



CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The Election of 1896

THE DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM

Adopted at Chicago, July 9th, 1896

OPPOSED TO THE GOLD STANDARD--
FREE AND UNLIMITED COINAGE--
OPPOSED TO THE ISSUE OF BONDS--
THE INCOME TAX--
SYMPATHY FOR THE CUBANS--
OPPOSED TO A THIRD TERM--

We, the Democrats of the United States in National Convention assembled, do reaffirm our allegiance to those great essential principles of justice and liberty upon which our institutions are founded, and which the Democratic party has advocated from Jefferson's time to our own--freedom of speech, freedom of the press, freedom of conscience, the separation of personal rights, the equality of all citizens before the law, and the faithful observance of constitutional limitations.

During all these years the Democratic party has resented the tendency of selfish interests to the centralization of Government power, and steadfastly maintained the integrity of the dual scheme of Government established by the founders of this Republic of republics. Under its guidance and teachings the great principle of local self-government has found its best expression in the maintenance of the rights of 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.

The Constitution of the United States guarantees to every citizen the rights of civil and religious liberty. The Democratic party has always been the exponent of political liberty and religious freedom, and it renews its obligations and reaffirms its devotion to these fundamental principles of the Constitution.

The Money Question.

Recognizing that the money question is paramount to all others at this time, we invite attention to the fact that the Federal Constitution names silver and gold together as the money metals of the United States, and that the first coinage law passed by Congress under the Constitution made the silver dollar the monetary unit of value and admitted gold to free coinage at a ratio based upon the silver dollar unit.

The Demonetization of Silver.

We declare that the act of 1873 demonetizing silver without the knowledge or approval of the American people, has resulted in the appreciation of gold and a corresponding fall in the prices of commodities produced by the people; a heavy

increase in the burden of taxation and of all debts, public and private; the enrichment of the money-lending class at home and abroad; prostration of industry and impoverishment of the people.

Opposed to the Gold Standard.

We are unalterably opposed to 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, and it can be fastened on the United States only by the stifling of that spirit and love of liberty which proclaimed our political independence in 1776 and won it in the War of the Revolution.

Free and Unlimited Coinage.

We demand the free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold at the present 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 such legislation as will prevent for the future the demonetization of any kind of legal-tender money by private contract.

We are opposed to the policy and practice of surrendering to the holders of obligations of the United States the option reserved by law to the Government of redeeming such obligations in either silver coin or gold coin.

Opposed to the Issue of Bonds.

We are opposed to the issuing of interest-bearing bonds of the United States in time of peace and condemn the trafficking with banking syndicates, which, in exchange for bonds and at an enormous profit to themselves, supply the Federal Treasury with gold to maintain the policy of gold monometallism.

The Issue of Paper Money.

Congress alone has the power to coin and issue money, and President Jackson declared that this power could not be delegated to corporations or individuals. We, therefore, denounce the issuance of notes intended to circulate as money by national banks as in derogation of the Constitution, and we demand that all paper which is made a legal tender for public and private debts, or which is receivable for dues to the United States, shall be issued by the Government of the United States, and shall be redeemable in coin.

The Tariff.

We hold that tariff duties should be levied for purposes of revenue, such duties to be so adjusted as to operate equally throughout the country and not discriminate between class or section, and that taxation should be limited by the needs of the Government honestly and economically administered. We denounce, as disturbing to business, the Republican threat to restore the McKinley law, which has been twice condemned by the people in national elections, and which, enacted under the false plea of protection to home industry, proved a prolific breeder of trusts and monopolies, enriched the few at the expense of the many, restricted trade and deprived the producers of the great American staples of access to their natural markets. Until the money question is settled we are opposed to any agitation for further changes in our tariff laws, except such as are necessary to meet the deficit in revenue caused by the adverse decision of the Supreme Court on the income tax.

The Income Tax.

But for the 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 100 years, that court having in that decision sustained constitutional objections to its enactment which had previously been overruled by the ablest judges who had ever sat on that bench. We declare that it is the duty of Congress to use all the constitutional power which remains after that decision, or which may come from its reversal by the court as it may hereafter be constituted, so that the burdens of taxations may be equally and impartially laid, to the end that wealth may bear its due proportion of the expenses of the Government.

Foreign Pauper Labor.

We hold that the most efficient way of protecting American labor is to prevent the importation of foreign pauper labor to compete with it in the home market, and that the value of the home market to our American farmers and artisans is greatly reduced by a vicious monetary system, which depresses the prices of their products below the cost of production, and thus deprives them of the means of purchasing the products of our home manufacturers, and, as labor creates the wealth of the country, we demand the passage of such laws as may be necessary to protect in all its rights.

We are in favor of the arbitration of differences between employers engaged in inter-State commerce and their employees, and recommend such legislation as is necessary to carry out this principle.

The absorption of wealth by the few, the consolidation of our leading railroad systems and the formation of trusts and pools require a stricter control by the Federal Government of those arteries of commerce. We demand the enlargement of the powers of the Inter-State Commerce Commission and such restrictions and guarantees in the control of railroads as will protect the people from robbery and oppression.

Reduction in the Number of Offices.

We denounce the profligate waste of the money wrung from the people by oppressive taxation and the lavish appropriations of recent Republican Congresses, which have kept taxes high, while the labor that pays them is unemployed, and the products of the people's toil are depressed in price till they no longer repay the cost of production. We demand a return to that simplicity and economy which befits a Democratic government, and a reduction in the number of useless offices, the salaries of which drain the substance of the people.

Contempts in Federal Courts.

We denounce the arbitrary interference by Federal authorities in local affairs as a violation of the Constitution of the United States and a crime against free institutions, and 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 and rights of citizens, become at once legislators, judges, and executioners, and we approve the bill passed by the last session of the United States Senate and now pending in the House of Representatives, relative to contempts in Federal Courts and providing trials by jury in certain cases of contempt.

The Pacific Railroad Funding Bill.

No discrimination shall be indulged in by the Government of the United States in favor of any of its debtors. We approve of the refusal of the Fifty-third Congress to pass the Pacific Railroad Funding Bill, and denounce the efforts of the present Republican Congress to enact a similar measure.

The Pensioners.

Recognizing the just claims of deserving Union soldiers, we heartily endorse the rule of the present Commissioner of Pensions that no names shall be arbitrarily dropped from the pension rolls, and the fact of enlistment and service should be deemed conclusive evidence against disease and disability before enlistment.

Territories.

We favor the admission of the Territories of New Mexico, Oklahoma and Arizona to the Union as States, and we favor the early admission of all the Territories having the necessary population and resources to entitle them to Statehood, and, while they remain Territories, we hold that the officials appointed to administer the government of any Territory, together with the District of Columbia and Alaska, should be bona fide residents of the Territory or District in which the duties are to be performed. The Democratic party believes in home rule, and that all public lands of the United States should be appropriated to the establishment of free homes for American citizens.

We recommend that the Territory of Alaska be granted a Delegate in Congress, and that the general land and timber laws of the United States be extended to said Territory.

The Monroe Doctrine.

The Monroe doctrine, as originally declared and as interpreted by succeeding Presidents, is a permanent part of the foreign policy of the United States, and must at all times be maintained.

Sympathy for the Cubans.

We extend our sympathy to the people of Cuba in their heroic struggle for liberty and independence.

Civil Service.

We are opposed to life tenure in the public service. We favor appointments based upon merit, fixed terms of office, and such an administration of the Civil Service laws as will afford equal opportunities to all citizens of ascertained fitness.

Opposed to a Third Term.

We declare it to be the unwritten law of this Republic, established by custom and usage of 100 years, and sanctioned by the examples of the greatest and wisest of those who founded and have maintained our Government, that no man should be eligible for a third term of the Presidential office.

Waterways.

The Federal Government should care for and improve the Mississippi River and other great waterways of the Republic, so as to secure for the interior States easy and cheap transportation to tide-water. When any waterway of the Republic is of sufficient importance to demand aid of the Government, such aid should be extended upon a definite plan of continuous work until permanent improvement is secured.

Confiding in the justness of our cause and the necessity of its success at the polls, we submit the foregoing declaration of principles and purposes to the considerate judgment of the American people. We invite the support of all citizens who approve them and who desire to have them made effective through legislation for the relief of the people and the restoration of the country's prosperity.