

New Ulm Review

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WANTS TO BE BOSS.

William E. Merriam and His Far-reaching Bohemes.

How the Governorship Fight Will Affect the Senatorship Later.

The Bright of Friendship. It has Been Treacherously used to Do Up Clapp's Candidacy.

The Republican party in Minnesota is approaching a crisis in its history. The convention called for Wednesday, July 1st, to nominate a candidate for governor will be the most important, in many ways, in the later political history of the state; for, upon it will depend, as has depended upon no former State convention, the good name Minnesota has had for so long a time in the sisterhood of states, and, in a very large way, our peace at home for years to come. That convention will redeem the Republican party, and take it, as all right-minded Republicans hope, forever out of the dangerous hands of an unscrupulous and self-seeking coterie of professional politicians, or will allow that coterie more securely than ever before to fasten itself upon the party and state. Which shall it be?

This is no nightmare or idle talk, but a note of warning to the state, and a prophecy of what the future will bring forth, unless Republicans arouse themselves to meet the enemy like brave men. For eight years the political reputation of this state has been in the keeping of the same coterie, but not without being dragged through the mire. What those years have brought in the way of strife and bitterness, of defeat of the will of the people, and of a blunted moral sensibility in public places, need not be rehearsed here. The first nomination of William E. Merriam for governor marked the beginning of this unfortunate rule, and his second nomination saw it in the heyday of its success. That the machine was still in splendid working order the election of Knute Nelson to the United States senate last year plainly showed, and that it is not yet a thing of the past, the effort to secure the nomination of D. M. Clough for governor this year proves beyond any question of doubt.

The game is for high stakes, and the ring is playing it as if human lives were depending upon the result. I have nothing against Mr. Clough, whose candidacy is only incidental to the main plan. As an individual he is not the principal issue in this campaign, and has no connection whatever with the Merriam scheme. Merriam is in a position where he can drop him at a moment's notice, if occasion requires. What Merriam wants now more than he wants Clough, or any other individual, is to be able to name the nominee. If it happens to be Clough, all well and good, but if it happens to be somebody else, he will be equally well pleased, providing always that Merriam men have brought about the result.

This fact should be forced home upon the Republicans of Minnesota, so as to influence them when they meet at the primaries and in county conventions, and insure the selection of delegates, who, no matter whom they may favor or oppose, will oppose the Merriam combination, no matter in what form it may present itself in the state convention. The good name of the state is at stake; the future of the Republican party in the state hangs trembling in the balance. The success of the scheme will mean a return to the methods of which the party saw something at the time of the second Merriam convention, and may mean a vote in November which will again be perilously near the point of defeat.

Does this sound like strong language? I wish, indeed, that it were—that it were in my power to so command the English language as to represent the situation as I sincerely believe it exists today—to so speak as to bring the rank and file of the party, the plain people, if you will, to a realizing sense of their duty and power—to so speak as to insure the defeat of what I believe to be one of the most villainous political conspiracies ever hatched in the northwest. For a moment look at it! See how cunningly the scheme has been devised, and with what perfect system and order its various details are being attended to. See the agencies which are at work in behalf of this man Merriam, and with what superb generalship he directs his forces.

Eight years ago Merriam wanted to jump from the speakership of the house of representatives in this state to the position of governor. The state was a reasonably large one, and the plans to secure it were reasonably well laid. Two years afterwards he wanted a second

term, which he got, although in the struggle the party almost went in twain. Merriam next showed his hand in the Davis senatorial election of 1893, but at the last moment his nerve failed him and he pulled off his forces. Davis was returned by a majority of one vote. Last year he assisted in the defeat of Senator Washburn, and yet his satellites all over the state are today trying to make a point in favor of Clough because Senator Washburn and Hennepin county remember the fight.

This year Merriam is playing directly for the highest stake which this state has to offer, a seat in the senate of the United States for himself. The stake being a large one, the plans to secure it have been laid on a corresponding large scale. There is nothing small about Merriam and his methods. He easily adapts himself to political conditions, and in his own superb way is a diplomat of the Machiavellian pattern. I give him full credit for the admirable personal traits which make him such a delightful companion; for the splendid power of mind and tireless energy which have made him a figure of magnificent strength in the business world; for the thorough knowledge of men, which has stood him in such good stead in politics, and contributed in part to his wonderful success as a public man—but while doing this, I express the deliberate opinion that he is the most dangerous man who ever crossed the path of the republican party in this state, and that the party will never be in position again to command the support and esteem of intelligent and law-loving men until Merriam and Merriamism are of the past and forgotten.

Merriam has made himself a man of consequence in Ohio, and with McKinley as president will have much to say in the dispensing of federal patronage in Minnesota; he wants Tams Bixby, who stands closer to him than any man in Minnesota, to succeed R. G. Evans as the Minnesota member of the republican national committee; to these sources of power and authority he wants to add the control of the state machinery, through the governor—all to the end that his path to the senate in two years may be smooth and strewn with flowers.

To bring this about no stone is being left unturned. It has been common talk over the state for months that federal patronage was being promised right and left in return for help for Clough—patronage which Merriam does not yet control; state appointments and favors through the governor's office are understood to be on the market in the same way; employees in the different departments under the governor are at work over the state for Clough, with a zeal worthy a better cause, and the chairman of the state central committee, who is in the pay of the state, is devoting all of his time to Mr. Clough's candidacy, and giving that candidacy the exclusive benefit of information which it has taken the republican party as a whole many years and much money to collect.

It is not difficult to understand why Merriam wants to name the next governor of the state, and why failure here will weaken him in possibly a vital point. Thousands of Minnesota people know how largely the employees of the various state departments contributed to the results in the Davis and Nelson senatorial campaigns; know how strong a pull these men have upon the legislature and how persistently they haunt the lobbies whenever measures are pending in which they are told to interest themselves. No lobby in the state so effectively influences legislation as the lobby made up of men whose names are on the pay rolls of the state in various subordinate capacities. Their ability along this line explains why they are in office. Every man of them is an expert politician and knows his business thoroughly. Indifferent services would many times be accepted by the state if by this plan the machine might the better avail itself of concurrent political skill.

When Merriam became governor he filled these positions, whose number is almost legion, with men after his own heart; I need not say that the administration which followed Merriam inaugurated no change in this respect. The same old men were retained, save as changes would occur in the natural course of events, and the executive employees are today men in every way as useful and as acceptable to the machine as those whom Mr. Merriam installed. There has not been a house cleaning at the statehouse, in any appointive place controlled directly or indirectly by the executive, since the days of Merriam's first term; and this rule applies to many of the higher places as well as to the lower.

A governor this year not of the Merriam persuasion would be very prompt to clean house, and nobody knows this better than Merriam. This is one reason why the present employees are working so hard for Clough—and yet 'tis the fault of the system rather than of the men that this is the condition of affairs and

that they so willingly lend themselves to the Merriam plan. A few set of employees, granting for the sake of the argument that they might be as expert in politics as those now in office, would use their expertness against Mr. Merriam for the senate in two years, instead of in his favor. That might change the result, or anyway make the race up-hill and very uncertain. Do you blame Merriam for being for Clough and against candidates who will not play into his hand in this important matter of appointment?

Merriamism is responsible for the election of Eli S. Warner as president of the state league of Republican clubs. It organized a league club, for temporary purposes only, in practically every voting precinct in Ramsey county, and brought delegates from them to the St. Paul convention to vote for Warner, as against Bruckhart, of St. Cloud. It is not a matter for surprise that Mr. Warner is making the fight of his life this year to carry Ramsey county against Clapp for governor. The state league doesn't amount to a great deal in Minnesota, and it amounts to less now than ever before. I do not know, and therefore cannot charge that Warner is using the league machinery in Ramsey county to defeat Clapp, but can say that the charge is made by some of the best Republicans in St. Paul, men whose word with the party goes a long way.

The St. Paul Republican newspapers are also in the deal. The Pioneer Press Merriam controls by reason of financial interest; how it has come that he is suspected of having brought the Dispatch, if not openly, at least secretly, to his side, I do not know. I do know that the Dispatch is charged with treating the candidacy of Clapp with great unfairness and with giving Clough decidedly the long end of the pole. None of Clapp's friends would think of asking either paper to print anything in the interest of his candidate, expecting to see the publication made in the same spirit in which it would be offered.

The most colossal attempt at fooling the people that I ever knew anything about, and one that should at once and forever condemn Merriam in the eyes of the party in the state, is Merriam's profession of political friendship for Clapp, and his apparent desire that Clapp shall be regarded as a part of his machine. Merriam is shrewd enough to know that if Clapp's identity with the machine can be established he is at once removed from the gubernatorial problem, and that without this he remains in it as a very troublesome factor. The personal and political relations between these men never have been close and intimate. They have nothing in common, and never can have; and Merriam's success in spreading a very general impression over the state that Clapp was a candidate on about the same terms as Clough, and that there was a perfect understanding between them, shows something of his shrewdness in politics and calls attention to the desperate character of the present fight and how determined he is to win.

So thoroughly was the work of tainting Clapp carried on that all over the state men who under other conditions would have been for him were estranged. Scores of Clapp's personal friends were misled, and his chance acquaintances and well-wishers by the hundreds. If Clapp ever consents to talk about his candidacy for the public, I will guarantee that he will say some things which will make Mr. Merriam's ears tingle. I know one man who sent three different emissaries to Merriam, in the guise of Clough followers, to draw Merriam out as to Clapp. To each of these men Merriam said practically the same thing. "We want Clough, of course," were his words, "and will do what we can for him; but if we can't get Clough, why, we want Clapp." In Fairbault county, where Clapp thinks he will secure the delegation without difficulty, the Clough men have quietly circulated the story that Clapp is friendly to Clough, and that if a Clapp delegation is sent up from that county, it will, of course, be expected to be for Clough for second choice. Can you imagine a more effective way of killing Clapp off and insuring the success of Clough? Was a more outrageous scheme ever put under way by a public man in this state?

Ramsey county is too small for both Clapp and Merriam, and the fight there is a fight to the death, as Merriam well knows. He doesn't want Clapp to be governor for two good reasons. First, Clapp, who is ambitious and very popular in the state, might stand in the way for the senate. Second, Clapp would demand and secure a second term, which would assist in throwing the senatorship to Minneapolis, both Merriam and Clapp being residents of St. Paul. Let us make no farther mistakes about the candidacy of Clapp. He is not a part of the machine, and is as far from Merriam and Clough as either Eustis, or Van Sant or Lee. But for Merriam's policy of duplicity, this would have been known long ago.

The republican party in Minnesota has too much at stake this year to go into the coming fight without a thorough understanding of who the enemy is and what his strong and weak points are. Nothing pleases Merriam more than to create false issues and keep the public off the true scent. He wants the fight against Clough to be a personal one, knowing that in this way Clough will gather strength through sympathy. He wants the public to think what it pleases, so long as it does not find out his scheme and uncover it. If the rank and file of the party can be made this year to take an intelligent interest in this important matter, the result will not be uncertain, and the state will be rid forever of the political methods which have come to make Merriam's name a synonym for political trickery wherever it is known.—Jerry J. in Minneapolis Journal.

The Masses and the Bosses.

The events of the last three months have furnished an instructive and significant lesson with regard to the relations of the masses and the bosses. It has been clearly demonstrated, that is to say, that the people have the interests of politics entirely in their own control, and can do whatever they please as to candidates and policies in spite of the self-constituted managers who make a business of manipulating caucuses and conventions. The fact is well known that a coterie of these professional strategists started out to dictate the Republican nomination for the Presidency. They laid their wires with characteristic cunning, and worked together zealously for a common purpose. Their scheme was invested with more than usual outside respectability by the presentation of several admirable men as candidates, and they had the co-operation of a number of prominent newspapers, as well as the advantage of a certain sentiment of State pride in favor of those whom they represented; but they were steadily beaten; in their efforts to secure delegates, and all of their resources of artifice and expertness were found to be inadequate in the way of bringing about a result that was not desired by the people.

This goes to show that the party boss is powerless whenever the popular will is actively exerted in opposition to him. He succeeds in his arbitrary and selfish projects only when the masses, for one reason or another, complacently allow him to have his way. The moment that they antagonize him, he loses his occupation and becomes practically impotent. His boasted experience, his abundant assurance, his subterranean methods all count for nothing against the definite and resolute wishes of the average voters. The unexpected happens to him at every turn; his plans are upset and his calculations thwarted by a succession of surprises. He learns that the situation involves conditions which are beyond the reach of his philosophy. The irony of circumstances makes an absurdity of his pretensions, and all he can do is to sit on the fence and see the procession go by. It is always so when the people assert their power and insist upon the right to manage their own affairs. The opportunity of the boss comes only in times of general indifference, when his practices are not resisted, and there is no counteracting influence, in the atmosphere. He thrives not by reason of his superior force in any respect, but merely because the people permit him to do so. They have him at their mercy whenever they choose to act against him, and the fact is well worth bearing in mind by all good citizens.—St. Louis Globe Democrat.

Speaking of Congressmen, Judge Shisler of Mankato, who has been mentioned as a candidate for that office, says: "I would like to have the position filled by a Mankato man at any rate." That is the broad-minded position the people of Mankato take upon every crumb of official patronage, state and national, that belongs to the Second district.—Fairmont Sentinel.

The New Ulm Review gives the editor of the Reporter credit for freeing out Ed. Weaver for congress in this district. The Reporter suggested Weaver for governor, and believes yet that if he would make a fight for it he could make a good deal of trouble for the Clough machine. The republicans of the southwest ought to combine in his interest whether he authorizes it or not, and go to St. Paul insisting upon the nomination of the Mankato business man for governor. There hasn't been a campaign for years when so many republicans of mediocre ability have asked the party for a nomination, and the whole gang of them ought to be turned down, unless it be Clapp or Gibbs, either of whom is preferable to the Van Sant-Lee-Eustis combination, or the Clough machine. But Ed. Weaver represents a better sentiment than any of them. He represents an element which believes in letting the party seek its candidate, and were it to choose him it would find a fearless, business man to succeed Gov. Clough, next January.—Windom Reporter.

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