

# Cleveland and Hendricks

## Democratic Platform

Adopted at Chicago, Ills. July 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 11<sup>th</sup> 1884.

The Democratic party of the Union through its representatives in National Convention assembled, recognizes that as the nation grows older, new issues are born of time and progress, and old issues perish. But the fundamental principles of the Democracy, approved by the United voice of the people, remain, and will ever remain, as the best and only security for the continuance of free government. The preservation of personal rights, the equality of all citizens before the law, the reserved rights of the States, and the supremacy of the Federal Government within the limits of the Constitution will ever form the true basis of our liberties, and can never be surrendered without destroying that balance of rights and powers which enables a continent to be developed in peace, and social order to be maintained by means of local self-government.

But, it is indispensable for the practical application and enforcement of these fundamental principles that the Government should not always be controlled by one political party. Frequent change of administration is as necessary as constant recourse to the popular will. Otherwise abuse grows, and the Government, instead of being carried on for the general welfare, becomes an instrumentality for imposing heavy burdens on the many who are governed, for the benefit of the few who govern. Public servants thus become arbitrary rulers.

This is now the condition of the country. Hence a change is demanded. The Republican party, so far as principle is concerned, is a reminiscence; in practice, it is an organization for enriching those who control its machinery. The frauds and robbery which have been brought to light in every department of the Government, are sufficient to have called for reform within the Republican party; yet those in authority, made reckless by the long possession of power, have succumbed to its corrupting influence, and have placed in nomination a ticket against which the independent portion of the party are in open revolt.

Therefore a change is demanded. Such a change was alike necessary in 1876, but the will of the people was then defeated by a fraud which can never be forgotten, nor condoned. Again, in 1880, the change demanded by the people was defeated by the lavish use of money contributed by unscrupulous contractors and shameless jobbers who had bargained for unlawful profits or for high office.

The Republican party during its legal, its stolen, and its bought tenures of power, has steadily decayed in moral character and political capacity.

Its platform promises are now a list of its past failures.

It demands the restoration of the Slavey. It has squandered hundreds of millions to create a Navy that does not exist.

It calls upon Congress to remove the burdens under which American shipping has been depressed. It imposed and has continued those burdens.

It professes the policy of reserving the public lands for small holdings by actual settlers. It 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.

It professes a preference for free institutions. It organized and tried to legalize a control of State elections by Federal troops.

It professes a desire to elevate labor. It has subjected American workmen to the competition of Convict and imported contract labor.

It professes gratitude to all who were disabled, or died in the War, leaving widows and orphans. It kept a Democratic House of Representatives the first effort to equalize both counties and pensions.

It proffers a pledge to correct the irregularities of our tariff. It created and has continued them. Its own Tariff Commission confessed the need of more than twenty percent reduction. Its Congress gave a reduction of less than four percent.

It professes the protection of American manufactures. It has subjected them to an increasing flood of manufactured goods, and a hopeless competition with manufacturing nations, not one of which taxes raw materials.

It proposes the protection of American labor. It has depleted the returns of American agriculture - an industry followed by half our people.

It proposes the equality of all men before the law. Attempting to fix the status of colored citizens, the acts of Congress were overruled by the decisions of its courts.

It "accepts anew the duty of leading in the work of progress and reform." Its caught criminals are permitted to escape through contrived delays or actual connivance in the prosecution. Honeycombed with corruption, cut-breaking exposures no longer shock its moral sense. Its honest members, its independent journals, no longer maintain a successful contest for authority in its councils or a veto upon bad nominations.

That change is necessary is proved by an existing surplus of more than \$100,000,000, which has yearly been collected from a suffering people. Unnecessary taxation is unjust taxation. We denounce the Republican party for having failed to relieve the people from crushing war taxes which have paralyzed business, crippled industry, and deprived labor of employment and of just reward.

The Democracy pledges itself to purify the administration from corruption, to restore economy, to revive respect for law, and to reduce taxation to the lowest limit consistent with due regard to the preservation of the faith of the Nation to its creditors and pensioners.

Knowing full well, however, that legislation affecting the occupations of the people should be cautious and conservative in method, not in advance of public opinion, but responsive to its demands, the Democratic party is pledged to revise the tariff in a spirit of fairness to all interests.

But in making reduction in taxes, it is not proposed to injure any domestic industries, but rather to promote their healthy growth. From the foundation of this Government taxes collected at the Custom House have been the chief source of federal revenue. Such they must continue to be. Moreover, many industries have come to rely upon legislation for successful continuance, so that any change of law must be at every step regardful of the labor and capital thus involved. The process of reform must be subject in the execution to this plain dictate of justice.

All taxation shall be limited to the requirements of economical government. The necessary deduction in taxation can and must be effected without depriving American labor of the ability to compete successfully with foreign labor, and without imposing lower rates of duty than will be ample to cover any increased cost of production which may exist in consequence of the higher rate of wages prevailing in the country.

Sufficient revenue to pay all the expenses of the Federal Government, economically administered, including pensions, interest and principal of the public debt, can be got, under our present system of taxation, from custom house taxes on favor imported articles, bearing heaviest on articles of luxury, and bearing lightest on articles of necessity.

We therefore denounce the abuses of the existing tariff, and subject to the preceding limitations, we demand that federal taxation shall be exclusively for public purposes and shall not exceed the needs of the Government, economically administered.

The system of direct taxation known as the "Internal Revenue," is a war tax, and so long as the law continues, the money derived therefrom should be sacredly devoted to the relief of the people from the remaining burdens of the war, and be made a fund to defray the expense of the care and comfort of worthy soldiers disabled in line of duty in the wars of the Republic and for the payment of such pensions as Congress may from time to time grant to such soldiers, a like fund for the sailors having been already provided, and any surplus should be paid into the treasury.

We favor an American continental policy based upon more intimate commercial and political relations with the fifteen sister Republics of North, Central and South America, but entangling alliances with none.

We believe in sound money, the gold and silver coinage of the Constitution, and a circulating medium convertible into such money without loss.

Asserting the equality of all men before the law, we hold that it is the duty of the Government, in its dealings with the people, to mete out equal and exact justice to all citizens of whatever nativity, race, color, or persuasion - religious or political.

We believe in a free ballot and a fair count; and we recall to the memory of the people the noble struggle of the Democrats in the Forty-fifth and Forty-sixth Congresses, by which a reluctant Republican opposition was compelled to assent to legislation making everywhere illegal the presence of troops at the polls, as the conclusive proof that a Democratic administration will preserve liberty with order.

The selection of Federal officers for the Territories should be restricted to citizens previously resident therein.

We oppose sumptuary laws which vex the citizen and interfere with individual liberty; we favor honest civil service reform; and the compensation of all United States officers by fixed salaries; the separation of Church and State; and the diffusion of free education by common schools, so that every child in the land may be taught the rights and duties of citizenship.

While we favor all legislation which will tend to the equitable distribution of property, to the prevention of monopoly, and to the strict enforcement of individual rights against corporate abuses, we hold that the welfare of society depends upon a scrupulous regard for the rights of property as defined by law.

We believe that labor is best rewarded where it is freest and most enlightened. It should therefore be fostered and cherished. We favor the repeal of all laws restricting the free action of labor, and the enactment of laws by which labor organizations may be incorporated, and of all such legislation as will tend to enlighten the people as to the true relations of capital and labor.

We believe that the public lands ought, as far as possible, to be kept as homesteads for actual settlers; that all unearned lands heretofore improvidently granted to railroad corporations by the action of the Republican party should be restored to the public domain; and that no more grants of land shall be made to corporations, or be allowed to fall into the ownership of alien absentees.

We are opposed to all propositions which upon any pretext would convert the General Government into a machine for collecting taxes to be distributed among the States, or the citizens thereof.

In re-affirming the declaration of the Democratic platform of 1850, that "the liberal principles embodied by Jefferson in the Declaration of Independence, and sanctioned in the Constitution which makes ours the land of liberty and the asylum of the oppressed of every Nation, have ever been cardinal principles in the Democratic faith"; we nevertheless do not sanction the importation of foreign labor, or the admission of servile races, unfitted by habits, training, religion or kindred for absorption into the great body of our people, or for the citizenship which our laws confer. American civilization demands that against the immigration or importation of Mongolians to these shores, no gates be closed.

The Democratic party insists that it is the duty of this Government to protect, with equal fidelity and vigilance, the rights of its citizens, native and naturalized, at home and abroad; and to the end that this protection may be assured, United States papers of naturalization, issued by Courts of competent jurisdiction, must be respected by the Executive and Legislative departments of our own Government, and by all foreign powers.

This is an imperative duty of this Government to efficiently protect all the rights of persons and property of every American citizen in foreign lands, and demand and enforce full reparation for any invasion thereof.

An American citizen is only responsible to his own Government for any act done in his own country, or under her flag, and can only be tried therefor on her own soil and according to her laws; and no power exists in this Government to expatriate an American citizen to be tried in any foreign land for any such act.

This country has never had a well-defined and executed foreign policy save under Democratic Administration; that policy has ever been, in regard to foreign nations, so long as they do not act detrimental to the interests of the country or hurtful to our citizens, to let them alone; that as the result of this policy we recall the acquisition of Louisiana, Florida, California, and of the adjacent

Mexican territory by purchase alone; and contrast these grand acquisitions of Democratic statesmanship with the purchase of Alaska, the sole fruit of a Republican administration of nearly a quarter of a century.

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.

Under a long period of Democratic rule and policy, our merchant marine was fast overtaking and on the point of outstripping that of Great Britain.

Under twenty years of Republican rule and policy, our commerce has been lost to British bottoms, and almost has the American flag been swept off the high seas.

Instead of the Republican party's British policy, we demand for the people of the United States an American policy.

Under Democratic rule and policy, our merchants and sailors, flying the Stars and Stripes in every port, successfully searched out a market for the varied products of American industry.

Under a quarter century of Republican rule and policy, despite our manifest advantage over all other nations in high-paid labor, favorable climates and teaming soils; despite freedom of trade among all the United States; despite their population by the foremost races of men and an annual immigration of the young, thrifty and adventurous of all nations; despite our freedom here from the inherited burdens of life and industry in old-world monarchies— their costly war navies, their vast lay consuming, non-producing standing armies; despite twenty years of peace—that Republican rule and policy have managed to surrender to Great Britain, along with our commerce, the control of the markets of the world.

Instead of the Republican party's British policy, we demand in behalf of the American Democracy an American policy.

Instead of the Republican party's discredited scheme and false pretense of friendship for American labor, expressed by imposing taxes, we demand in behalf of the Democracy, freedom for American labor by reducing taxes, to the end that these United States may compete with unhindered powers for the primacy among nations in all the arts of peace and fruits of liberty.

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With profound regret, we have been apprised by the venerable Statesman through whose person was struck that blow at the vital principle of republics (acquiescence in the will of the majority), that he cannot permit us again to place in his hands the leadership of the Democratic hosts, for the reason that the achievement of reform in the administration of the Federal Government is an undertaking now too heavy for his age and failing strength.

Knowing that his life has been prolonged until the general judgment of our fellow-countrymen is united in the wish that those wrongs were righted in his person, for the Democracy of the United States we offer to him in his withdrawal from public cares not only our respectful sympathy and esteem, but also that best homage of plenitude, the pledge of our devotion to the principles and the cause now inseparable in the history of this Republic from the labor and the name of Samuel J. Tilden.

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With this statement of the hopes, principles and purposes of the Democratic party, the great issue of Reform and change in administration is submitted to the people in calm confidence that the popular voice will pronounce in favor of new men, and new and more favorable conditions for the growth of industry, the extension of trade, the employment and due reward of labor and of capital, and the general welfare of the whole country.

Nicholas M. Bell Secretary

*N. M. Bell* President

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