

## Mr. Bryan's Chicago Letters

(Following are special reports covering the Republican National convention at Chicago, June 8 to 12, which were furnished by Mr. Bryan to various newspapers throughout the country.)

### PLATFORM DAY

Chicago, June 10.—Today was platform day. I wish I could give a phonographic description of the scene. Language does not adequately describe such an occasion. Words may be underscored in print, but no underlining can reproduce the impression that is made by the voice of the one who reads the platform or the response that comes from the audience. One cannot by reading the printed page get the tone of the convention, as he can from the relative emphasis placed on different planks as they are read.

The convention was an anvil chorus on criticism, but its voice was soft and low when it approached constructive measures. And it was noticeable that the criticism was overdone. That is, the audience was called upon to applaud criticism so often that it became weary. The corporation complexion of the convention was made manifest by the volume of noise that greeted declarations against government ownership and in favor of the private ownership of railroads and other utilities.

Of the treaty plank I shall treat more at length in my next article. It was a compromise, and like all compromises, did not express the real sentiment of any considerable number. It was carefully written. It will not embarrass any Republican senator, no matter how he votes on the treaty reservations. Senator Johnson and Senator Borah can quote this composite plank to endorse anything he has ever said against the treaty, while the senators who voted for the reservations can select from the plank sentences that will support all they said and did. The convention merely asks the country to trust it to decide what to do and how to do it without limitation, restriction or direction.

The profiteering plank stands out as probably the best evidence of the Republican party's inability to protect the people from the menace of big business.

The government records furnish abundant and conclusive proof of conscienceless plundering by the middlemen. Every community has been victimized; the rising resentment of producers and consumers is one of the chief causes of unrest and yet a Republican national convention avoids the subject by devoting to it its shortest plank. It is brief enough in full: "Profiteering"—"We condemn the Democratic administration for failure impartially to enforce the anti-profiteering laws enacted by the Republican congress."

Here is a plank containing eighteen words and occupying a little less than four lines of the ordinary newspaper space. One of the biggest subjects before the American people is dismissed with one sentence, and that sentence instead of promising something merely condemns the Democratic administration. The plank does not specify the Republican laws that remain unenforced; it does not even congratulate the Republican party upon passing such laws. The anti-profiteering sentence isn't even red in the face with indignation; it doesn't shake its fist at the president or the attorney general and demand the protection of the people. It seems like a casual statement thrown in parenthetically. It is preceded by an enumeration of the causes of the high cost of living, first and foremost among which is a "50 per cent depreciation in the purchasing power of the dollar." Here we have a formal acceptance of the quantitative theory of money; it is easier to confess the party wrong twenty-four years ago in denying the quantitative theory of money than to face the profiteers of today. Among the lesser and not so foremost causes are "reduced production, burdensome taxation, swollen profits, and the increased demand for goods arising from fictitious but enlarged buying power." The cause described as "swollen profits," is included with three other causes named, but there is no indication of anger or resentment.

There is another paragraph just preceding the profiteering plank which contains sixteen lines in which the convention pledges the

party to earnest and consistent attack upon the high cost of living by, (1) avoidance of inflation, (2) intelligent deflation and, (3) encouragement of production by prevention of unreasonable profits, public economy, stimulation, thrift and revision of taxes.

The platform not only offers no specific relief but it warns the country that "there is no short way out" and the delegates therefore "decline to deceive the people with vain promises of quack remedies." Can you find anything in this pronouncement that strikes terror into the heart of the profiteer or excites hope of relief in the hearts of the suffering?

The service men will not fail to note that the platform carefully avoids any pledge of a bonus. The delegates assure the soldiers and sailors of the recent war that they hold "in imperishable remembrance the valor and patriotism" that they exhibited, and they promise to discharge "to the fullest the obligation which a grateful nation justly should fulfill." But the word bonus does not appear. Instead of a specific promise the delegates declare that the Republicans are not ungrateful and ask that "their history" be accepted as a pledge.

The trouble is that the Republican party is not willing to collect the money for a bonus from the only source available, viz., from those who made fortunes out of the war while the soldiers bore the risks of the conflict.

The fiasco on the prohibition plank probably has no equal in the history of national conventions. The platform as prepared by the subcommittee and published in the morning paper contained a six line sentence as follows: "With regard to the sale and manufacture of intoxicating beverages the Republican party will stand for the enforcement of the constitution of the United States as it shall be declared by the supreme court."

That was surely weak enough; it has less than one-half of one per cent of vigor in it. It did not mention the Volstead law, it did not announce the party's position on the subject of prohibition; it did not even congratulate the Republican party on having a part in this great moral victory.

But even that plank, evasive as it was, was stricken out in the full committee, and the platform as adopted, amid great enthusiasm, makes no reference whatever to the subject of prohibition. One member of the committee on resolutions prepared a minority report containing an endorsement plank; he gave it to an outsider, not a delegate to the convention, with instructions that it be given to a prominent delegate from his state to present. The prominent delegate could not be found, and the delegates from thirty-four dry states, that is, dry by their own acts, sat mute while the subject was ignored.

### "FEARFUL AND WONDERFUL" PLANKS

Chicago, June 11.—Oh, harmony, what crimes have been committed in thy name! Harmony is the giant of the Philistines in this convention and no David near with a pebble and sling. A thousand delegates, leaders in public life and not more than a handful who are willing to fight for their convictions in the face of opposition. One man tried to present a minority report on a number of economic questions. Chairman Lodge had difficulty in compelling the crowd to listen—he had to threaten to clear the galleries,—and then the dissenting committeeman could get no state to second his demand for a roll call.

The League of Nations plank is one of the most perfect specimens of art in the way of compromise that can be found in all convention literature. Practically every delegate accepts it with mental reservations. It is a mosaic made up of a multitude of sentences of all sizes and colors. Those who believe that our nation ought to lend its counsel to other nations in the interest of universal peace can thunder forth approval of the first sentence: "The Republican party stands for agreement among the nations to preserve the peace of the world." Could anything be more emphatic? And what kind of an agreement shall it be? One like the President brought back from Paris with the approval of some twenty or more nations? Never! Of this the platform says: "The covenant signed by the President in Paris fails signally to accom-

plish this great purpose, and contains stipulations not only intolerable for independent people, but certain to produce injustice, hostility, and controversy among nations which it purposes to prevent."

If not the covenant as brought back by the President, what about the covenant as amended by more than two-thirds of the Republican senators? Even this is thrown into the discard with the President's covenant at the demand of the irreconcilables.

But the platform says: "The senators performed their duty faithfully"—both the thirty-four who voted for ratification with reservations and the fifteen who prevented ratification with reservations. Evidently they were both right. They were compliments of each other, although the language with which they described each other was not always complimentary. And the platform proceeds to say: "We approve their conduct and honor their courage and fidelity." No matter what they did, it was honorable, and above all, they were courageous. They showed their fidelity by fighting each other. Why did they not save some of their fidelity for this convention and fight here? Why did the lion and the lamb lie down together, the lamb on the inside?

The convention is so inspired by the "honor," "courage" and "fidelity" shown by its senators that it concludes its platform by "pointing to its history and relying on its fundamental principles." It admits, nay, even declares that the party has the "genius, courage, and constructive ability" to do the job. Suppose those who read the platform happen to consult history—not ancient history, but history about eight years old. What will they find? A convention much like this, managed by the same identical men, quite as proud of themselves then as they are now, and just as sure that they had a monopoly of "genius, courage, and constructive ability," and yet only two states in the union applauded their remarks. Forty-six states voted no on the roll-call, leaving Utah and Vermont to certify to their "genius, courage, and constructive ability."

But they laid their crowns at the feet of King Harmony, and the leader will proceed to play the clairvoyant act and tell how a great piece of good fortune is coming to the Republican party about the fourth of March.

And what will Senator \_\_\_\_\_ have to say, who has been exposing the profiteers and demanding legislation that will protect producers and consumers from the greed of the middlemen? What answer will he make when the audience hurls that little eighteen-word anti-profiteering plank at him, and give him the horse laugh? But harmony demands acquiescence, aye, even the appearance of gratification. A story is told of a party of men who went out on a hunting trip. It was agreed that they would take turns cooking, and to prevent complaint any person who criticized the cooking would have to take his turn next. The first morning one of the party had trouble with his steak, and with some emphasis declared: "This is the toughest piece of steak I ever ate"—and then remembering the rule, added: "but I like it."

And Colonel \_\_\_\_\_, won't he be a little embarrassed when he reads the soldier plank at a meeting of the Legion? It is much easier to give the service men an "imperishable remembrance" apiece than a bonus. The soldiers asked for bread and received a bouquet. It doesn't cost so much and isn't so hard to collect. I wonder how many of the war profiteers would be willing to trade their newly-made fortunes for an "imperishable remembrance." The Republican party started out quite bravely in the bonus matter, but it couldn't keep up its gait. A merchant, who on retiring from business turned his store over to his son, advised him how to be popular without expense to himself. "Subscribe to the building fund of every church proposed, then fight the location." The Republican party can't find a location for a soldiers' bonus.

But the most pathetic situation is presented by the dodging of the prohibition question. Read the platform and see how gleeful the Republican party is over the record of its senators and members of congress—with what "honor," "courage," and "fidelity" they have done things great and small; see how proudly they assert the position of the Republican party on other questions big and little, and then to think that they would run away from their most stupendous act because a few ex-liquor dealers and some thirsty worship-