

Democratic Platform

1892

NATIONAL
Democratic Platform

ADOPTED

CHICAGO, JUNE 21, 22 and 23 1892.



The Platform.

Section 1. The representatives of the democratic party of the United States, in national convention assembled, do reaffirm their allegiance to the principles of the party as formulated by Jefferson and exemplified by the long and illustrious line of his successors in democratic leadership from Madison to Cleveland. We believe the public welfare demands that these principles be applied to the conduct of the federal government through the accession to power of the party that advocates them, and we solemnly declare that the need of a return to these fundamental principles of a free popular government, based on home rule and individual liberty, was never more urgent than now, when the tendency to centralize all power at the federal Capitol has become a menace to the reserved rights of the States that strikes at the very roots of our government under the constitution as framed by the fathers of the republic.

Force Bill.

Section 2. We warn the people of our common country, jealous for the preservation of their free institutions, that the policy of federal control of elections to which the republican party has committed itself is fraught with the gravest danger, scarcely less momentous than would result from a revolution practically establishing monarchy on the ruins of a republic. It strikes at the North as well as the South and injures the colored citizens even more than the white; it means

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a horde of deputy marshals at every polling place, armed with federal power; returning boards appointed and controlled by federal authority; the outrage of the electoral rights of the people in the several States, the subjugation of the colored people to the control of the party in power and the reviving of race antagonism now happily abated, of the utmost peril to the safety and happiness of all: a measure deliberately and justly described by a leading republican Senator as "the most infamous bill that ever crossed the threshold of the Senate". Such a policy, if sanctioned by law, would mean the dominance of a self-perpetuating oligarchy of officeholders, and the party first entrusted with its machinery could be dislodged from power only by an appeal to the reserved right of the people to resist oppression, which is inherent in all self-governing communities. Two years ago this revolutionary policy was emphatically condemned by the people at the polls, but in contempt of that verdict the republican party has defiantly declared in its latest authoritative utterance that its success in the coming elections will mean the enactment of the force bill, and the usurpation of despotic control over elections in all the States.

Believing that the preservation of republican government in the United States is dependent upon the defeat of this policy of legalized force and fraud, we invite the support of all citizens who desire to see the constitution maintained in its integrity, with the laws pursuant thereto, which have given our country a hundred years of unexampled prosperity, and we pledge the democratic party, if it be entrusted with power, not only to the defeat of the force bill, but also to relentless opposition to the republican policy of profligate expenditure, which in the short space of two years, has squandered an enormous surplus,

emptied an overflowing treasury, after piling new burdens of taxation upon the already overtaxed labor of the country.

Tariff Reform.

Section 3. We denounce republican protection as a fraud, taxing the labor of the great majority of the American people for the benefit of the few. We declare it to be a fundamental principle of the democratic party that the federal government has no constitutional power to impose and collect tariff duties except for the purposes of revenue only, and we demand that the collection of such taxes shall be limited to the necessities of the government honestly and economically administered.

The Mc Kinley Bill.

We denounce the Mc Kinley tariff law enacted by the Fifty-first Congress as the culminating atrocity of class legislation; we indorse the efforts made by the democrats of the present Congress to modify its most oppressive features in the direction of free raw materials and cheaper manufactured goods that enter into general consumption, and we promise its repeal as one of the beneficent results that will follow the action of the people in entrusting power to the democratic party. Since the Mc Kinley tariff went into operation there have been ten reductions of the wages of laboring men to one increase. We deny that there has been any increase of prosperity to the country since that tariff went into operation, and we point to the dullness and distress, the wage reductions and strikes in the iron trade as the best possible evidence that no such prosperity has resulted from the Mc Kinley act.

We call the attention of thoughtful Americans to the fact that after thirty years of restrictive taxes against the importation of foreign wealth, in exchange for agricultural surplus, the homes and farms of the country have become burdened with a real estate mortgage debt of over two thousand five hundred million dollars, exclusive of all other forms of indebtedness; that in one of the chief agricultural States of the West there appears a real estate mortgage debt averaging \$165 per capita of the total population, and that similar conditions and tendencies are shown to exist in the other agricultural exporting States. We denounce a policy which fosters no industry so much as it does that of the sheriff.

Reciprocity.

Section 4. Trade interchange on the basis of reciprocal advantages to the countries participating is a time-honored doctrine of the democratic faith, but we denounce the sham reciprocity which juggles with the people's desire for enlarged foreign markets and freer exchanges by pretending to establish closer trade relations for a country whose articles of export are almost exclusively agricultural products with other countries that are also agricultural, while erecting a custom-house barrier of prohibitive tariff taxes against the richest countries of the world that stand ready to take our entire surplus of products and to exchange therefor commodities which are necessities and comforts of life among our own people.

Trusts.

Section 5. We recognize in the trusts and combinations which

which are designed to enable capital to secure more than its just share of the joint product of capital and labor a natural consequence of the prohibitive taxes, which prevent the free competition which is the life of honest trade; but we believe their worst evils can be abated by law, and we demand the rigid enforcement of the laws made to prevent and control them, together with such further legislation in restraint of their abuses as experience may show to be necessary.

Public Lands.

Section 6. The republican party, while professing a policy of reserving the public land for small holdings by actual settlers, has given away the people's heritage till now a few railroads and non-resident aliens, individual and corporate, possess a larger area than that of all our farms between the two seas. The last democratic administration reversed the improvident and unwise policy of the republican party touching the public domain, and reclaimed from corporations and syndicates, alien and domestic, and restored to the people nearly one hundred million acres of valuable land to be sacredly held as homesteads for our citizens, and we pledge ourselves to continue this policy until every acre of land so unlawfully held shall be reclaimed and restored to the people.

Silver and Gold.

Section 7. We denounce the republican legislation known as the Sherman act of 1890 as a cowardly make-shift fraud with possibilities of danger in the future, which should make

all of its supporters, as well as its author, anxious for its speedy repeal. We hold to the use of both gold and silver as the standard money of the country and to the coinage of both gold and silver without discriminating against either metal or charge for mintage, but the dollar unit of coinage of both metals must be of equal intrinsic and exchangeable value or be adjusted through international agreement or by such safe-guards or legislation as shall ensure the maintenance of the parity of the two metals, and the equal power of every dollar at all times in the markets and in the payment of debts, and we demand that all paper currency shall be kept at par with and redeemable in such coin. We insist upon this policy as especially necessary for the protection of the farmers and laboring classes, the first and most defenceless victims of unstable money and a fluctuating currency.

State Bank Tax.

Section 8. We recommend that the prohibitory ten per cent. tax on State bank issues be repealed.

Civil Service.

Section 9. Public office is a public trust. We reaffirm the declaration of the Democratic National Convention of 1876 for the reform of the civil service, and we call for the honest enforcement of all laws regulating the same. The nomination of a President, as in the recent republican convention by delegations composed largely of his appointees, holding office at his pleasure, is a scandalous satire upon free popular institutions and a startling illustration of the methods by

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which a President may gratify his ambition. We denounce a policy under which federal officeholders usurp control of party conventions in the States, and we pledge the democratic party to the reform of these and all other abuses which threaten individual liberty and local self-government.

Foreign Policy.

Section 10. The democratic party is the only party that has ever given the country a foreign policy consistent and vigorous, compelling respect abroad and inspiring confidence at home. While avoiding entangling alliances it has aimed to cultivate friendly relations with other nations, and especially with our neighbors on the American continent whose destiny is closely linked with our own, and we view with alarm the tendency to a policy of irritation and bluster which is liable at any time to confront us with the alternative of humiliation or war. We favor the maintenance of a navy strong enough for all purposes of national defense and to properly maintain the honor and dignity of the country abroad.

Immigration.

Section 11. This country has always been the refuge of the oppressed from every land — exiles for conscience sake — and in the spirit of the founders of our government we condemn the oppression practised by the Russian government, upon its Lutheran and Jewish subjects, and we call upon our national government, in the interest of justice and humanity, by all just and proper means, to use its prompt and best efforts to bring about a cessation of these cruel persecutions in the dominion of the Czar, and to secure to the

oppressed equal rights.

We tender our profound and earnest sympathy to those lovers of freedom who are struggling for home rule and the great cause of local self-government in Ireland.

Section 12. We heartily approve all legitimate efforts to prevent the United States from being used as the dumping ground for the known criminals and professional paupers of Europe, and we demand the rigid enforcement of the laws against Chinese immigration or the importation of foreign workmen under contract to degrade American labor and lessen its wages; but we condemn and denounce any and all attempts to restrict the immigration of the industrious and worthy of foreign lands.

PENSIONS.

Section 13. This convention hereby renews the expression of appreciation of the patriotism of the soldiers and sailors of the Union in the war for its preservation, and we favor just and liberal pensions for all disabled union soldiers, their widows and dependents, but we demand that the work of the pension office shall be done industriously, impartially and honestly. We denounce the present administration of that office as incompetent, corrupt, disgraceful and dishonest.

Internal Improvements.

Section 14. 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 the tide water.

When any waterway of the public is of

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sufficient importance to demand the aid of the government, such aid should be extended by a definite plan of continuous work until permanent improvement is secured.

Nicaragua Canal.

Section 15. For purposes of national defense and the promotion of commerce between the States, we recognize the early construction of the Nicaragua Canal and its protection against foreign control as of great importance to the United States.

World's Fair.

Section 16 Recognizing the World's Columbian Exposition as a national undertaking of vast importance, in which the general government has invited the co-operation of all the powers of the world, and appreciating the acceptance by many of such powers of the invitation extended and the broad and liberal efforts being made by them to contribute to the grandeur of the undertaking, we are of the opinion that Congress should make such requisite financial provision as shall be necessary to the maintenance of the national honor and public faith.

Education.

Section 17. Popular education being the only safe basis of popular suffrage, we recommend to the several States most liberal appropriations for the public schools. Free common schools are the nursery of good government, and they have always received the fostering care of the democratic party, which favors every means of increasing intelligence. Freedom of education being an essential of civil and religious liberty, as well as a necessity for the development

of intelligence must not be interfered with under any pretext whatever. We are opposed to State interference with parental rights and rights of conscience in the education of children, as an infringement of the fundamental democratic doctrine that the largest individual liberty consistent with the rights of others insures the highest type of American citizenship and the best government.

Admission of Territories.

Section 18. We approve the action of the present House of Representatives in passing bills for the admission into the Union as States of the Territories of New Mexico and Arizona and we favor the early admission of all the Territories having the necessary population and resources to admit 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 their duties are to be performed. The democratic party believes in home rule and the control of their own affairs by the people of the vicinage.

Industrial Measures.

Section 19. We favor legislation by Congress and State Legislatures to protect the lives and limbs of railway employes and those of other hazardous transportation companies, and denounce the inactivity of the republican party and particularly the republican Senate for causing the defeat of measures beneficial and protective to this class of wage-workers.

Section 20. We are in favor of the enactment by the States of laws for abolishing the notorious sweating system, for abolishing contract convict labor, and for prohibiting the employment in factories of children under fifteen years of age.

Sumptuary Laws.

Section 21. We are opposed to all sumptuary laws as an interference with the individual rights of the citizen.

Section 22. Upon this statement of principles and policies the democratic party asks the intelligent judgment of the American people. It asks a change of Administration and a change of party in order that there may be a change of system and a change of methods, thus assuring the maintenance unimpaired of institutions under which the republic has grown great and powerful.

William L. Wilson, Chairman.

Nicholas M. Bell
Secretary.