in public. His years
in politics had given him an impassive outlook toward the
public so that he walked among men like a bronze statue...
determinedly looking for his pedestal."16 To be sure, his
mannerisms were not all that recommended his selection. His
attitude toward politics was keenly appreciated by the prac-
tical politicians of his time. McKinley knew the rules of the
political game and followed them implicitly, always keeping
on high ground. A contemporary observer noted that in
politics, "the first maxim is to take care of yourself, the
second maxim is to take care of your crowd."17 The fact

14 Upon learning that votes were to be cast for him, McKinley "mounted a chair" and dramatically refused to be
considered for the nomination, saying, "I do not request--I demand, that no delegates...shall cast a ballot for me.
See H. H. Kohlsaat, From McKinley to Harding, Personal
Recollections of Four Presidents, p. 1-2.

15 William Allen White, Masks in a Pageant, p. 166. See
also Tyler Dennett, John Hay From Poetry to Politics, p. 178.

16 White, Masks in a Pageant, p. 155.

17 Ibid., p. 155.
that McKinley sometimes reversed the procedure did not hurt his standing among political associates.

Hanna's first attempt at advancing the political fortunes of McKinley, was to run him for the Speakership of the House in 1889. In this action in which they were defeated by one vote, McKinley was pushed to the forefront in the House of Representatives. Thus, as a method of political compensation, he was made chairman of the Ways and Means Committee. It was in this capacity that McKinley received national recognition, for in 1890 the high protective tariff bill of that year carried his name. That measure was in large part responsible for the sweeping Republican defeats in the autumn elections, and McKinley was himself defeated for reelection, but he had established himself as a leader of the protectionist group and would be in a most favorable position when public confidence in protection could be restored.18

McKinley was allowed only one year of political inactivity. In 1891 Hanna arranged to have him nominated for the governorship of Ohio. During the ensuing campaign, money was used in abundance. Hanna not only served as collector from the state businessmen but journeyed into Illinois and Pennsylvania to remind the industrialists of their duties to the protectionist system. Sometimes as much as $10,000 was needed for one county, but Hanna was particular in selecting

his workers and when the returns were in, the results were as desired.\textsuperscript{19}

Shortly after this, Foraker attempted to stand against Sherman for the Senate. Once again Hanna moved his "steam roller" into position and Foraker was given a stinging lesson in party discipline.\textsuperscript{20} Thus with the defeat of Foraker and the election of McKinley, Hanna had gained his first major political victories. Furthermore, the fact that the Hanna machine had held itself undefeated in a year of general Republican disaster served to strengthen his prestige in the party.

In 1892, McKinley served as chairman of the National Republican convention. During the balloting for a standard bearer, McKinley was sitting on the rostrum gently fanning himself with a large palm-leaf, when suddenly some of the delegates began casting their votes for him. Hanna and McKinley were not yet ready.\textsuperscript{21} McKinley shook his head and the palm-leaf began to move faster. As the balloting continued he became "very much agitated", and when Ohio tried to cast its entire vote for him, he challenged the vote on the grounds that his proxy had not been so instructed by him.

\textsuperscript{21}Hanna had planned a small campaign calculated to introduce McKinley to the delegates. It was not planned that he should receive 182 votes or appear in any strength since 1892 was a doubtful Republican year. See Croly, op. cit., p. 166.
In the end, Harrison was renominated, but McKinley was in third place only one vote behind Blaine. Afterwards Hanna expressed his opinion of the incident to McKinley saying, "My God, William, that was a damned close squeak!"

In the year following the 1892 convention, McKinley returned to Ohio and worked toward the consolidation of his position in his second gubernatorial campaign. It was at this important stage of his political career that he found himself in serious business difficulties as the endorser of notes owed by a ruined business associate. When the final account of his indebtedness became known it was found that he was $130,000 in debt. McKinley's first impulse was to resign from politics and resume his law practice in order that he might someday hope to clear his credit. Such was not to be the case, however, for the Hanna syndicate, "with a splendid esprit de corps, came at once to the Governor's rescue."

It was decided that the McKinley properties should be placed in a receivership. The following statement was released to the press:

Governor McKinley and his wife will give up everything they have in the world except the clothes on their backs. If that is not enough to pay his debts in full, he will retire from office at the end of his term in December and practise law in New York or Chicago until every cent is paid.

Hanna, H. H. Kohlsaat, and others making up a select circle of Western millionaires, quickly raised the money to pay McKinley's debts. Furthermore, after the banks holding the bad notes were persuaded to discount them 10 per cent, a surplus of $13,000 remained. It was said that over 5,000 people subscribed to the McKinley fund, yet none of the money was collected from New York or the East. The surplus was profitably invested and this, with money McKinley later added to the fund, enabled the debts not only to be paid in full, but with his properties under the supervision of financiers, McKinley soon had an estate of over $200,000. Following the solution of McKinley's financial difficulties, the gubernatorial campaign was successfully completed. Thus, by acting quickly and positively, Hanna and his associates were able to save a valuable political property from ruin, and while McKinley was never given the names of his

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26 During this campaign, Hanna showed his political astuteness in an incident concerning two guards in the Ohio Penitentiary. The A. F. A., an anti-Catholic association, demanded their discharge solely because they were Catholic. Of the 63,000 A.P.A.'s in Ohio, 90 per cent were Republican. In what was obviously a test case, McKinley stood to lose some 60,000 votes when he firmly refused to dismiss the guards. Acting quickly to offset this loss, Hanna called in a priest whom McKinley had befriended. Shortly afterward Bishops Elder of Cincinnati and Horstmann of Cleveland gave interviews commending McKinley and expressing the hope that he would be reelected. Thus what had happened became known generally, the Catholics of Ohio were practically forced to support McKinley. In the election which followed, McKinley's plurality was 81,999 compared to 21,511 in the previous election. See Kohlsaat, op. cit., pp. 18-19.
benefactors, the bonds which held him to Hanna and his syndicate were now solidly forged.

Immediately following the successful state elections, the work of gathering delegates for the 1896 national convention was begun. The South was the first section to feel the impact of Hanna's work. For years the Southern delegates had been in a very favorable position in Republican party circles. The end of reconstruction saw the termination of their chances to have a candidate of their own. Oddly enough, however, it was the very lack of a candidate that gained them their favor, for every candidate saw in the South a chance to pick up support easily. Hanna began his assault on the South in the usual manner. His workers were sent into all districts with the usual inducements of patronage in exchange for votes. Later, Hanna set up a residence in Thomasville, Georgia to "escape the rigors of a northern winter." Soon McKinley joined him and white and colored gentlemen came every day to visit the two men from Ohio. During these visits McKinley first made friendly little talks, after which Hanna made friendly little deals. Thus before other presidential candidates realized what was happening, over two hundred delegates had quietly been added to the McKinley cause. Furthermore, Hanna saw to it that the work was "so well done, that...able and unscrupulous Northern politicians" could not stem the

27 Josephson, op. cit., p. 649. See also Crowly, op. cit., p. 175.
tide in favor of McKinley. At the same time, Hanna saw to it that the various Southern state chairmen were McKinley men. To insure the cause against rival delegations, thirty-five out of fifty of the Republican National Committeemen were convinced that only McKinley delegates from the South were regular party members.

Leading Northern politicians, realizing that with the Southern vote, McKinley was practically nominated, determined to bargain for personal gain rather than meekly to surrender. Hanna was summoned to New York for a conference with Thomas C. Platt, Republican Boss of that state, and Matt Quay, party leader of Pennsylvania. Hanna's report to McKinley upon his return to Ohio has been described by an eyewitness:

"You can get both New York and Pennsylvania, Governor, but there are certain conditions." McKinley asked; "What are they?" Hanna replied: "They want a promise that you will appoint Tom Platt Secretary of the Treasury, and they want it in writing. Platt says he has had an experience with one President (Harrison) born in Ohio, and he wants no more verbal promises." McKinley was smoking a cigar. . . . finally, facing Hanna ... he said: "There are some things in this world that come too high. If I cannot be President without promising to make Tom Platt Secretary of the Treasury, I will never be President."

Following failure to work a deal, the Northern politicians determined to work for the selection of favorite son

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28 Groly, op. cit., p. 176.
29 Arthur W. Dunn, From Harrison to Harding, I, 172.
30 Kohlsaat, op. cit., p. 30. See also Charles Summers Oclott, The Life of William McKinley, I, 300.
candidates from as many states as possible in the hope of later forcing McKinley to do business on their terms. At the time of its formation the plan seemed far more promising than it later proved to be. Thomas B. Reed, who had been speaker of the House under Harrison, had a large popular following and was expected to hold New England in line. Platt, who could deliver the New York delegation at his discretion, decided that Levi P. Morton was his favorite son, and Quay, not to be outdone by the New York politician, decided that Matt Quay was the favorite son of Pennsylvania. In addition to these candidates, it was hoped that Indiana might remain loyal to ex-President Harrison and that Shelby M. Cullom of Illinois would be able to hold that state in line. 31

To their dismay, the Northern politicians soon learned that they had made one major political blunder in their planning. In setting up their campaign to stop McKinley, they had based all plans on local political bosses being able to hold the line. Hanna immediately raised the cry that all opposition to McKinley was boss inspired while all support came from the people. Thus it became McKinley and the people against the bosses. 32 When the Indiana convention met in

31 Croly, op. cit., p. 179.

32 Charles G. Dawes, A Journal of the McKinley Years, p. 66.
February of 1896 the Hanna "steam roller" pushed Harrison aside. Shortly afterward, in a deliberate display of audacity, Hanna, with the help of Senator Redfield Proctor, head of the Vermont Marble Works, invaded New England and took Vermont's delegation from Reed. Hanna had determined to fight all along the line in order to make the best showing possible and to introduce his candidate to the people. Following this plan, Hanna determined to add Illinois to the McKinley slate and for this project he enlisted the aid of Charles G. Dawes. Dawes, under the leadership of Hanna, soon proved to be an able and brilliant politician, and after a sharp battle, the Illinois delegation was pledged to McKinley, and Cullom withdrew from the race.

With McKinley's nomination assured, the only major problem facing McKinley and Hanna was a decision regarding the monetary question. During the campaign to gain delegates, the policy had been to build upon the policy of a protective tariff, while the financial issue was pushed to the background. To be sure, this was sound politics because much of McKinley's natural popularity rested in the West while his opposition was concentrated in the East. Furthermore, protection was a doctrine which most Republicans agreed upon, and by making

33Josephson, op. cit., p. 652. See also, Croly, op. cit., p. 182.
34Shelby M. Cullom, Fifty Years of Public Service, p. 273. See also, Dawes, op. cit., pp. 71-80.
it the leading issue McKinley was able to avoid party dissen-
sion. Thus, McKinley advocated an ambiguous sound money
program which was interpreted by various sections in different
manners. Vermont, for instance, pledged its delegates to
McKinley and the gold standard. Wyoming, on the other hand,
instructed for free silver and McKinley.35

Indeed, bimetallism was the one weakness in McKinley's
Republican background. As a young congressman, he had con-
sistently supported the free silver forces.36 It was only
after he became Governor of Ohio that he began to accept the
policy of a single monetary standard. Knowing that the mone-
tary issue could split the party, it was determined to con-
tinue to advocate sound money until the delegates gathered at
St. Louis, when a more accurate sounding of opinion could be
made. Hanna favored the gold standard and had from the begin-
nning, but he was determined that no commitment should be made
until the latest possible hour, and that when it was made
that he would seem to be yielding to a will of the majority.37
As events later proved, this was exactly what happened.
Hanna arrived in St. Louis with a proposed monetary plank
which in essence committed the party to the gold standard
but omitted the word gold. Investigation disclosed that an
overwhelming majority of the delegates favored the gold

37Croly, op. cit., p. 199. See also, Nation, LXII,
(May 21, 1896), 387.
standard, and a series of conferences regarding the money question were begun. At one of the meetings, one man, without preliminary greeting, said, "Mr. Hanna, I insist on a positive declaration for a gold-standard plank in the platform." Looking up, Hanna asked, "Who in hell are you?" The man answered, "Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, of Massachusetts." Hanna immediately replied, "Well, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, of Massachusetts, you can go plumb to hell. You have nothing to say about it."\(^{38}\) Not all the delegates were treated in this fashion, however, and when the word gold was finally inserted in the platform, many of the delegates felt that they were responsible for the victory over Hanna. Indeed, so well had Hanna played his part, that at one time a group of influential financiers had given him just one hour to decide to declare for the gold-standard.\(^{39}\) Needless to say, Mark Hanna took less than the given hour to announce himself to be a gold man. Hanna's only later comment regarding the matter was in a letter in which he said, "The whole thing was managed in order to succeed in getting what we got, and that was my only interest."\(^{40}\)

\(^{38}\) Kohlsaat, op. cit., p. 37.

\(^{39}\) Alexander K. McClure, Our Presidents and How We Make Them, p. 366. See also, Royal Cortissoz, The Life of Whitelaw Reed, pp. 204-208.

\(^{40}\) Hanna to A. K. McClure, June 26, 1900, as cited in Croly, op. cit., p. 192. For a discussion of the writing of the gold plank, see Champ Clark, My Quarter Century of American Politics, I, 482-495.
When the convention met, as previously arranged, the credentials committee seated only delegations favorable to McKinley. Following this, the committee on platform brought in its report. Foraker, who had made his peace with Hanna following his lesson in party discipline, served as chairman of this committee and thus presented the platform to the assembled delegates. The platform began by applauding the "matchless achievements of thirty years of Republican rule". It reminded the people that the Democrats had held full control of the government for the first time since the Civil War and described its work as one which "precipitated panic, blighted industry and trade with prolonged depression, closed factories, reduced work and wages, halted enterprise and crippled American production..." Next the Republicans reaffirmed the principle of "the protection and development of American labor and industries", and at the same time promised a policy of reciprocal trade. Then, in an atmosphere of tension, Foraker read out the part of the platform relating to the money question:

The Republican party is unreservedly for sound money. It caused the enactment of a law providing for the redemption of specie payments in 1879. Since then every dollar has been as good as gold. We are unalterably opposed to every measure calculated to debase our currency or impair the credit of our country. We are therefore opposed to the free coinage of silver, except by international agreement with the leading commercial

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nations of the earth, which agreement we pledge ourselves to promote, and until such agreement can be obtained the existing gold standard must be maintained. All of our silver and paper currency must be maintained at parity with gold...

Other portions of the platform worthy of note were demands for the United States to control the Hawaiian Islands and liberate Cuba.43

As soon as Forsaker completed the reading of the platform, Senator Henry M. Teller of Colorado took the rostrum to present a minority report, and to present a substitute amendment for the money plank.44 Previously he had tried unsuccessfully to get this motion included in the platform. In part, it declared that, "the Republican party favours the use of both gold and silver as equal standard money", and it pledged the party to secure the "free, unrestricted and independent coinage of gold and silver...at a ratio of 16 parts of silver to 1 of gold." Having forced the issue to the forefront, Teller spoke in support of it, explaining that he was unable to support the platform as proposed, and saying, "When the...party was organized, I was there. It has never had a national candidate since...that my voice has not been raised in his support."45 Teller's speech was received with respectful silence but on the vote that followed, his motion was struck

42 Porter, op. cit., pp. 203-204. 43 Ibid., pp. 204-205.
44 Forsaker, op. cit., I, 477.
45 Feck, op. cit., pp. 488-489.
down by a vote of 818 to 105. Teller and his supporters then rose and left the hall amid cries of "Go! Go! Go! to Chicago! Take the Democratic train!" Only thirty-four bolted but they included four Senators and two Representatives.

After adopting the platform, the convention proceeded to the nomination of a standard bearer. Foraker presented the name of McKinley, Lodge nominated Reed, and Depew spoke in behalf of Morton. None of the speeches were outstanding since the outcome was already generally forecast. Indeed, Depew expressed the opinion of the nominators when he said, "If there is any hope, an orator on such an occasion has inspiration, But if he knows he is beaten he cannot put into his effort the fire necessary to impress an audience." On the first ballot, McKinley was nominated with 616 of the 854 votes cast. Ohio had the distinction of nominating its own candidate for after casting its vote on the first ballot, McKinley had the necessary plurality. Depew then rose to move that the nomination be made unanimous. He said, "I am in the happy position now of making a speech for the man who is going to be elected. It is a great thing for an amateur, when his first nomination has failed, to come in and second the man who has succeeded...." The demonstration which followed

46 Josephson, op. cit., p. 660.
47 Chauncey M. Depew, My Memories of Eighty Years, pp. 147-148.
the nomination lasted for over an hour and produced the only genuine enthusiasm of the convention. When order was restored, Garret A. Hobart, a wealthy New Jersey lawyer was selected as McKinley's running mate and the convention adjourned.50

Thus, the Republicans had demonstrated a high degree of party harmony in their national conclave, and leaders of the party faced the forthcoming campaign very optimistically. A contemporary periodical declared the convention to be a memorable one on three counts: first, Eastern party leaders were, for the first time unable to press their demands on the nominee; second, practically no enthusiasm was shown during the convention; and third, a candidate whose record showed him to be on one side of the monetary issue was selected to run on a platform advocating the opposite view.51 Another act worth noting was the definite stand which had been taken on the monetary question. If the Democratic party should accept the challenge and adopt the opposite view, the monetary question might well become the major issue of the campaign.

50Everett Walters, Joseph Benson Foraker an Uncompromising Republican, p. 131.

51Harper's Weekly, XL (June 26, 1896), 642.
CHAPTER III

EMERGENCE OF BRYAN

The Democratic National Convention of 1896 met in Chicago on July 7 in a vast glass roofed structure called the Coliseum. Here fifteen thousand members of the Democracy had come together for the purpose of writing a platform and selecting a standard bearer for the coming election. As soon as the Convention was called together, it became apparent that this was no ordinary meeting of the party members. The seeds of discontent that had been growing since 1892 were at a peak and it was obvious that an all out struggle for party control was at hand.

Even before the convention met, two groups had emerged as contenders for the leadership. One of these groups was the conservative or Cleveland faction, while the other was the liberal group of the West and South.

The conservatives, or "gold bugs" as they were called, were lead by Senator David Hill of New York. Shortly after reaching Chicago they learned that they could no longer

1Harry Thurston Peck, Twenty Years of the Republic 1885-1905, p. 493.
control the party as they had in the past. In order to best utilize their strength, therefore, they determined upon a plan to divide and conquer. Realizing that they were hopelessly outnumbered, Hill and his associates hoped to maintain their influence by getting the delegates to modify their demands in the interests of "party harmony." They further agreed that since Cleveland was so unpopular to many delegates, little mention of him or his administration would be made in the search for converts. Following this plan, Cleveland's picture disappeared mysteriously from the New York headquarters where it was replaced by portraits of Hill and other New York leaders.

Another factor which the conservatives expected to work in their favor was importance of the National Democratic committee, which as the representatives of Cleveland, they controlled. Precedent held that the committee should designate the temporary chairman. If they could only convince a majority of the delegates that precedent should be followed

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2 Prior to the convention, the sound money men had hoped to control the convention, as they had in 1892, through the party machine. Upon arriving in Chicago, however, they analysed the situation and found their position hopeless. They were amazed at the type of opposition they met, for here were "men bitter with a sense of injustice and burning with a desire for redress—not all politicians, but in part plain farmers, and labor representatives." See Allan Nevins, Grover Cleveland A Study in Courage, p. 700.

in this matter, they could count on the temporary chairman in the channelling of a conservative direction.

Following these plans, the conservatives determined to nominate Hill as temporary chairman. A few hours before the convention was called together, Hill and his associates gathered with the leading silver advocates at a secret meeting. Here the crucial question was whether or not the regularly constituted National Democratic Committee would be permitted to designate the temporary chairman. Present at the meeting, however, was John Peter Altgeld, the Illinois governor who had broken with Cleveland during the Pullman strike, and it was he who answered for the liberals. Coolly facing the gold leaders, Altgeld flatly stated that no gold man would head the convention. Free silver had the majority of the delegates and it would rule from the beginning.4

Faced with this ultimatum, the conservatives decided to carry their fight to the convention floor. Thus, defying the silverites, the Cleveland faction opened the battle by placing the name of Hill in nomination. Immediately, Henry D. Clayton of Alabama arose to nominate an ardent silverite, Senator John W. Daniel of Virginia. A bitter debate followed in which the Cleveland faction argued that it would be discourteous to ignore the recommendations of the committee and urged that precedent be followed. But the liberals were not

to be denied. They replied that the committee knew the sentiments of the delegates, and if the committee wished its recommendations followed, it should have followed the will of the majority. On the vote which followed, Daniel was elected by the decisive majority of 556 to 349. Thus on the opening day, the Eastern leaders who had so long controlled the affairs of the party found their powers greatly diminished, and for the first time experienced the feeling of being ignored by those who had previously looked to them for leadership.

The situation was an unusual one. For years New York and Pennsylvania had been the dominant states in the Democratic party. Now both of these states were in the discredited conservative wing of the party, and the forty-eight votes of Illinois became the most important bloc of the convention. With the West and the East solidly opposed to each other, the Midwest held the balance of power. Thus Altgeld of Illinois became the dominant figure of the convention.

The man who was to lead the convention of 1896 was brought to the United States by his German parents when he was three months old. The family settled in Ohio where young Pete, as he was known, grew up to a life of hard farm labor. Late in the Civil War, he became old enough to volunteer, and served the last few months of the war as a Union private.

After the war Altgeld wandered into the West, finally settling in Savannah, Missouri, where he studied law and finally was elected County Attorney. Shortly after, however, he resigned, moved to Chicago and entered the practice of law. While here he amassed a considerable fortune as a real-estate speculator. He was subsequently elected a judge in Cooke county and in 1892 became the first Democratic governor of Illinois since 1857.6

After the dispute with Cleveland, Altgeld began an all out battle against Clevelandism in the party. Prior to the State Democratic Convention, he called a silver convention to meet in Springfield in June, 1895.7 Despite attempts of sound money men to discredit the meeting, the governor held the reins and in the regular state convention at Peoria on June 23, 1896, the resolutions drawn up by the rump convention were accepted. Without a hitch, Altgeld had all of the state's forty-eight delegates pledged to silver. He then made himself chairman of the delegation and left for Chicago with the state machine completely under his control.8

9The man that Altgeld hoped to nominate at the Chicago convention was Senator Richard Parks Bland of Missouri. Bland had long been the leader of the silver cause, so long

6 Barnard, op. cit., pp. 15-162.
7 Ibid., p. 353.
8 Ibid., p. 357.
In fact, that he was commonly referred to as "Silver Dick". As the head of the silver movement, many of the leaders of the Democracy thought him to be the logical man for the 1896 nomination. He came from one of the old slave states and many of the delegates felt that it was not yet time to urge the leadership of a man from that area. Furthermore, Mrs. Bland was a Roman Catholic and, while Bland was Protestant, he would be subject to unreasonable charges which would cost the party votes because of the religion of his wife. These factors were overruled, however, by the leaders of the silver movement. They were loyal to him for championing their movement, and "Silver Dick" entered the convention by far the strongest candidate in the field. Feeling that his nomination was thus assured, Bland determined to remain in his home at Lebanon, Missouri during the convention. The Senator from Missouri was unduly optimistic. Behind the scenes a young delegate from Nebraska was hard at work. That young man was William Jennings Bryan. The would-be nominee was ridiculously young for one with presidential aspirations, for he was only thirty-six; but his youth bothered him little for Bryan was an opportunist. In the tremendous Democratic landslide of 1890, Bryan had been elected to the House of Representatives.


During this first campaign, his opponent had sarcastically called him the "boy orator of the Platt", and the name stuck.\textsuperscript{11} For the first two years in Congress, he worked almost wholly on the tariff question and distinguished himself with a speech demanding the lowering of the tariff. Shortly before the end of his first term, however, he perceived that the silver question would be a dominant one in his section and immediately he became an outstanding advocate of free silver.\textsuperscript{12}

During his campaign for reelection, Bryan was often queried regarding his sudden romance with silver, for his constituents who knew the silver question backwards and forwards soon saw that he did not. Bryan met this challenge with his usual candor by saying, "I don't know anything about free silver. The people of Nebraska are for free silver and I am for free silver, I will look up the arguments later."\textsuperscript{13}

With such a flair for saying the simple and acceptable thing Bryan was reelected in a normally Republican district by a margin of 137 votes. Shortly after his return to Congress, Cleveland introduced the Silver Repeal Act and Bryan again gained national prominence in his opposition. This time, however, his fight ended his immediate political future.

\textsuperscript{11} Paxton Hibben, The Peerless Leader, William Jennings Bryan, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{12} M. R. Werner, Bryan, pp. 35-38.
\textsuperscript{13} Hibben, op. cit., p. 145.
for administration pressure still remained strong, and in 1893 "the boy orator of the Platt" was literally read out of the party.14

Following his defeat at the hands of the Nebraska sound money men, Bryan prevailed upon certain of his silver friends to purchase a newspaper, the Omaha World Herald, and to give him the editorship. Thus provided with a forum on which to present his views and with an expense account for traveling, he began an intensive campaign to make himself known.15 He traveled widely throughout the country addressing any gathering that would hear him, whether or not he was invited to speak. Often he hired a hall and announced that he would speak to those who were interested. Sometimes only a few came, but he managed to see that those few were the political leaders of the community. Thus when the national convention met, Bryan was personally known to delegates from all sections of the country.16

Actually Bryan was organizing his own political machine. Having suffered his 1893 defeat, he realized that the only way to beat the Cleveland machine was to organize one of his own. Starting in Nebraska in 1894, he gained control of the

14Hibben, op. cit., p. 155.
15Werner, op. cit., pp. 54-55.
state Democratic organization and forced the sound money men to bolt and set up their own party, called the "Straight Democratic Party". Thus when time came for the 1896 convention, Bryan completely controlled the regular Democrats of Nebraska. Pledging his following to free silver, and to "Silver Dick" Bland, he placed himself at the head of the delegation and descended upon Chicago to contest the seating of the Nebraska gold delegates.17

As noted, the silver forces took possession of the convention on the first day following the fight over the chairmanship. By the size of the vote, however, the liberals saw that some change in membership must be made in order to get enough delegates under the two-thirds rule to nominate. It therefore came as little surprise when, in the following session, the gold delegation of Nebraska was unseated by the credentials committee and the group led by Bryan was installed in its place. At the same time, four gold delegates from Michigan whose seats were disputed, were displaced in favor of silver delegates. This gave the silver faction a majority in the Michigan delegation and thus, under the unit rule, the liberals would gain Michigan's twenty-eight ballots. Having made these changes, the silver forces still lacked votes, and since the territories were known to be on the silver side, their representation was augmented from two to six. These changes brought the number up to the necessary two thirds.

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17 William Jennings Bryan, The First Battle, pp. 149-152.
and the advocates of free silver were thus in complete control of the convention. They then selected Senator S.M. White of California as permanent chairman and having listened to his short speech of acceptance, adjourned until the following day when the Committee on Platform was due to report.18

Altgeld was the prime mover in these preliminary maneuvers to wrest control from the conservative faction. Though wooed, threatened and challenged, this man whom Cleveland had insulted led the party "relentlessly to the adoption of the 'new heresies' of silver money."19 43

When the convention continued on the following day, few delegates felt that the climax of the convention was at hand. True, everyone knew there would be a bitter dispute over the platform, but the naming of a standard bearer was the time of the convention, which was usually set aside for climactic events. Thus there was only the usual air of expectancy when Senator James K. Jones of Arkansas, who was chairman of the Resolutions Committee, mounted the rostrum and began to read the document to the convention.20 44

In the main, the platform was devoted to the free silver issue which was declared to be "paramount to all others at this time". After denouncing the demonetizing of silver as the basic cause of the prevailing financial distress, the

18 Nevins, op. cit., p. 701. See also, Peck, op. cit., p. 494.

19 Waldo R. Browne, Altgeld of Illinois, p. 271.

20 Josephson, op. cit., p. 673.
platform emphatically stated:

We are unalterably opposed to the monometallism which has locked fast the prosperity of an industrial people in the paralysis of hard times. Gold monometallism is a British policy, and its adoption has brought other nations into financial servitude to London. It is not only un-American, but anti-American....We demand the free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold at the existing legal ratio of 16 to 1 without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation. We demand that the standard silver dollar shall be a full legal tender, equally with gold, for all debts, public and private, and we favor much legislation as will prevent for the future the demonetization of any kind of legal-tender money by private contract. 21

This was that part of the platform which the advocates of silver had come to produce and its declarations were wholeheartedly approved by them. Without doubt, it is also the only part of the document that was influenced by Bryan, since he was involved in a struggle to be seated while the platform was being written. There is evidence, however, that he insisted upon the inclusion of the key clause, "We demand the free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to one without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation." Indeed this demand is taken almost verbatim from the silver plank of the 1894 Nebraska Democratic Convention. 22

Beyond the free silver clause, however, the platform was almost totally an Altgeld document and with it the governor of Illinois "delt ɑɪɡ/ˈtʃɛlvæld/ the bitterest blow of

his career, and scored for himself the greatest personal political coup of any man of his time. Altgeld's triumph was clearly illustrated by the second paragraph of the platform:

During all these years, the Democratic party has resisted the tendency of selfish interests to centralization of the government established by the founders of this Republic of republics. Under its guidings and teachings the great principle of local self-government has found its best expression in the maintenance of the rights of the States and in its assertion of the necessity of confining the General Government to the exercise of the powers granted by the Constitution of the United States.

This alone would constitute a triumph for Altgeld, for the basic arguments which he used in his dispute with Cleveland were thus approved by Cleveland's own party. The outgoing president was not to be lightly dismissed, however; the platform went on to condemn practically every important policy with which Cleveland had been identified. Resolutions were made to repudiate "the issuing of interest-bearing bonds of the United States in time of peace and... the trafficking with banking syndicates," and to denounce "arbitrary interference by Federal authorities in local affairs." In direct

23 Barnard, op. cit., p. 361. That Altgeld realized the importance of his work during the convention was shown when he later remarked to a friend, "I did everything but nominate myself and that was prevented by an accident of birth and a clause in the Constitution." See Barnard, op. cit., p. 365.

24 Porter, op. cit., p. 181.

reference to the Pullman controversy the platform declared, "we especially object to government by injunction as a new and highly dangerous form of oppression by which Federal judges, in contempt of the laws of the States...become at once legislators, judges, and executioners." The Supreme Court was taken into account for its decision against the income tax;

But for this decision by the Supreme Court there would be no deficit in the revenue under the law passed by a Democratic Congress in strict pursuance of the uniform decisions of that court for nearly one hundred years, that court having sustained Constitutional objections to its enactment which had previously been overruled by the ablest judges who have ever sat on that bench.

Furthermore, contrary to all usage, there was no commendation of the administration of President Cleveland. Indeed it was exactly what those who wrote it intended it to be, a repudiation of him and his administration.

Obviously such a platform could not be accepted by the conservative faction; therefore a minority report was submitted by sixteen gold Democrats of the committee. In the report they stated that, "many of the declarations in the report of the majority...are wholly unnecessary....Some are ill considered and ambiguously phrased, while others are extreme and revolutionary of the well recognized principles of the party." In place of the silver plank, a substitute was offered to the effect that the United States should not attempt to stand

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26 Porter, op. cit., p. 185. 27 Ibid., p. 184.
alone on the policy of bimetallism. This resolution declared, "The Democratic party is the party of hard money and is opposed to legal tender paper money as part of our permanent financial system...." Finally, the minority concluded by commending "the honesty, economy, courage and fidelity of the present Democratic national administration."28

Both reports were then submitted to the convention at large and time was arranged for the debate. Tempers ran high and there was little hope of compromise. The first speech in behalf of the majority report was made by Senator Ben Tillman of South Carolina, a leading agrarian spokesman. He began a bitter speech reminiscent of the secessionist days of 1860:

I came here in 1892 opposed to Cleveland. We had denounced him in South Carolina as a tool of Wall Street. I appear here today and what was prophecy then is history now....We of the South have burned our bridges behind us so far as the Eastern Democrats are concerned....We denounce the Administration of President Cleveland as undemocratic and tyrannical ....A plutocratic despotism is sought to be established on the ruins of the republic.29

But Tillman lacked the persuasive manner needed to appeal to interests outside the South. The force with which the speech

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29 Henry Luther Stoddard, Presidential Sweepstakes, The Story of Political Conventions and Campaigns, pp. 116-117. See also Francis Butler Simkins, The Tillman Movement in South Carolina, p. 181; and Josephson, op. cit., p. 678; and Nation, LXIII (July 16, 1896), 43. Tillman was commonly known as Pitchfork Ben for he had been elected on the promise that he would go to Washington and pitchfork Cleveland out of the White House. See Stoddard, op. cit., pp. 116-117.
was given, and the fact that it was a sectional appeal had cost him the attention of his audience.

In answer, Hill of New York rose to defend the administration. Speaking tactfully, but forcefully, he said, "I am a Democrat, but I am not a revolutionist. My mission here today is to unite, not to divide...My friends I speak more in sorrow than in anger. You know what this platform means in the East..." But he too was disregarded by the majority of the Chicago convention, for they had not come to reason or to compromise but to repudiate the administration. Thus, it was only natural that the other two gold Democrats, Senator William F. Vilas of Wisconsin, Cleveland's former Postmaster General, and Governor John E. Russel of Massachusetts, were given little attention as they tried with threats and pleas to defend the minority report.

The delegates were restless. For hours they had heard the issues debated, yet they had not heard what they listened for, one who could properly champion the majority report. The conciliatory and able speech of Hill was the only one of real character and it had been made by a gold Democrat. With the final speech to come and more than two thirds of the delegates still listening for words which met with their approval, it was obvious that for the final speaker, it would be the opportunity of a lifetime.

30 Alexander, op. cit., pp. 268-269. See also Josephson, op. cit., p. 674.
And the speaker, young William Jennings Bryan, he who was called the "boy orator of the Platt", was fully aware of the possibilities of the moment. Before Bryan started to the rostrum, Clark Howell of the Atlanta Constitution scribbled, "This is a great opportunity," on the back of an envelope and passed it to Bryan who instantly replied, "You will not be disappointed."

Suddenly I saw a man spring up from his seat among the delegates...and with the agility and swiftness of a boxer hurry to the speakers' rostrum. He was slim, tall, pale, raven-haired, beaked of nose. They caught at his coat as he made his way, as if to bid him God-speed, for he was going to reply to the great Hill of New York.

Bryan quietly faced the mob before him. He was self-possessed and smiling, facing the roaring multitude with a serene consciousness of power. Before a single word had been spoken the pandemonium sank to a quiet murmur, and as he began to speak even this was hushed. "A mellow penetrating voice that reached, apparently without the slightest effort, to the farthest recess of that enormous hall, gave utterance to a brief exordium."5

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Convention: I should be presumptuous, indeed, to present myself against the distinguished gentlemen to whom you have listened, if this were a mere measuring of abilities; but this is not a contest between persons. The humblest citizen

32 J.C. Long, Bryan The Great Commoner, p. 84.
in the land, when clad in the armour of a righteous
cause, is stronger than all the hosts of error...

Already in this brief opening paragraph, Bryan had
captured his audience. These words were not words of hatred,
they were dignified. True, those who had served in Congress
with Bryan had heard these words before, but Bryan knew that
to most of the listeners the words were new and continued:

With a zeal approaching the zeal which inspired
the crusaders who followed Peter the Hermit, our silver
Democrats went forth from victory unto victory until
they are now assembled, not to discuss, not to debate,
but to enter upon the judgment already rendered by the
plain people of this country... When you (turning to the
gold delegates) come before us and tell us that we are
about to disturb your business interests, we reply that
you have disturbed our business interests by your course.

We say to you that you have made the definition of
a business man too limited in its application. The man
who is employed for wages is as much a business man as
his employer; ... the farmer who goes forth in the morning
and toils all day... and who by the application of brain
and muscle to the natural resources of the country
creates wealth, is as much a businessman as the man who
goes upon the board of trade and bets upon the price of
grain.... We have come to speak for this broader class
of business men.

...the hardy pioneers who have braved all the dangers
of the wilderness, who have made the desert to blossom
as the rose... these people, we say, are as deserving of
consideration of our party as any people in this country.
It is for these that we speak. We do not come as
aggressors... We have petitioned and our petitions have
been scorned; we have entreated, and our entreaties
have been disregarded; we have begged, and they have
mocked when our calamity came. We beg no longer; we
entreat no more; we petition no more. We beg no longer;
we defy them.36

The crowd was applauding every sentence now, and as he


36 Ibid., p. 200.
flung out the last challenge, "The tumult was like that of a
great sea thundering against the dykes...This orator had met
the mood to the very full. He had found magic words for the
feeling which they had been unable to express."37

Why is it that within three months such a change
has come over the country? Three months ago...it was
confidently asserted that those who believe in the gold
standard would frame our platform and nominate our
candidates....But note the change. Mr. McKinley was
ominated at St. Louis upon a platform which declared
for the maintenance of the gold standard until it can
be changed into bimetallism by international agreement.
Mr. McKinley was the most popular man among the
Republicans and three months ago everybody in the
Republican party prophesied his election. How is today?
Why, the man who was once pleased to think that he looked
like Napoleon—that man shudders today when he remembers
that he was nominated on the anniversary of the battle
of Waterloo. Not only that, but as he listens he can
hear with ever-increasing distinctness the sound of the
waves as they beat upon the lonely shores of St. Helena.

You come to us and tell us that the great cities
are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the
great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies.
Burn down your cities and leave our farms and your
cities will spring up again as if by magic; but destroy
our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of
every city in the country."

Then, continuing to exploit his central theme of the
battle between the agrarian interests and the financial
interests, he swept dramatically into his conclusion:

...having behind us the producing masses of this
nation and the world, supported by the commercial
interests, the laboring interests, and the toilers
everywhere, we will answer their demands for a gold
standard by saying to them: You shall not press down
upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns; you shall
not crucify mankind upon a cross of gold."38

When the speech was finished, there was silence in the great hall, "I went to my seat in a silence that was really painful," Bryan said later, "...somebody near me raised a shout and the next thing I was picked up—and bedlam broke loose." For nearly an hour the delegates shouted, cheered, whistled, and yelled their approval. With the convention collectively insane, there was a rush of standards to the Nebraskan. Such a rush, in fact, that it was hardly noticed that Altgeld, who was not yet ready to relinquish the leadership to a mere "boy orator" successfully held the Illinois standard in its place.

A delegate from Georgia raced with a Cherokee from the Indian Territory to the Nebraskan's side. On the way, the Indian "plunged through the New York delegation, which was trying to maintain a hostile composure, and upset both its dignity and its comfort." Finally order was restored and Hill, beaten but not yet ready to quit, entered a plea for a commendation of Cleveland. The motion failed by a vote of 564 to 357. But the comparative closeness of this vote indicated that some of the more sober delegates would have been willing to grant the conservatives this much in the hope that they would later support the ticket.

Two later motions to change the silver statement, also put by

40 Hibben, op. cit., p. 186. 41 Barnard, op. cit., p. 370.
42 Long, op. cit., p. 88.
Hill, were shouted down without a roll call, thus indicating that on this issue there would be no compromise. The platform was then adopted by the vote of 628 to 301. Having taken this action, the exhausted delegates adjourned until the following afternoon.

Over night the question as to who the nominee would be was discussed. Bryan following his speech, had jumped to the forefront as one of the leading candidates. The sheer audacity of the situation was amazing to the old political leaders. Here was a man who was seriously contending for the presidency; yet he had no campaign headquarters, no floor managers, or even alliances with other party leaders. Indeed, the only thing Bryan brought when he came to Chicago besides one hundred dollars for personal expenses, was a few barrels of Bryan buttons and one hundred badges.

When the convention assembled the following afternoon for the purpose of selecting a standard bearer, it soon became obvious that the contest lay between Bryan and Bland. Altogether thirteen men were nominated. Besides the two leading candidates, only three other men had a noticeable following. Robert E. Pattison of Pennsylvania was nominated by the conservatives and received ninety-seven votes on the first ballot. This was both the most and the least votes he received until

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44 Stoddard, op. cit., p. 116. See also, Hibbin, op. cit., p. 177, and Herrick and Herrick, op. cit., p. 127.
the final ballot when one delegate from Maine and one from South Dakota deserted him in favor of the obvious winner. Prior to the convention, ex-Governor Horace Boies of Iowa was boomed as one of the leading favorite sons. On the first ballot, however, when he only received sixty-seven votes, it was seen that his strength had been overemphasized. It is probable that he would have been a much stronger candidate had he not until recently, been a leading member of the Republican party. Senator J.C.S. Blackburn of Kentucky entered the convention with the solid backing of Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming, as well as his own state and scattered other delegates, but his first ballot strength of eighty-seven was his best effort and he lost ground rapidly on later ballots.

Actually there is evidence to indicate that Bryan hoped to capture the nomination without even being formally nominated for he had arranged with the Nebraska delegation that no formal nomination would be made; it thus came as some surprise to him to learn that Henry T. Lewis of Georgia had placed his name in nomination.

Meanwhile, as has been indicated, Altgeld and the other silver leaders had no intention of being stampeded for Bryan.

48 Ibid., p. 213.
When his delegation threatened a revolt before the first ballot, Altgeld faced them down saying, "We are not political coquettes. We are here for business and not for political play. We are Democrats and we are for Bland and free silver." Thus the result of the first ballot showed Bland in solid control of eight states and six of the territories with a total vote of 235 while Bryan trailed with five states and 137 votes. On the second ballot, Bland picked up Alabama and Virginia as well as other scattered support to run his total up to 281, and for a while it appeared the shift to him might well be under way since his gain was at the expense of various favorite sons. But Bryan also showed a substantial gain. Besides picking up South Carolina and Wyoming, he had gained the solid twenty-eight votes of Michigan, including four that had supported Bland and ten that had refused to vote on the first ballot. Thus with 197 votes Bryan remained in the same relative position that he had from the first. The third ballot was much like the first two. Bland gained no new states, but picked up ten additional votes while Bryan took Colorado from a favorite son and other scattered votes to run his total to 219. It was at this point that Bryan

49 Barnard, op. cit., p. 371.

50 Bryan, The First Battle, pp. 214-218. Figures were derived from tables of the balloting given on these pages. On the first ballot, 178 of the conservatives refused to take part in the balloting, holding that any candidate they supported could not stand on the platform as adopted. After the first ballot, 162 abstained from further voting.
was said to have remarked that the results from the convention read much like a continued story with the "hero left in a desperate situation at the end of each chapter." 51 Indeed, there was some indication at this time that the delegates might decide that neither man could win and the convention might shift to some third person. The fourth ballot proved more decisive, however. Alabama, Idaho, Kansas and Iowa switched their votes to Bryan, and Oregon, which had been splitting its votes in several directions, united behind him, to raise his support to 280 delegates. Bland, on the other hand, lost four states and had only 241 votes. Thus for the first time, Bryan assumed the lead. 52

As the fifth ballot began, all sides began to feel the tension of the situation. Bryan men milled around the vast hall shouting, "Bryan! Bryan! William Jennings Bryan!" Others carried crude banners on which was scrawled, "NO CROWN OF THORNS! NO CROSS OF GOLD!" 53

Once again the forty-eight votes of Illinois became of paramount importance. For four consecutive ballots Altgeld had held his delegation in line for Bland despite increasing opposition. Now the crisis had arrived. If Altgeld held fast, other leaders would follow him, and without enough votes...
to nominate, the Bryan boom might collapse. Now, however, the pressure of the moment confronted the Illinois leader with an unwanted problem. John Peter Altgeld who had faced down the conservatives, connived to oust gold delegates, and repudiated Cleveland through the platform, realized that if he wished to continue to lead, he must now follow. Thus, when the state of Illinois was called on the fifth ballot Altgeld stood up, and for once the galleries were silent. The entire convention was suddenly as quiet as a cathedral. In one sentence, Altgeld announced his decision, "Illinois casts its forty-eight votes for William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska!" It was all over. Once again pandemonium broke loose in the convention as the scenes of the night before were repeated. True, it was necessary for Governor Stone of Missouri to first read a letter from Bland saying, "...If it should at any time appear that my candidacy is the least obstruction to the nomination of any candidate...I wish my name unconditionally withdrawn from consideration." But Illinois had turned the tide and had led the stampede to Bryan.

When order was partially restored, the convention adjourned until Saturday at which time the nomination of vice-presidential candidate was to be taken up. During that time

54 Barnard, op. cit., p. 372.
55 Byard, op. cit., p. 238.
there was much speculation as to who the candidate would be. Upon learning that John R. McLean of Ohio was willing to accept the nomination, many of the old party regulars were given new hope, for McLean was a man of great wealth and the Democratic campaign chest was in dire need of funds, particularly in view of the fact that many wealthy Eastern Democrats had already been alienated from the party. Furthermore, aside from having wealth to contribute to the party, McLean was the owner of the powerful Cincinnati Inquirer. Thus, knowing that the masses of the voters would accept anyone approved by Bryan, and feeling that the opportunity to gain a man who would take care of the organization was a Godsend, they hastened to notify Bryan of the availability of this running mate. Upon approaching Bryan on the matter, the delegates were amazed when he declared that McLean represented the forces of organized wealth and the nomination would compromise everything for which he stood. To them such a stand was all right on the rostrum, but as a matter of practical politics it represented naivete. But Bryan was adamant and finally closed the interview by saying, "If that man is nominated for Vice-President, I would decline the nomination for the presidency. I would not run on a ticket with that man." Thus did Bryan assert his leadership of the party. To those who approached him regarding McLean, however, the manner in

56 Long, op. cit., p. 91.
which Bryan later accepted a running mate much like McLean, but far less accommodating, must have seemed inconsistent.

Sixteen men were presented as candidates for the vice-presidential nomination when the convention reassembled on Saturday morning. Of these only Bland, McLean, Arthur Sewall of Maine, and Joseph C. Silby of Pennsylvania had any appreciable following but it was five ballots before Sewall was selected as the nominee. Prior to the balloting, however, the Ohio delegation announced that McLean was not a candidate, and on the fourth ballot this delegation read a terse statement from McLean to the effect that "any vote cast for me for Vice-President is against my expressed wish and without my authority." Similarly, at the end of the third ballot Governor Stone of Missouri obtained recognition and read a statement from Bland saying that he felt it was "unwise and impolitic to nominate both candidates from the West side of the Mississippi river." Actually, Bland at his home in Lebanon, Missouri, was insulted that he should be considered for the vice-presidency. Reportedly he said, "If they wanted me on the ticket, why didn't they put me where I belonged." Since Silby withdrew his name before the result of the second ballot was announced, Sewall received the nomination.

57 Bryan, The First Battle, p. 228.
58 Byars, op. cit., pp. 239, 297.
59 Bryan, The First Battle, p. 227. 251 of the conservatives took no part in nominating a vice-president.
Actually, Sewall had been in the good graces of the silver men since the first day of the convention when he had broken with the rest of the Maine delegation and cast his vote in favor of Daniel for temporary chairman. Following this he was dropped by his delegation and had already telegraphed his wife that he was out of politics forever when he was proposed for the nomination. Of interest also is the fact that during the balloting, the same delegation that had dropped him from its rolls lined up solidly behind him since he had suddenly been boomed into the limelight.60

There were several reasons for the selection of Sewall. Although he was a shipbuilder, and a railway director, Sewall believed firmly in the theory of free silver. Furthermore, though a banker, he did not believe that national banks should be permitted to issue notes.61 As a native of a staunch Republican state, he would not be expected to carry his home state, but as a wealthy Easterner his candidacy would be attractive to that section of the country.

News of the unusual proceedings at Chicago were received with mixed feelings across the country. The West was overjoyed, the South was satisfied, but the East received the news with dismay. Eastern Democrats, having been completely discredited, were faced with the problem as to what their future

61 Ibid., p. 231.
course would be. Senator Hill summed up the feelings of his followers when, on being asked if he were still a Democrat, he said, "I am a Democrat still," and added after a significant pause, "very still."*62

Cleveland received the news with bitterness. He admitted that he was "politically dazed," and hastened to point out that the action at Chicago had relieved his administration from the responsibility of any future failures.63 Bitterly, he said, "If ever there was a penitentiary devoted to the incarceration of those who commit crimes against the Democratic party, how easily it could be filled just at this time."64

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*62 Peck, op. cit., p. 504.


64 Cleveland to Don M. Dickinson, as cited in Nevins, *Grover Cleveland*, p. 704.*
CHAPTER IV

DEMOCRATIC WHISTLE STOPS AND
A REPUBLICAN FRONT PORCH

Just before the Republican National Convention of 1896, McKinley had set the tone of the planned Republican campaign when he said, "I am a tariff man, standing on a tariff platform...This money matter is unduly prominent. In thirty days you won't hear anything about it."¹ Four years of Democratic depression had given the Republicans good cause for such optimism. At that time it was felt that all the Republicans needed for a victory was a quiet campaign recounting the errors of the Democratic administration and proclaiming McKinley as the "Advance Agent of Prosperity." Only in a few doubtful states was an extensive campaign planned, and even here little emphasis was to be placed on the monetary issue.

Not all Republican leaders were so shortsighted, however. In the same meeting in which McKinley had proclaimed himself a tariff man, Judge William Day had replied, "In my opinion, in thirty days, you won't hear of anything else."² Nevertheless, at the close of the convention, Hanna, who had

had been duly chosen chairman of the Republican National Committee, left on a yachting vacation to Nantucket to relax after the battle for McKinley's nomination. Such Republican optimism was rudely interrupted when the Democrats refused to attempt a defense of Cleveland's administration, repudiated their leaders, and took the offensive with the "Boy Orator" proclaiming free silver as the cure-all of the nation's ills.

After their rude awakening, the Republicans decided to face the issue squarely and carry their side of the monetary question to the people. On July 17, a meeting of the National Committee was held and it was determined that the next sixty days of campaigning would be devoted to the currency issue. At the same time, a program of education was planned. In a statement released to the press, the committee members said:

"It is considered by many members of this committee that just now the silver sentiment is so widespread that great necessity exists for immediate work to counteract it and restrict its further growth." At the same time, it was determined that instead of working in doubtful states, the Republicans must fight all along the line. In order to better carry out these plans, two national headquarters were set up. The old national headquarters in New York would be retained, but it would work only throughout the Eastern states. Chicago became the other branch, and it was from here that the invasion of the Western states was planned.

Meanwhile, the People's Party, which had shown signs of becoming a major party in the 1892 elections, was preparing to hold its national convention in St. Louis. Here all was confusion. As noted, the Populists had postponed their convention until after the major conventions in the hope of adding bolting silver members to their party. Thus the action of the Democratic convention had undercut the Populist strategy. Furthermore, the Democratic vice-presidential nominee caused further ruptures within the Populist ranks; for while Bryan's background was acceptable to them, an Eastern financier was not. Three different groups soon developed within the party. Some of the agrarian leaders, whose holdings represented great potential wealth, saw no reason why Sewall should not be given the second place on the ticket. They pointed out that Bryan was young and in good health, that Sewall supported their view on silver, and that greater harmony between the two parties would exist if both Democratic candidates were nominated. Others felt that Bryan should be nominated in any way possible; Weaver, the 1892 Populist candidate and Senator William V. Allen of Nebraska were among this group. They were joined by those, not quite so prosperous, who suggested that Bryan was acceptable but that an Eastern financier was completely alien to their interests. Still another group argued against placing principle above party. They urged the convention to take an independent course and nominate their own candidates.
At the same time, they pointed out that it would be the "death knell" of the party if fusion with the Democrats was accepted.

Amid such dissension, two factors became obvious; first, that a majority of the delegates favored endorsing Bryan for the presidency, and second, that Sewall's financial status was such as to render him unacceptable to many in the party. Furthermore, practical politicians such as Weaver and Allen realized that if the group against Sewall were to unite with the group favoring independent action, Bryan would not be nominated. Faced with such a situation the party's leaders decided that it would be politically expedient to revert to the unprecedented practice of nominating a vice-president first and then proceeding with the nomination for the presidency. Acting on these plans, the name of Thomas B. Watson of Georgia was proposed instead of Sewall. During the ensuing fight, Bryan telegraphed the convention that he would not accept their nomination if Sewall were not selected as running mate. Knowing that Bryan's telegram would cost him the nomination, Allen withheld the message, and Watson was nominated for the vice-presidency. Bryan was then selected as the Populist presidential aspirant by a vote of

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1,042 out of 1,366. Notice of Bryan's nomination by the Populists was carried in the Eastern press under headings claiming him the "right man in the right place" and that he was the "logical candidate of the party of fantastic ideas." On the following day, the conclusion of the convention was announced with, "whiskers, banners, and points of order all gone home." Concurrently with the Populist convention, the National Silver Party which was composed of Populists, Silver Republicans and Silver Democrats, met in St. Louis. Since the party had been organized in an effort to obtain the free coinage of silver, the delegates endorsed the candidates and platform of the Democratic party and adjourned.

While the Populists were accepting the inevitable, gold Democrats remained intransigent. Even before the Democratic convention, there was much agitation in favor of a second Democratic ticket if the Chicago meeting were to declare in favor of free silver. After the convention, pressure for another ticket grew until a meeting was called to convene on the second of September in Indianapolis. Party discipline and party loyalty had long been the standard of Eastern Democratic leaders, yet faced with the Chicago platform, they soon discovered that personal interests transcended party

interests. Shortly after meeting at Indianapolis, the delegates adopted the name of "National Democratic Party" and nominated Senator John N. Palmer of Illinois for the presidency and Simon B. Buckner of Kentucky for the vice-presidency. A platform was adopted which condemned "the Populist Conventions of Chicago and St. Louis," and commended the "fidelity, patriotism, and courage" of Cleveland. The major issue, the currency, was mentioned only in a brief paragraph urging the maintenance of the present gold standard. Having written a platform and selected standard bearers, the convention adjourned. Except for placing the names of its nominees on the ballot, the new party took no further action during the campaign. To be sure, the "sound money" Democrats made no attempts to confuse the voters as to the reason for their action. Bluntly they expressed their aims, saying, "We want to see the defeat of the Democratic ticket, and we shall try to draw away many votes as we can....Of course, we shall find no fault with those...who cast a straight vote for McKinley." And Cleveland? As noted he hastily denounced the Chicago convention which repudiated him. Now, however, he announced his support for the Palmer-Buckner ticket and encouraged his friends to work in its behalf.

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With the exception of the Western silver barons, the action of the Gold Democrats had served to align practically all of the organized wealth of the nation into one camp. Even the Prohibitionists split and placed two tickets in the field. Noting this financial cleavage, Bryan said, "At last we have the line drawn so that a man can take his place on one side or the other."15 He added that "The men who are in the employ of trusts and syndicates...are not leaving the party for their party's good."16 What he failed to note was that the action of the National Democrats had left only the poor and discontented on his side.

During the campaign, there was an intense division of opinion in the press. Generally the press of the South and West supported Bryan while the press of the East violently opposed him. Nor were all papers to remain in their traditional parties. In Michigan a striking example of press dissention was seen; it was described by a contemporary periodical as follows:

A more extraordinary overturn in political journalism has never been seen than that which has occurred in Michigan during the past six weeks. The Detroit Tribune has long been the chief Republican newspaper in the State; the Detroit Free Press, the leading Democratic journal. The Republican national convention had no sooner adopted a gold standard platform than the Tribune denounced it as 'damnably unpatriotic and un-Republican.' On the other hand when the Democratic convention declared for the free and unlimited coinage of silver, the Free Press denounced the monetary utterance as 'un-Democratic and fraught with serious menace to the country.'

15 Bryan, The First Battle, p. 452. 16 Ibid.
and its prosperity. In short the two journals have completely changed sides.17

In the first week of August, Bryan began a speaking tour which was unprecedented in American political history. In the course of this trip he journeyed some 18,000 miles, made over six hundred speeches within three months, and addressed over 5,000,000 people. In earlier periods of American history, such a pilgrimage would have been impossible because of the lack of transportation facilities. After the Civil War, however, the modern railroad served to draw the nation closer together. In utilizing the railroad, Bryan's campaign became the forerunner of later "whistle stop" campaigns. To be sure, tradition held that the candidate for the presidency must not disclose his wish for the office, or appear to seek the honor publicly. Thus in taking his program to the people, Bryan opened himself to charges that he lacked the dignity necessary for the office of president. To these charges, he replied in a manner which delighted his followers:

...I would rather have it said that I lack dignity than that I lack backbone to meet the enemies of the Government who work against its welfare in Wall Street. What other Presidential candidates did they ever charge with a lack of dignity? (A voice: "Lincoln") Yes my friends, they said it of Lincoln. (A voice: "Jackson.") Yes, they said it of Jackson. (A voice: "And Jefferson.") Yes, and of Jefferson; he was lacking in dignity, too.

...I do not like to be lacking in any of the essentials, but I cannot see that there is any lack of dignity shown if I come before the people and talk to them and tell them what I stand for and am opposed to.18

This speech was made at Philadelphia. It was one of his best

17 Nation, LXIX (July 16, 1896), 1. 18 Ibid., p. 477.
during the campaign for it was here that he took a shrewd slap at the Republican campaign when he said:

Now it might be more dignified for me to stay at home and have people come to see me; but you know I said I was not going to promise to give anybody an office, and, therefore, a great many people who might go to see a candidate under some circumstances would not come to see me at all.19

Bryan's remark was well directed for at Canton, Ohio, Mark Hanna had arranged a careful front porch campaign for the Republican nominee. McKinley, who had fully noted the follies of Blaine's campaign, planned all details in advance so that no break in popularity over some chance phrase such as "Rum, Romanism, and Rebellion" would occur. The front porch technique began on the night of McKinley's nomination with "spontaneous" demonstrations. Immediately after Ohio's forty-six votes had nominated McKinley, townspeople of Canton came into the yard, and McKinley, mounting a chair, made his first speech of the campaign. Shortly afterward some two thousand citizens from a small town nearby arrived by train and another speech resulted. After that, trains bearing well wishers began to arrive with monotonous regularity so that "at least fifty thousand people listened to speeches by the candidate."20 Such excellent results were obtained from these visitations that it was determined to conduct McKinley's entire campaign from his front porch.

19 Nation, LXIX (July 16, 1896), 477.
This idea was developed and employed to the very limit. Several times each week delegations arrived in Canton to pay their respects to the candidate. Each delegation had a chairman who would first address McKinley, telling him "a few little truths with which he was already familiar." McKinley would then reply with a speech whose length was determined by the importance of the visiting delegation. Afterwards the speech would be printed verbatim in the Republican press.

Every detail was carefully prearranged. According to the general arrangement, a letter would be received by McKinley requesting that a certain delegation be allowed to call on the nominee on a certain day. An answer, expressing pleasure at the planned visit, would immediately be returned; but the head of the delegation would be requested to make a preliminary visit to Canton. When he appeared, the delegate would be warmly greeted by McKinley who would ask what he planned to say when presenting his delegation. McKinley would tactfully point out the conveniences of having a written speech prepared and would request a copy in advance. Often, if the proposed introduction did not meet his fancy, McKinley would make the necessary corrections. Thus, when the delegation appeared, McKinley knew exactly what would be said and had his answer written and ready. Such a course gave rise to few bursts of eloquence on the part of the nominee, but it also

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21 Croly, op. cit., p. 215.

22 Ibid., p. 216. See also Olcott, op. cit., p. 221.
eliminated the chance of error. Furthermore, it allowed McKinley's utterances to be well thought out and when, later in the campaign, Bryan began to tire physically, McKinley was easily able to continue to produce good speeches.

Shortly after his nomination, Bryan had determined to receive the formal notification of his nomination in New York instead of at home. Madison Square Garden was chosen as the site of the speech. Bryan hoped by opening his campaign here to carry his fight to the "heart of the enemy's country." After much deliberation, he decided to read his address rather than depend upon the magnetism of his oratory. In doing this, he acted against the advice of his wife and friends; but, as the speech was to be carried in the press of the nation, he wanted it to be a more intellectual address. However, Bryan's decision to read his speech resulted in his first damaging political blunder.

Those who had gathered to hear him were plagued by intense heat which left them sweltering during the unusually long notification speech of Governor W. J. Stone of Missouri. All of this they willingly suffered for they expected an oration along the lines of the famous "Cross of Gold" speech which had stampeded the Chicago convention. When, however, Bryan began reading his address, they were greatly disappointed and many of them left in disgust. The belligerent Eastern

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press did not find it necessary to slant their coverage of the event for the bare facts were bad enough. The effect of his speech was properly described by the *New York Times* which said, "The widely advertised "Boy Orator" read a prosy commonplace speech that served to tire those who listened." It added that before five minutes people began to leave and by the time the speech ended fully half of the audience was gone. Bryan was "left reading his speech to empty galleries." 

Bryan did not give his adversaries cause to relax their efforts because of the failure of his Garden speech. He planned and carried out four long journeys throughout the East and Midwest. Nor were his crowds disappointing. Everywhere he was received by enormous gatherings and enthusiasm greeted his efforts. Only when he tried to address the students of Yale University at New Haven did he meet with discourtesy. Here when he tried to denounce the predatory Wall Street financiers to their sons, he was greeted with jeers, yells, and cries for McKinley. Realizing that his audience was intent upon provoking him, Bryan departed from his prepared speech and said, "I have been so used to talking

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25 *Ibid.* Not all authorities agreed that Bryan erred in reading his speech. It was pointed out that after the Chicago convention, Bryan had gained an almost legendary ability as an orator. Had he decided to deliver his Garden address in the manner of the Chicago speech, he would have found himself competing against his own reputed ability. See Peck, *op. cit.*, p. 507. See also Charles M. Rossor, *The Crusading Commoner*, pp. 67-68.

to young men who earn their own living that I do not know—\textsuperscript{27} at this point he was again interrupted with applause and cheering. When he again was able to be heard, he said, "I say, I have been so used to talking to young men who earn their own living that I hardly know what language to use to... those who desire to be known... as the distributors of wealth which somebody else has created."\textsuperscript{28} Again he was greeted with cheering for McKinley. After finally being able to continue, the speech went on in the same vein until a band marched near. Bryan then ended his speech saying, "...I must ask you to excuse me from talking any further in the presence of the noises against which we have to contend today."\textsuperscript{29} The incident caused considerable discussion but only one of the McKinley papers saw fit to defend the action of the students.\textsuperscript{30}

Bryan's speeches during the campaign varied according to the locality in which he was speaking. In his Garden speech, for example, he assured his audience that he planned no wild revolution. Quoting from Jackson, Bryan agreed that "distinctions in society will always exist under every just

\textsuperscript{27}Bryan, \textit{First Battle}, p. 485. \textsuperscript{28}Ibid.,

\textsuperscript{29}Ibid., p. 486.

\textsuperscript{30}One of the most interesting criticisms of the incident came from Muskogee in the \textit{Indian Territory}. It said: "Resolved: that we contemplate with deep regret the recent insulting treatment of William J. Bryan by students in the land of the boasted white man's civilization, and we admonish all Indians who think of sending their sons to Yale that association with such students could prove hurtful alike to their morals and their progress toward the higher standard of civilization." See Bryan, \textit{First Battle}, p. 487.
form of government. Equality of talents, of education or of wealth, cannot be produced by human institutions."31 To this he added:

Our Campaign has not for its objective the reconstruction of society. We cannot insure the vicious the fruits of a virtuous life; we would not invade the home of the provident in order to supply the wants of the spendthrift; we do not propose to transfer the rewards of industry to the lap of indolence. Property is and will remain the stimulus to endeavor and the compensation for toil.32

But at St. Paul, the home of James J. Hill, he spoke with more abandon when he promised a properly administered government where there would be no "railroad wreckers to make themselves rich by bankrupting those who put their confidence in them", and went on to add that there would be no "representative of a coal trust sitting by every fireside to exact tribute from those who desire to be protected from the cold of winter."33 In Illinois he told an audience that the evils of foreclosure were caused by bad laws, and he charged the people with the duty to correct them; "...you cannot find in all the history of the past a single instance where people who profited by bad laws ever secured their repeal."34 To a group of Chicago businessmen, he stated that he had been accused of lawlessness and if elected it was feared he would cause an era of revolution. To this he replied that he stood for the strict enforcement of all laws and "until we find some means of adjusting the difficulties...between labor and

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31 Bryan, First Battle, p. 316.  
32 Ibid.  
33 Ibid., p. 536.  
34 Ibid., p. 572.
capital...you can expect increasing disorder instead of increasing quiet."35 Following his Yale fiasco, Bryan returned to New York where he was the guest of Tammany Hall. Here he showed no fear of patronage politicos when he said of Tammany that it was "great, compact, and ready to do effective service in any cause which the society espouses."36

All of these statements were made as mere side issues, however, for Bryan never failed to espouse the merits of free silver. So many benefits were claimed in the name of silver that his opponents soon realized that he was often using unsound arguments and determined to attack these weaknesses as the easiest means of defeating him.

The most serious problem confronting Mark Hanna and the Republican National Committee was that of raising enough money to pay for the proposed campaign. Not only were more speaking tours planned than had been previously considered necessary, but, an expensive campaign of education was planned. Thus, unless a proportionately large amount of money could be raised, activities must be curtailed. To Hanna went the job of raising the money. He had planned the campaign, selected the candidate, and agreed to the platform; now he must provide the money for the operation. Since the customary manner of voluntary contribution was wholly insufficient, a

35 Bryan, First Battle, p. 587.
new system must be found. Obviously the financier was en-
dangered by the monetary issue and must provide the campaign
fund, but the leading financiers were in the East and Hanna
was not known there. Moreover, Wall Street had not favored
McKinley's nomination. Its choice of a presidential candidate
had been Levi P. Morton. Thus, some persuasion and enlighten-
ment would be necessary in order to unloosen the Eastern
purse.37

In New York, Mark Hanna met no immediate success. He
was unable to see the "right" men. Just as all seemed lost,
an old friend, James J. Hill, entered the picture. Hill was
well known among the Eastern financiers and was quite willing
to introduce Hanna in the proper circles. Furthermore, he
supported Hanna's view that the monetary danger was a real
one and not a political scare to raise funds. Since he had
purchased coal from Hanna's mines, he could testify to the
integrity of the Ohioan. With this help, Hanna was able to
gain the support of Wall Street.38

Assisted by his new found friends, Hanna began a careful
organization of his machinery for collecting funds. The
raising of a war chest was converted from a task of political
begging into a system of systematic assessment according to
the ability of the institution or individual.39

Inasmuch as the security of business and the credit
system of the country were involved...appeals were
made to banks and businessmen, irrespective of party

37Croly, op. cit., p. 219. 38Ibid. 39Ibid.
affiliations.... Responsible men were appointed to act as local agents... for the purpose both of soliciting and receiving contributions.... calculated... at the rate of one-quarter of one per cent of their capital, and this assessment was for the most part paid.40

Working under this system, an immense campaign fund was raised. Although officially recorded as $3,500,000, other estimates as high as $16,500,000 have been made.41 Never had politicians had such wealth with which to work. Not only was enough for all demands gathered, but in the closing days of the campaign, Hanna was able to return recently submitted checks uncashed. By any estimate, this Republican fund was of a size "which would have made a very popular man out of any distributor of it."42 To oppose this war chest, the Democrats were able to raise only $450,000, less than twice the amount of Standard Oil's Republican contribution alone.43

Backed with their enormous financial resources, the Republicans published some 275 different pamphlets. Some 120,000,000 copies of these were printed in English, Italian, German, French, Swedish, and other languages. In this manner the speeches of McKinley were distributed to millions. Other millions of leaflets promoted the sound money arguments.44

40Croly, op. cit., p. 220.
41Ibid. See also Josephson, op. cit., p. 699.
42Foraker, op. cit., I, 447. 43Croly, op. cit., p. 220.
44Olcott, op. cit., p. 325.
In order to insure the best possible arguments, leading educators, such as J. Lawrence Laughlin of the Rockefeller endowed University of Chicago, were hired to paint the uncertainties of monetary inflation in the darkest colors. These arguments were pointed toward a concrete appeal to the people of small means. They were warned of the low future purchasing power of the dollar and the effect of inflation on savings, pensions, insurance, and small investments.  

Under the leadership of Charles G. Dawes, a business type system of spending was adopted. Each district was listed separately and all expenses necessary to its campaign were itemized. A central purchasing agency was set up in Chicago and all campaign contracts were awarded to the lowest bidder. In this manner, additional savings were made as Republican supporters trimmed their profits to aid in the election of McKinley.

Nor did the Republican high command content itself with mere literature. Every possible means was used to arouse the people against Bryan. Casting about for orators to further their cause, they found many religious leaders who were willing to work in their behalf. In New York, the Rev. Dr. R.S. MacArthur of the Calvary Baptist church entered the pulpit in early August to loose an ecclesiastical barrage against Bryan. His philippic was climaxed with a stirring declaration: "By the grace of God and the votes of the people, no sympathizer

45 Kohlsaat, op. cit., p. 52. 46 Dawes, op. cit., p. 82-84.
with anarchy will ever sit in the Presidential chair of the American Republic."

Republican papers contributed their part in the denunciation by carrying MacArthur's speech in full. At the same time they applauded his efforts and noted that at times his congregation joined in a rousing cheer for parts of his sermon. They also published later talks which he made including the one in which he said, "The silver Judas took burned his palm. The great degraded dollar it is now proposed to give us would burn the conscience of every noble American citizen. Away with the filthy, false dollar."

MacArthur was not the only Baptist minister to speak out against Bryan. The Rev. Cortland Myers of the Brooklyn Baptist Temple delivered his opening blast at Bryan in mid-September when he said:

This pulpit is absolutely non-partisan, but it is positively patriotic and Christian. It does not stand for party, but as long as it stands for Christ it must stand for principle. I must be heard and I will be heard against all dishonesty and anarchy and kindred evil. I love the blood-stained banner of the cross and it is ever in danger. I love every stripe and every star of Old Glory, and it is at this moment in great danger. I must speak every Sunday from now until November. I shall denounce the Chicago platform. That platform was made in hell.

Other New York Protestants joined in the religious denunciation of Bryan. On September 27th., the Rev. Dr.

48 Ibid., August 31, 1896, p. 5.
Charles H. Parkhurst, in a sermon at Madison Square Presbyterian church, thundered out, "Mutual confidence does not exist today and attempts are being made, deliberate and hot blooded, to destroy what little of it remains. I dare in God's pulpit, to brand such attempts as accursed and treasonable." Even some of the Catholic clergy were induced to speak out against the cause of Bryan. Here, however, moderation was used. Governor Charles Culberson of Texas had written to Prince Bismarck of Germany asking his opinion of bimetallism. The ex-Chancellor replied that he personally had always had a preference for bimetallism and added that "the United States are commercially freer in their movements than any single one of the European nations." The silver orators had made much of this letter and in seeking someone to answer these arguments, the Republicans found Archbishop Ireland of St. Paul, Minnesota. After denunciing the platform and Democrats in general, the Archbishop said, "Herr Bismarck counseled the United States to go ahead and make the experiment alone....The sly old fox would, indeed, be pleased to see America make the experiment and go to the bottom of the sea." As the campaign progressed, the Republicans realized that their program of education was not achieving its goal. Not because the silver arguments were irrefutable, but because

of the almost fanatical devotion of the common people to the "Boy Orator" and to free silver. Thus it became necessary to shift the emphasis of the campaign into new channels, to limit the monetary debates to statements in favor of "sound money", and to discredit the leaders of the Democratic party. Bryan, because of his youth, could be described as a tool of older politicians but the proposals of the Chicago platform would, with their dangerous demands for an income tax and a halt of government by injunction, remain untouched. Bryan did not write these proposals. It thus became incumbent upon the Republicans to discredit the author of the Chicago platform of repudiation. That man was John Peter Altgeld. Furthermore, since Illinois' switch from Bland to Bryan had led to Bryan's nomination, it could be claimed that Altgeld had nominated Bryan. Altgeld's prominence on Bryan's side was even more of a boon to Hanna and his cohorts because of a Chicago riot that had taken place in 1886. In that year of industrial unrest, an attempt by police to disperse a meeting of several hundred workingmen had ended with a bomb killing eight of the policemen. Eight anarchists were subsequently tried for murder and found guilty. Four of these were hanged, one committed suicide before reaching the gallows, and three others remained in prison. Altgeld did not feel that the men had been fairly tried and after becoming governor, he pardoned the three remaining men.  

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1896, Republican logic held that: Altgeld pardoned the anarchists; therefore Altgeld was an anarchist; therefore any cause backed by Altgeld was anarchist; therefore any supporters of a cause backed by Altgeld were either anarchists or puppets of an anarchist. "In the light of such impregnable logic as this, the Democratic plot against organized society stood revealed and explained..."55 A contemporary periodical described the situation as follows:

Governor Altgeld...is the brain and inspiration of the movement for which Mr. Bryan stands....It is he who chose Mr. Bryan in preference to Mr. Bland....Altgeld preferred the impulsive, susceptible, imaginative, yielding, Mr. Bryan who had always shown himself ready to make war on society...and who would be as clay in the hands of the potter under the astute control of the ambitious and unscrupulous Illinois communist, who had become the leader of all the disturbing forces in the country by reason of his defense and pardon of the Chicago anarchists.56

To be sure, the most important plank in the Democratic platform was the currency item. The Republicans obviously could not brand as anarchistic or revolutionary a monetary policy which had been in use by the government for several decades and which, until recently, had been actively championed by their own candidate. Therefore the emphasis was shifted from this plank to those which Altgeld had written. The item objecting to government by injunction was held, by members of the Old Guard, to be a "declaration in favor of free riots" and the clause objecting to the Supreme Court's income tax

56 Harper's Weekly, XXXX (October 17, 1896), 1018.
decision was called an "attack on the courts" as well as a "covert threat to Pack the Supreme Court". Nor were all attacks on Altgeld held to his policies. He was libeled and slandered many times in the process of the campaign. When the Republicans first made him the target of their attack, Altgeld was described as an "anarchist", "socialist", "communist", "fool", and "fraud". But these terms were soon worn threadbare and new words were needed to describe him. Variously Altgeld was held to be a "lunatic", "ruffian", "snake", "viper", "hoodlum", "traitor", and "arch devil".

Meanwhile the storm blew over the land. Bryan, stumping through the Midwest and East, was greeted by enormous crowds that were practically hysterical in their support of his cause. Labor, spurred on by Altgeld and Debs, was swinging toward the Democratic leader. To be sure, the employees of the giant industries were not satisfied that free silver would benefit them, but the railway strike had taught them to fear government injunctions. Under the pressure of insults and libels, Altgeld invaded New York and in a three-hour speech at Cooper Union Hall sought to defend his action in pardoning the anarchists. He also attempted to vindicate the platform of his party and called upon his audience to "make a new Declaration of Independence to mankind." Altgeld seemed beside himself with passion during the speech and it was

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not known that during his tour he frequently suffered from fainting spells caused by heart attacks.

Certain sections of the country escaped, in some measure, the full force of the 1896 campaign. The strongly agrarian South was conceded to Bryan early in the campaign; partly because it had long opposed the industrial movement and partly because Reconstruction had served to align the South against the Republican party. With the exception of California, which was known to want a protective tariff for its citrus industry, and the traditional Republican state of Oregon, the West was also slighted by the planners of the Old Guard. This was a natural result inasmuch as the silver mines were located in this region. Furthermore, the West for the most part was made up of small farmers who had suffered under the monetary policies of Cleveland, and who had taken the lead in demanding a more elastic currency. Thus in the South and West, Bryan was heralded as the leader of a "new battle for freedom," and a true knight of the West who was "fighting for the people."60

Nor was Bryan unaware of his strength in these regions. During the campaign, his home state of Nebraska was the most Western point of his tours. The deep South was also passed over. But in the border states, Bryan did considerable campaigning, speaking extensively in Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and even dipping into North Carolina and Virginia on one of

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60 *Public Opinion*, XXI (July 16, 1896), pp. 75-79.
his pilgrimages.61 For the most part, however, the Midwest and North became the battleground. In the Midwest, Bryan's candidacy was particularly appealing. Indeed, so strong was Bryan's hold on this area in the early days of the campaign, that it required a lavish expenditure of Republican funds well into October to assure the Old Guard of their standard bearer's home state.62

Late in September when observers predicted that Bryan would win the election, the Republicans introduced coercive measures into the campaign. Large contingent orders were given to manufacturers on condition that these orders should be valid only in the event of McKinley's election. Labor was thus told that it would vote itself out of work if it voted for Bryan. Upon learning of this, Democratic leaders advised the employees to petition their employers for raises in the event of McKinley's election. Hanna replied by charging that the Democrats were using coercion in "a bold attempt to excite workingmen against their employers."63 Large Eastern insurance companies which held mortgages on Western farms intimated to the farmers that their mortgages would be extended

61 Bryan, First Battle, pp. 385-601.
63 Public Opinion, XXI (October 29, 1896), 1. The same statement demonstrated that he could sublimely assume the position of "the pot calling the kettle black" when he accused the American worker of attempting to sell his vote: "The ballot in his hands is to become a mere matter of dollars and cents." See Ibid., p. 1.
for five years at a low rate of interest if McKinley were elected. On the week-end before election, the large railroads and manufacturers decided upon a final ultimatum to their employees to be delivered in unison on Monday, November 2, to the effect that none need return to work if Bryan were elected. One leading manufacturer is said to have told his workers, "Men, vote as you please, but if Bryan is elected tomorrow the whistle will not blow Wednesday morning." The Democratic leaders were divided in their opinion as to the effect of the ultimatum. Some held that it would serve as a boomerang because it would secretly be resented. But Senator Teller of Colorado, now working with the Democratic party, shook his head and said, "Boys, I am afraid it beats us. If I were a working man and had nothing but my job, I am afraid when I came to vote I would think of Mollie and the babies."  

On the last day of October the Republicans held a highly organized sound money parade and victory demonstration in New York. Over 100,000 people took part in the parade which was witnessed by a million others. Trade associations marched in battalions with banners identifying them. Stockbrokers and bankers marched with union laborers, each carrying an

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64 W. C. Williams, William Jennings Bryan, p. 195, as cited in Josephson, op. cit., p. 704.  
65 Ibid., pp. 704-705.
American flag and singing the Star Spangled Banner. Following the parade, Hanna announced that the Republican campaign was completed. The literature had been sent out and the Republicans were resting their case.

The Democrats continued their campaign until the last hour. Bryan, speaking in Chicago for the last time before the election on October 28, brought the city into the streets. The next day he issued a statement, the only one of its kind of the campaign, in which he sought to deny many of the charges which had been made of him. On the final day before the election, Bryan made twenty-seven speeches; the last of which was made a few minutes before midnight. The campaign was completed and the candidates awaited the decision of the voters.

CHAPTER V

REPUDIATION REPUDIATED

On Tuesday, November 3, the voters rendered the popular verdict in the heated presidential contest. From that time until the inauguration in March, the lonely man in the White House, Grover Cleveland, would be alien to the incoming president regardless of how the election went. If the election went to the Democrats, his administration would stand repudiated. On the other hand, if the Republicans won, he would be saved from complete repudiation, but at the hands of the opposition party.

In Canton, Ohio, William McKinley cast his ballot for a high tariff and the gold standard early in the morning. Republican tactics were to swamp the polls shortly after their opening and thereby gain an early lead. In Lincoln, Nebraska, William Jennings Bryan cast his vote in favor of free silver and repudiation. At the time Bryan approached the polls with his ballot, a Republican suggested that those present remove their hats as a token of respect to the Democratic candidate. With one exception this was done.¹

Lacking funds, the Democrats across the nation had made few plans for getting out the vote. Not so the Republicans,

¹Bryan, The First Battle, p. 604.
Mark Hanna had prepared for election day with his usual thoroughness. "In some thousand precincts the Republican district leaders and their henchmen were provided for by a last distribution of gold pieces."\(^2\) Every available vehicle was hired for the purpose of transporting voters to and from the election booths.

Voters who were at work and possible subject to loss of time were paid for their time, many of them upon a very liberal basis. Farmers who had to leave their fields were recompensed for their loss of time and for the loss of time of their hired hands....Every voter, no matter in what condition he may have been, was sought out....Every county chairman, district chairman, precinct captain...and all other willing workers, were supplied with money to get out the votes.\(^3\)

In Indiana, 30,000 floaters were reported to have voted in consideration of sandwiches, liquor, and a five dollar gold piece. Due to an oversight on the part of Hanna's men, some 48,000 votes were cast in one Western Indiana district which boasted only 30,000 registered voters. Ohio reported one vote for every four living persons, and this at a time when only men had the suffrage. Negroes, whose votes would have been useless in their Southern homes, were reported to have crossed the Mason and Dixon line in trainloads to vote in more doubtful states. Indeed, the "very graveyards were robbed of the names on their tombstones."\(^4\)

\(^2\) Josephson; op. cit., p. 705.
\(^3\) Dunn, op. cit., I, 195.
\(^4\) Hibben, op. cit., p. 201.
On the fourth of November the Republican papers announced
the election of McKinley with blazing headlines and large
portraits of the candidate in which his very respectable
paunch was clearly visible. Nevertheless, James K. Jones
of the Democratic National Committee released a statement
assuring the voters that Bryan was safely elected.

An enormous vote had been brought forth and for several
days the final result was in some doubt. However, the early
trend set by the Republican's city voters was never offset
by the results from the outlying districts. Bryan has
described his feelings as the results came in:

As the evening progressed the indications pointed more
and more strongly to defeat, and by eleven o'clock
I realized that, while the returns from the country
might change the result, the success of my opponent
was more than probable. Confidence resolved itself
into doubt, and doubt, in turn gave place to resigna-
tion...there vanished from my mind the vision of a
President in the White House...and in contemplation of
the picture of a citizen...free from official respon-
sibility, I fell asleep.

By Thursday evening, November, 5, enough returns were in to
indicate the certain election of McKinley. Upon learning
this, Bryan telegraphed McKinley his congratulations and
said, "We have submitted the issue to the American people
and their will is law." Thus the New York Journal, which
alone of the New York papers had supported Bryan, had proved

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\(^{6}\) Ibid., November 4, 1896, p. 2.
\(^{7}\) Bryan, The First Battle, p. 605.
\(^{8}\) Ibid., p. 606.
to be wrong when it said, "Nobody who realizes what is at
stake...can vote to abandon government of the people, by
the people, for the people, in favor of government of McKinley,
by Hanna, for a syndicate." 9

Republican jubilation on learning of the success of
their candidate was unbounded. Hanna hastily telegraphed
his congratulations to his friend McKinley saying, "God's
in his Heaven, all's right with the world." A president
had been made and an era of gold, privilege, and high pro-
tective tariffs was in the making. Labor, having submissively
voted as directed, would pose no new threat to industrial
domination for many years. Finance politics held unchallenged
away. Realizing the scope of their victory, long after mid-
night in an exclusive club,

one of the world's greatest merchants started the
old boyhood game of "Follow the Leader." He was
joined by bank presidents, merchants, Chicago's
foremost men; they went over sofas, chairs, tables,
up-stairs and down-stairs, and wound up dancing in
each other's arms.10

A final tabulation of the results of the election showed
that McKinley, in winning the election, had received a popular
vote of 7,107,322, carried twenty three states, and gained
271 votes in the electoral college. Bryan had received a

9 New York Journal, July 13, 1896, in Allan Nevins(ed.),
American Press Opinion, Washington to Coolidge, A Documentary
Record of Editorial Leadership and Criticism 1785-1927,
p. 418.

10 Kohlsaat, op. cit., p. 53.
popular vote of 6,511,075, carried twenty-two states, and gained 176 electoral votes. With only 224 electoral votes needed for election, the forces of repudiation had been decisively defeated. Nevertheless, Bryan had made a remarkable showing. In losing the election he had come within half a million votes of McKinley and had received more popular votes than any previous successful presidential candidate. He had also carried only one less state than the winner. More important, of the thirteen and one-half million votes cast, a change of only twenty thousand from McKinley to Bryan, distributed among the states of California, Kentucky, Indiana, Delaware, West Virginia, and either Oregon or North Dakota, would have given Bryan the 224 electoral votes needed for election.1

Considered in relation to the geographical location of the states, the results show that the nation voted along sharp sectional lines. East of the Mississippi River and North of the Mason and Dixon line, McKinley had carried every state. He also carried North Dakota, Minnesota, and Iowa, and the border states of Maryland, Delaware, and West Virginia. In the far West, Oregon supported the Republican candidate and California gave him eight of her nine electoral votes. Kentucky, another border state, was divided with McKinley receiving twelve of the thirteen ballots. Bryan had carried

1 Computed from tables and maps given in Bryan, The First Battle, pp. 608-611; and Olcott, op. cit., II, 326.
the border state of Missouri, the Solid South, and all of the states west of the Mississippi River with the exception of those noted. From a percentage standpoint, Vermont was the strongest Republican state, for it supported McKinley by a ratio of five to one. However, this does not compare favorably with the strongest Democratic state, Mississippi, which voted for Bryan at a ratio of twelve to one.12

A look at the results of third party activity also proves interesting. As predicted, the Populists had sounded the "death knell" of their party by supporting Bryan. In the 1892 election the Populists had polled over a million votes, but in 1896 their total vote was only 222,207. To be sure, this can not be considered a fair estimate of Populist strength since many of them undoubtedly voted a straight Democratic ticket. Furthermore, the 1896 Populist Vice-Presidential candidate, Watson, received 28 electoral votes, six more than Weaver had gained in 1892; but the increase in the electoral college was due to fusion with the Democrats in an attempt to harmoniously elect Bryan rather than an increase in the power of the Populists. After 1896 the People's Party disintegrated and was taken over by the Democratic party.13

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12 Bryan, The First Battle, pp. 608-611.

13 Ibid. The 28 votes which Watson received could have produced an interesting situation if Bryan had been elected by a small majority. In that contingency, Watson's 28 votes would have prevented the regular Democratic vice-presidential candidate, Sewall, from receiving a constitutional majority in the electoral college.
The National Democratic ticket also played a leading role in the results. In giving conservative Democrats an alternative to Bryan, Palmer and Buckner had taken the states of California and Kentucky from him and thereby cost the regular Democrats twenty electoral votes. Another minor party, the Prohibitionists, suffered in the 1896 election. Four years earlier their popular following had included nearly three hundred thousand voters; but in 1896 the tremendous pressures of the campaign lowered their vote to less than one hundred and fifty thousand.14

As has been noted, a change of less than twenty thousand votes in certain states would have given Bryan the election. More interesting still are the actual results considered in the light of an election free from coercion and floaters. In Indiana, the observed floaters alone were more than enough to give McKinley that state's electoral support. In Delaware the pressure of contingent shipbuilding contracts could easily have accounted for the 3,380 Republican majority in that state. Kentucky and California would probably have gone to the Democrats if coercion, floaters, and a second Democratic ticket had not been called into play. Thus it can be reasonably assumed that a more proper showing of the respective strengths of the two parties would have given the Republicans the victory by, at best, an electoral vote of 233 against 214. Add to these results the closeness of the vote in West Virginia.

14Bryan, The First Battle, pp. 608-611.
and the doubtful states of North Dakota and Oregon; consider the tremendous advantage of the fabulous Republican war chest; and it is not illogical to assume that Bryan and not McKinley would have emerged the victor in the 1896 campaign if the Democrats had had a comparative campaign fund and a Mark Hanna.

As the leaders of the new, liberal, Democratic party considered the results of the campaign, they realized as Altgeld said, that the party had been forced to "reform while under the fire of the enemy," but even so they had, "made the most heroic political fight ever seen in this country." In a post election statement, Altgeld said of the party that it was:

confronted by all the banks, all the trusts, all the syndicates, all the corporations, all the great papers. It was confronted by everything that money could buy, that boodle could debauch, or that fear of starvation could coerce. It was confronted by the disgust which the majority of the American people felt toward the national administration, for which they held us responsible. It was confronted by the unfounded charge of being partly responsible for the hard times. It was confronted by a combination of forces such as had never been united before and will probably never be united again; and worse still, the time was too short to educate the public.15

Nor should the personal contribution of the astute Ohio political boss, Mark Hanna, be underestimated. As has been shown, it was he who first selected William McKinley for the Republican nomination and subsequently caused his acceptance. It was he who had given the final nod to the gold standard

15 Browne, op. cit., p. 295.
clause which had given the campaign its issue. When the Republican canvass was about to halt for lack of funds, it was Hanna who pried the necessary money from the Eastern financiers. Late in the campaign, when all seemed lost, it was Hanna who led in the introduction of coercive measures. Finally, it was he who minutely planned the "get out the vote" tactics for the election day. The resulting victory had proved, beyond doubt, the supreme importance of his strategy and dynamic organization.

McKinley was the first to recognize the value of Hanna's work. On November 12, just one week after the election, McKinley wrote to Hanna:

We are all through with the election, and before turning to the future I want to express to you my great debt of gratitude for your generous life-long and devoted services to me. Was there ever such unselfish devotion before?...I want you to know...how much I appreciate your friendship and faith.16

McKinley was also cognizant of his political debt to Hanna for in the same letter he said, "Now to the future. I turn to you irresistibly. I want you as one of my chief associates in the conduct of the government."17

The Ohio Boss, however, was unwilling to compromise his independence by accepting a cabinet post. While he was quite willing to help in deciding which of his fellow Republicans should be compensated for their work, Hanna declined to be

16 Croly, op. cit., p. 229.
17 Ibid., p. 229.
considered for any of the offices. At the same time, he let it be known that he was most interested in a seat in the Senate.

Hanna's stand placed McKinley in an uncomfortable position. One of Ohio's seats was held by the venerable John Sherman whose term would not expire until March of 1899. The other seat had just been won by his political ally, Joseph B. Foraker. To resolve the situation, McKinley determined to vacate one of the prevailing positions. Sherman was nearly seventy-four years old and would be glad to round out his career as Secretary of State. The way would then be open to Hanna's appointment. To be sure, the governor of Ohio, Asa Bushnell, was far from friendly to either McKinley or Hanna. But when properly approached, Bushnell was induced to appreciate the availability of Hanna. Thus in the campaign of 1896, Hanna led McKinley to the Presidency and McKinley reciprocated by arranging a place for Hanna in the Senate.

Much discussion has been raised over the manner of Bryan's nomination. Generally the debates resolve themselves into two schools of thought; those who think Bryan would have been nominated without making his famous "Cross of Gold" speech, and those who hold that his address was the

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18 When it appeared that Bushnell might not appoint Hanna, the business interests brought a united pressure against the governor. Bushnell, who hoped to be a candidate for reelection, was given to understand that his political career would be at an end if Hanna were not appointed. See Croly, op. cit., p. 240.
sole reason of his nomination. One reporter who followed Bryan through his pilgrimages later wrote:

Bryan had no intention of swinging the convention to him as nominee. He only wanted to swing the convention to free silver. But after the speech that voiced all the emotions, all the aspirations of the great mass of struggling men...it was revealed to them that here was their leader, bearing the torch of liberation from the bonds of economic slavery.19

Such reports are characterized as naive by those representing the opposite view. Another observer has said:

As a great many people now know, the men who were pulling the strings had been at work maneuvering Bryan into position from which he could attract national notice...Few political secrets have been so well kept. The scheme was a good and sensible one. For all that has been written about the freakiness of that nomination, it was the only thing to do. Not the Cross of Gold speech nor anything else could have stampeded the convention if there had been any available candidate who embodied the issue.20

In support of his view, this observer related a story told to him by a reporter who covered the convention.

Before the Convention met, James A. Campbell of the Philadelphia Times, was taking a drink with Altgeld's chief lieutenant, and as they parted after a short chat, Campbell said, "Can't you give me some kind of tip on what's going to happen?" "Only this and don't ask me any more," replied the other after a moment's hesitation. "Keep your eye on William J. Bryan of Nebraska."21

While the second report is much closer than the first,

19 Frank Parker Stockbridge, "Bryan the Great Commoner", Current History, XXII (September, 1925), 870.

20 Charles Willis Thompson, Presidents I Have Known and Two Near Presidents, p. 47.

21 Thompson, op. cit., p. 47.
neither is exactly correct. For months Bryan had traveled about the country meeting the leaders of the Democratic party. He pursued the coming nomination for the Presidency with the eager-eyed ardency of a Harpo Marx chasing blondes. Thus when the convention opened, Bryan was far better known than is generally believed. He was also on the ground and available to all who might be interested in meeting him. This was the full extent of the Bryan strength prior to the convention. He did not enter the meeting a favorite candidate or even the candidate of a strong minority. Only Bryan and a small group of delegates considered him a serious contender for the nomination.

Even so, Bryan's position was a good one. The party was about to repudiate its leaders and therefore would be leaderless. Ordinarily the man who led in the repudiation would be the logical candidate, but in 1896 that man was John Peter Altgeld, who, because of his foreign birth, was ineligible for the presidency. Others who might have been considered as strong candidates were disqualified because of their geographic origins or because of the recency of their conversion to the Democratic party. Bryan, coming from the Western state of Nebraska, and having been a lifelong Democrat, was open to neither of these charges. He was known to be a Democrat who had the admiration of the Populist party and behind whom the million votes of 1892 could be rallied. He was also associated

\[22\] Irving Stone, They Also Ran, p. 64.
with the repudiation movement for it was his opposition to
Cleveland in 1894 which had cost him his seat in Congress.
Finally, Bryan had the most magnetic platform appearance of
any of the members of his party. Thus he quite accurately
summed up the situation when he said, "I am what they call
the logic of the situation."

Long before the convention met, Bryan had been preparing
and rehearsing a convention speech. He had rewritten and
adjusted each forceful statement according to the reaction
it received from his various audiences. The "crown of thorns"
and "cross of gold" statements had been sharpened to perfec-
tion because, as Bryan said, "I recognized its fitness for
the conclusion of a climax, and laid it away for a proper
occasion."

Irregardless of the logic of Bryan's candidacy and the
value of the prepared speech, both would have been useless
unless some manner could be devised for Bryan to appear
before the convention as the proper man to represent the
movement of repudiation. It was here that political maneuvering
was begun. When it was learned that there would be a platform
debate, Bryan determined to use his prepared speech to close
the debate. To aid him in gaining this position, Bryan
enlisted the aid of ex-Governor James S. Hogg of Texas. Hogg
was the sole member of the Texas delegation who supported

Bryan and, as Texas voted under the unit rule, was never able to swing the state to Bryan until his nomination was assured. However, the ex-governor was a close personal friend of the chairman of the platform committee, Senator James K. Jones of Arkansas. Jones, in view of his desire to become Chairman of the National Democratic Committee, was soon found to be most favorable to placing Bryan on the agenda. The only other speaker for the new liberal platform who might have commanded the closing position was Senator "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman of South Carolina. Tillman had already been informed that he would become Secretary of the Treasury in the event of Bryan's election and was thereby amenable to any suggestion. In this manner, Bryan arranged to close the debate.

After the speech had been delivered, many of the delegates who had only thought of Bryan as an up-and-coming politician began to think of him in terms of the Presidency. The years of traveling and lecturing came to bear fruit. Delegates who came to the convention to support Bland and the other candidates began to realize that here was a man who knew them personally and who would probably be a better caretaker for their political futures. Even so, the convention refused

25 Rosser, op. cit., pp. 36-37. The Bryan campaign was developed well before the meeting of the convention. In November, 1895, Rosser had traveled from Texas to South Carolina for the sole purpose of informing Tillman that Bryan would like to see him become Secretary of the Treasury. See ibid., p. 34.

26 A Republican observer who had predicted Bryan's nomination if he made a speech on the silver issue, was so sure of Bryan's nomination that he did not deem it necessary to return for the final balloting. See Dawes, op. cit., p. 89.
to nominate Bryan by acclamation. Altgeld fought the nomination of Bryan to the last and was bitterly disappointed to see him nominated. Here again, however, the small group supporting Bryan were able to make their influence felt. Altgeld's chief lieutenant was Buck Hendrichsen and he was ever present, working within the Illinois delegation for the cause of Bryan. After the fourth ballot swing to Bryan started, Hendrichsen was able to rouse the Illinois delegation to the point where Altgeld could no longer hold it in line. On the fifth ballot, Illinois swung to Bryan and the nomination followed.

Thus, it can be concluded that the truth of the discussion over Bryan's nomination lies somewhere between the two extremes. Practical politicians would never have nominated a man for the nation's highest office on the strength of one speech, regardless of its force. On the other hand, they would have refused to nominate so young a candidate, even though he had proved to be an astute politician, before the young candidate had proven his ability to hold an audience.

Oddly enough, the monetary issue around which the campaign was fought was not the real issue. The underlying cause of the 1866 uprising was the power of the trusts which had perverted the laws to protect their own corporate wealth. The alliance between business and government which emerged as a legacy of the Civil War had created economic conditions highly

27 Barnard, op. cit., p. 371.
favorable to business and adverse to agrarian interests. Free silver became the shibboleth to rally the debtor group into an opposition party, just as cheap money had always been regarded as a panacea by debtor and small farmer groups.

The campaign of 1896 was one of the most unusual in American political history because of its alignment. After the Civil War, the government had been controlled by an invisible government of industrialists. The campaign of 1896 represented the last effort of the agrarians to regain the power they had held prior to the war. In attempting to regain control of the government, the farmers found themselves aligned with labor in their battle against industry. The progressive trend ushered in by Theodore Roosevelt, the factor which eventually split the Republican party and led the Democrats under Wilson once more from the wilderness, was not essentially an agrarian movement. Thus the farmer-labor class alignment which made the campaign of 1896 so unusual and dramatic disappeared.
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