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Speech of

Hon. John T. McGraw

Temporary Chairman

Democratic State Convention

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“The subject of taxation is one which has engaged the best thought, and enlisted the best minds of all times, and has been the fruitful source of governmental agitation among all peoples. There never was a revolution which lost Provinces to a Kingdom, or shook the foundation stones of a Throne, that did not in some form, revolve about this subject. It never has been successfully quieted, and it never will be, except through an honest distribution of the burdens and benefits of human government.”

Address to Convention

Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen of the Convention: I am deeply grateful for the honor you confer, in calling me to preside over the deliberations of this magnificent convention, comprising as it does in its personnel, a majority of the tax-paying, law-abiding and substantial citizens of the State. It must be the source of the keenest congratulation to the militant Democracy of West Virginia as it looks upon this inspiring scene and finds every county, from the Heights of Bolivar to the coal mines of McDowell, with an overflowing representation, and upon the face of each delegate, written in lines which can not be misunderstood an earnest determination to cause the return of this young and lusty commonwealth to her ancient moorings, and bring her back home from her wanderings in strange and unnatural seas. It is also the source of congratulation that, not only here, but throughout the nation as well, we have an harmonious and united party, marching no longer with unsteady step, but with a reliant tread, to victory under inspiring national leaders. And what a glorious cause and intrepid leadership!

The principles for which our cause contends inspired the birth and their advocates rocked the cradle of the young republic when popular government had faded from the nations of the earth. We inherited the great charter of human liberty from the immortal founder of our party—the basic elements of our governmental structure—and we made them the axioms of our life and being as a party organization. These principles were not born to die, but will survive wherever human liberty finds a home, because, like the stars, they are eternal. They gave life and vitality to the struggling colonies, extended the national domain to the northern seas and bounded it by the western ocean and the southern gulf. As a party it welded the American people into

A NATION OF FREEMEN,

made it a world power before the jingo policies of modern statesmen had been wrapped in their swaddling clothes, and dignified the American citizen by adding renewed glory to America's name before the last survivor of the old Federalist party was born. It administered for generations, faithfully and well, the affairs of the nation, and gave to the American people the most economical and best government that history records among the annals of all time. It has been burned in the crucible, has met disasters and gone down many times in defeat; but has always stood throughout all its trials and vicissitudes like the rugged oak in the forest, which is neither withered by the torrid suns of summer nor frozen by the chilly blasts of winter, because it contains within itself the germs of its own perpetuity. We have seen the old

ship rudderless, and at sea tossed by the billows of angry passions and divided councils; we have seen her hull lashed by the fury of the waves and her decks covered by the spray; and we have seen her almost disappear from sight; yet every recession of the storm has shown that her light was unquenched, and her lustre undimmed. Redolent in the glorious memories which tell the story of her past, with principles ever ancient, ever new, she measures up to the demands of the present, and looks serenely to the emergencies of the future.

Let him who would flippantly write the obituary of the Democratic party, if he be the son of an exile, who sought these shores as a relief from the oppression of his native land, remember it was the Democratic party which placed his old father under the folds of the American flag and made him a peer in a country where before he had been a serf and a slave. Let that son recall the fact that it was under the great Marcy, when he sat as Secretary of the Navy in a Democratic administration through a son of South Carolina, thundered from an American man-of-war in the far-off Bay of Smyrna: "Put Martin Kosta back on this ship by four o'clock, or by that hour I will fire upon you." And by that act established

THE DEMOCRATIC DOCTRINE

of protection to the humblest naturalized American citizen. If he be a son of toil, let him remember it was the Democratic party which first dignified labor, and made it honorable to sell the sweat of his face for his daily bread; that gave him one day in the calendar which he could call his own; that seeks to enforce, by arbitration, the just demands he may have against his employer, and would elevate him to a Cabinet place at the council board of the Republic. And if he be one who followed the sword of Lee in a war which settled the irrepressible conflict between State sovereignty and Federal supremacy, let him remember that it was the Democratic party which recognized the loyal heart under the tattered gray coat he wore, took the heel of the despot from his neck and restored him to citizenship by striking the galling shackles from his limbs.

If there existed no other reason for the success of the Democratic party in the present campaign than that presented by a patriotic selection between the candidates of the two parties, the result of the issue, in the approaching election, would be with the Democratic party. On one side is the incumbent of the Presidential office, who succeeded to that high estate through the assassin's act of either a madman or a depraved regicide—because none other could have had the heart to chill the blood in the veins of one so gentle and kindly disposed as William McKinley. If the veil of the future could have been raised and subsequent events foreseen, I think I am safe in the assertion that Theodore Roosevelt would not have been a Vice Presidential candidate, and the record of his strenuous life would have been written in the legends of the cowboys of the Dakotas, or told in the jungle stories among the cacti of Cuba. When he succeeded to the great office, the business world stood appalled in

TREPIDATION AND FEAR,

and the country was only relieved of the tension when he stood by the bier of the dead President and covenanted that he would carry out the policies of him whom he succeeded. The record of his administration is one of promises broken and covenants unfulfilled, which stand out like the lurid glare of the magic lantern's tableau upon the darkened canvass. When William McKinley stood in the metropolis of upper New York, in the shadow of death, amid the evidences of mechanical skill and ingenuity which had been gathered in a marvelous exposition, near Niagara's roaring waters, he pleaded for an enlarged market for the output of the factory and the shop, which would give to the manufacturer, unrestrained by law, a wider market for his surplus products, and steadier employment to the wage-earner. Theodore Roosevelt has disregarded that final message. When William McKinley stretched out his arms to the returned soldiers of the Southland, clad a Lee and a Wheeler in the blue coat of a Union soldier, and sent them to fight the battles of their restored country against the Spanish armies, he cauterized the wounds of civil war, wiped out the last vestige of sectional hate and rancor, only to have them reopened by Theodore Roosevelt in breaking bread under the national roof with one whom God had not made his social equal; in imposing upon Southern people men of like color as their public servants, and in attempting, by a plank in his party's platform, to disfranchise Southern representatives and nullify Southern votes in the electoral college.

McKinley stood for the employment of the public moneys in the development of the waterways and natural arteries of trade and commerce, and the upbuilding of the commercial and industrial greatness of the nation, while Theodore Roosevelt urges public appropriations to the fostering of a great military and naval establishment in a Republic which is founded upon the loyalty and patriotism of the citizen; and employs the army to escort, with the pomp and circumstance of inglorious war, a retiring Cabinet minister to his home, and to conduct his successor to his office with a military pageant equal to that which greeted the return of a Roman conqueror who brought new territory to the Roman domain, and new booty to the Roman treasury. Against this candidate, who has nothing in statesmanship, environment or disposition in common with the dead President, and whose election would be

A CONSTANT MENACE

to the business interests of the country; a travesty on the Presidential office, and one whose strenuous temperament is better suited to a military camp and the branding pen of the cowboy, than to the conservative policies of a republican form of government, the Democratic party presents to the country a candidate of judicial temperament, a typical American citizen of heroic mould—the material out of which great Presidents are made, and one who comes to us with a life filled with high ideals and replete with virtues. When the great ^{CIVIC} ~~X~~ conclave of the Democratic party sat in the metropolis of that Mississippi empire, which the diplomacy of Thomas Jefferson wrested from Napoleon and gave to the American union, it had the flower of American statesmen from which to select its

President. Its candidate was to stand for constitutional liberty and a return of the government to the peaceful paths of the Constitution. It was charged, in its concentrated wisdom, to weld together the discordant elements of the party, and to select the best arrow in the party's quiver. With one universal acclaim it turned to the great Chief Justice of the Empire State, who had worn the ermine of that exalted office without a stain or blemish upon its virgin folds, and it named as the uncrowned king of the Democratic and conservative hosts of the country—Alton B. Parker, of the State of New York. With that selection the Democratic party found a leader, and its principles a champion, such as it has not had since the days of Samuel J. Tilden—one possessing all the learning, sagacity and statesmanship of Tilden, with the courage of a Napoleon. When he found the platform silent upon one subject, which he deemed vital to the cause, a message came from the seclusion of his quiet home, and the Democratic party found in its candidate a man who could put away a crown, but would not compromise a political opinion, even for the Presidency. When Phil Sheridan thundered down the Valleys of Virginia, reformed the scattering forces of the Federal soldiery, and converted a fleeing mob into a victorious army, never in that mad ride did he display greater leadership than that indicated by the voice which rang out, clear as a fife's note, from the banks of the Hudson to the Democratic forces at St. Louis, and by a single act converted chaos into order, timid fear into courage, and took command of the Democratic army, and is to-day leading it to certain victory.

CROWNING GLORY.

Among the crowning glories of that great convention, and a ~~co-partner~~^{center} in its primal honors, West Virginia has been conspicuously honored. For the second place within the gift of the American people, in the line of succession to the highest office on earth, a West Virginia citizen was named. That citizen needs neither eulogism nor tribute here, because he is personally known of all men, from the Pennsylvania line to the Kentucky border. His name is woven into every fibre of our State's history, and her marvelous development owes more to him than any other man. Whatever may be the results elsewhere, the man who loves his State and revels in her glorious achievements, whether he be a Democrat or Republican, Populist or Prohibitionist, will rejoice in the elevation to the great office of Vice President of the United States of the First Citizen of this Commonwealth, the Gladstone of American politics, a lion of the fold of Judah—Henry G. Davis, of the County of Randolph.

While we rejoice and are fortunate in a superb national leadership, yet it is not alone the personalities of our candidates which commend our cause to the thoughtful attention of the country, but the principles for which they stand must challenge its serious attention. We believe in a return to the plain and simple ways of the Constitution, and in an economical government, administered for the benefit of the governed. We believe in a government whose benefits, like the rain, fall on all alike; which does not, as Hamilton would have it, make paupers of one class and the lordly owners of baronial estates of another. We believe

in tariff reform in the nation, and its handmaid, tax reform, in the State; and a system of taxation which limits the taxing powers to the actual necessities of the government, economically administered; and we do not believe in a system which builds up great monopolies and combinations, in restraint of trade, enriches, through the operation of law, one class of citizens and pauperizes another—a system which enables an American manufacturer to sell his product

CHEAPER ABROAD,

because of the competition, than to the domestic consumer—a system which neutralizes reciprocal trade relations with friendly powers, debauches the electorate franchises, corrupts courts and lawmakers, and closes the avenues of opportunity to the young men of the country in a land the genius of whose institutions is based upon the doctrine of equal rights. We believe in the development of the industrial and commercial life of the nation, and the improvement of its waterways; and we oppose a large standing army as a lurking danger to the Republic, and think that Roman legions and Roman galleys, with Julius Caesar at their head, were not a greater menace to the Roman Republic than a large standing army, scattered from Maine to San Francisco, with battleships in every port, is to the liberties of the American people, with Theodore Roosevelt as President and the Commander-in-Chief. We are in favor of a government which attends to its own business at home and does not terrorize weak republics, with the swagger of a bully abroad; which does not prostitute public offices to partisan ends, nor shields criminals, whether they be found among the favorites of a President in Cuba, or in a great department of the government at Washington. We are in favor of the Monroe Doctrine as a cardinal tenet of our political faith, and we oppose a colonial empire and the subjugation of alien races in distant seas. We are opposed to the annexation of tropical islands as a part of American territory, and we would extend to the Filipino the same liberty and governmental policy accorded to the Cuban patriot. Under the auspices of a

DEMOCRATIC ADMINISTRATION

we will take down the American flag in the Philippine archipelago as we took it down when it floated over the halls of the Montezumas on the plains of Mexico; as we took it down when it floated over the ramparts of Tripoli, under the burning skies of Africa, and as we took it down from the walls of Pekin in the land of Confucius; and we will carry it home with honor, where it now floats over an alien race and hostile subject-provinces; and in its stead we will there raise the standard of a new Republic, which will carry the blessings of civil and religious liberty to the nations of the other hemisphere; and its flag, when so raised, will stand boldly out in the islands of the South Sea as did the burning cross in the heavens which lured Constantine to Christianity. We are in favor of a merchant marine with a broad American policy, which will carry the flag of the American people into every port, place the product of the American mine, the American shop and the American factory in every mart of trade and commerce; dignify the

American name and make the American people the financial, industrial and commercial masters of the world.

These policies and principles, when crystalized into law, will be the safeguards of the Republic, and will find their full fruition in the great administration which Alton B. Parker and Henry G. Davis, our grand old-young man, will give to the American people.

STATE MATTERS.

With the very stars in their courses fighting the cause of the national Democracy, here in this State is entrusted to the concentrated wisdom of this convention the patriotic duty of inaugurating such wise and conservative policies as will cause West Virginia's electorate to again entrust the Democratic party with power and return the State to her place in the Democratic sisterhood. It is a proud privilege which we are here called upon to exercise, and in the results of the deliberations of this convention depends much of that which we can hope for, and deserve, in November. We stand for a peaceful and

ORDERLY GOVERNMENT,

and oppose revolutions of all kinds, whether they be found in the fiscal affairs of the State or the administrative policies of the Nation; and we oppose domestic disorder, whether it rears its ghastly head in assassination on the banks of Tug River or be found in open bribery and corruption in a primary election in Kanawha. We do not propose the destruction of important elements in our industrial life in order to deceive other interests with the delusion that they may be able to feed and fatten on the dead and decaying carcass. We believe, as a principle of our political creed, that government was ordained and established for the protection and benefit of all the citizens alike, and that its burdens and blessings should be shared by all alike. Under these theories of government, from John J. Jacobs, to the wise and conservative administration of William A. MacCorkle, the Democratic party gave to the people of the State the best and most orderly government it ever had, a long period of administrative life without spot or blemish upon the State's escutcheon. Under the fostering care of the Democratic party, within the cycle of these years, you saw your State arouse herself from a Republican lethargy and like a young giantess, shake off the dew of the morning and take her place among the first of the industrial and commercial States of the Union. You saw your own citizens smite her mountain sides and cause them to give forth their wealth. You saw the paths of progress blazed through your virgin forests to the mountain peaks, among the storm clouds, and your railroads built by the energy and enterprise of your own people, headed by Henry G. Davis and Johnson N. Camden, the pioneers in your State's industrial development; and you saw, throughout a period of Democratic ascendancy, that golden era of progressive development which seven years of Republican partisanship has not been able to retard or destroy. When entrusted with power in the period following the war, the Democratic party gave to the people of the State a constitution, with a bill of

rights, which protected the citizen in his person and in his property, and under it restored to the ranks of a complete citizenship the returned soldier of the Confederacy. That constitution wrote into the State's organic law a mandate for equal and uniform taxation upon all kinds of property throughout the State, in order that its citizens, without respect to class, should bear their relative proportion of the public burdens, in exchange for the corresponding blessings of citizenship which they received from the protecting arm of the State. With this constitution, and the laws enacted by the Democratic party thereunder, there were added to the tax lists not only the taxable property of the individual citizen, but also, for the first time in the State's history, the taxable properties of the railroads and other corporations, including the delinquent taxes, which Republican administrations had failed to collect

SEVEN YEARS AGO.

Seven years ago, when we turned over the State to the Republican party with a clean sheet, our oil, gas, coal and timber development was in its incipiency, and yet during the seven years of the marvelous development of these great industries no honest effort has been made to compel them to pay their proper proportion of the public burdens, although the Republican party has been in control of all the departments of the government. To bring these and other interests to a fair and proper basis of taxation it required no imaginary constitutional amendment, but the enactment of fair and equitable laws under the salutary provisions of the Democratic constitution. Two Republican administrations have been deaf to the appeals and have stood silently by, without awakening to a relief of the tax-ridden farmer and the wage-earner, until, at the heel of the last Republican administration which this State will see for a generation, if her people be true to their own interests, a Republican Governor is suddenly taken with a spasm of tax reform strenuousness, and uses a non-partisan question, as a decoy, through which to whip into subserviency his own party followers, and reward a faithful secretary with the great office of Governor. When the Democratic party sought to tax the express, telegraph, sleeping car and pipe-line companies, it was a Republican administration, headed by the Republican candidate for Governor, that brought death to the bills. When a Democratic minority in the House of Delegates defeated a "trust bill" which opened widely the door for the unlimited capitalization of inflated corporations, took the limit off the ownership of our lands, at the instance of the Leather Trust, and made our Capitol building the home of dishonest speculation in watered stocks, and

ADDED A FORTUNE

to the campaign coffers of a Republican Secretary of State, it was a Republican State convention, in its platform, which congratulated the people of the State, with complacent effrontery, upon the enactment of this law as the first step toward their many colored schemes of tax reform. It was this same convention and platform which usurped the lawmaking power of our State government, and pledged the Republican party to the enactment into laws of the bills prepared by "DISTIN-

GUISHED CITIZENS" in the city of Washington, not one of whom is a member of the lawmaking department of our government, and not twenty of the eight hundred delegates who voted to ratify the platform knew the contents of the bills, or had ever seen one of them. It was this same convention which presented to the people of the State, for their suffrages, the Republican candidate for Governor an adroit and skillful gentleman—who has spent more time at the crank of his well oiled political machine than, in the study of economic questions—one who won his nomination as an advocate of tax reform, as promulgated by the report of the Tax Commission, and yet had not the courage to permit the convention which he controlled to approve the measure which elevated him. The amazing hypocrisy of these new-born tax reformers is found in the fact that after Senator Dawson had secured his own nomination as Governor, and cunningly excluded an endorsement of his tax schemes from his platform, he turned over the convention, presiding officer and retainers, to the opponents of his own tax measures, and permitted them to name the balance of the Republican State ticket, including a majority of the important Board of Public Works, which controls, as the final judge, so much of the tax powers of the State. Not content with this record of duplicity and bad faith, a Republican Governor, the father and patron of this tax agitation, in order to harmonize his professions with his party's platform, and his candidate's desires, at the expense of the tax-payers of the State.

CONVENED THE LEGISLATURE

in extraordinary session, not to adopt the reports of a tax commission of his own creation, and enact into laws the bills prepared in harmony with it; not to find new means of bringing more money to the public treasury, but to pass what they call "compromise bills," prepared by self-constituted lawmakers outside the limits of the State, and to deceive the farmer and the small land-owner, by reducing the direct tax upon real estate without an adequate substitution in its place. Let not him who owns his little farm be lulled to happiness by the idea that this measure brings relief from the oppressive hand of the tax gatherer, because the same law which takes the direct tax, suggested by the present Legislature, from his one or two hundred acre farm, also takes the same tax from the thirty thousand acres of coal land, the hundred thousand acres of land covered with its primeval forests, the unlimited area of oil and gas producing land, owned by non-resident oil and gas companies; and it also relieves to the same extent the valuable town and city lot, upon which is erected the lordly mansion, the imposing banking house, and the stately business block. No one but a dullard can be deceived in the results of the recent legislative session, if he examines the whited sepulchre uncovered, and the diseased places laid bare by the scalpel and knife in the hands of a skillful Democratic minority in that Legislature; and to the eternal credit of that courageous minority be it ever said that they stood loyally by and sustained the acts of Henry G. Davis and John H. Holt, the Democratic tax reformers, while a Republican Governor, and his candidate for the succession, were re-

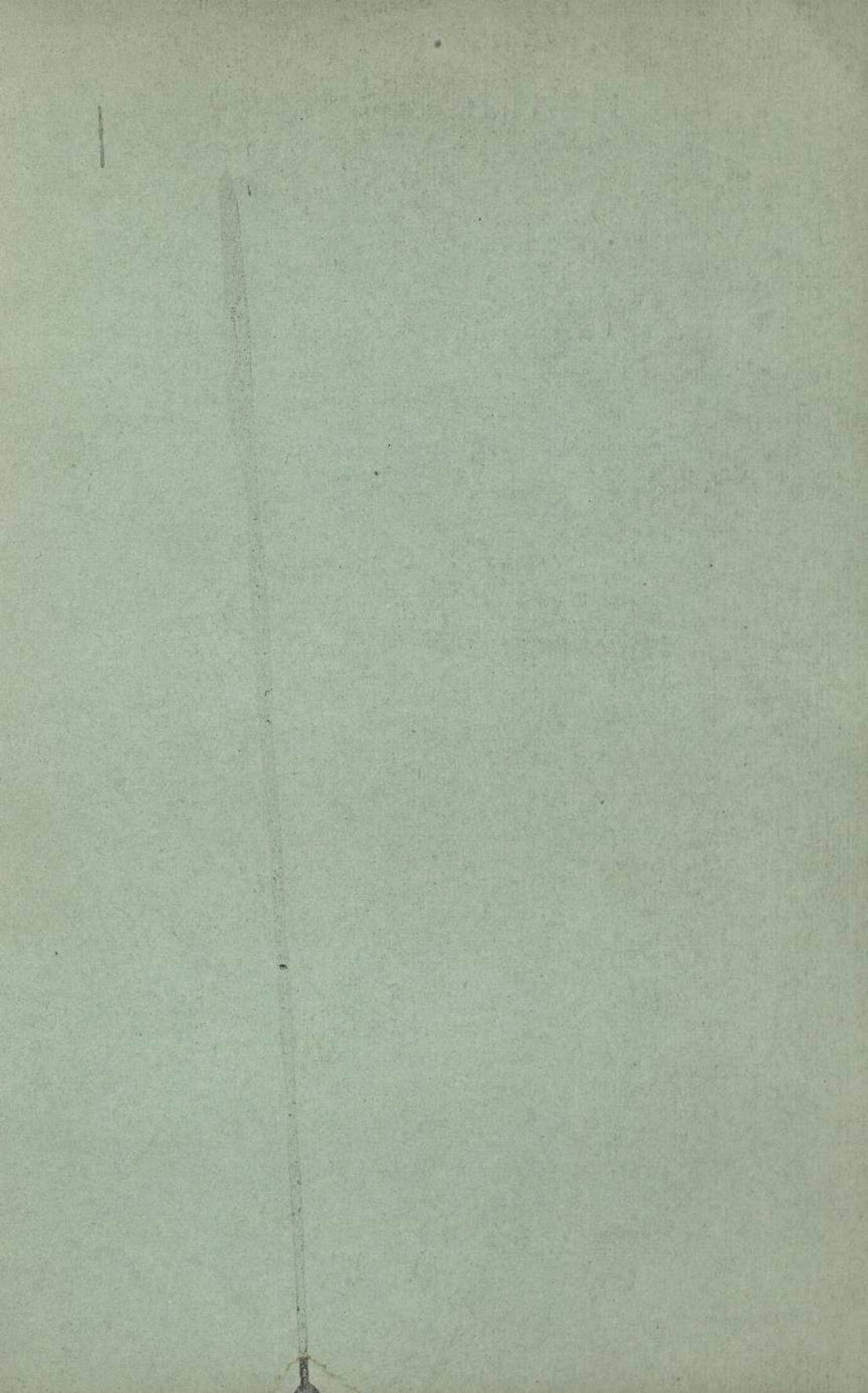
puddiated by their own party friends, and could command but four votes in their own Senate, and not even control the two votes of their own candidates for Secretary of State and Attorney General.

TAXATION.

The subject of taxation is one which has engaged the best thought, and enlisted the best minds of all times, and has been the fruitful source of governmental agitation among all peoples. There never was a revolution which lost provinces to a kingdom, or shook the foundation stones of a throne, that did not in some form revolve about this subject. It never has been successfully quieted, except in an honest distribution of the burdens and benefits of human government. In this State it can not be settled through the juggling statesmanship and hypocritical efforts of the Republican party, but must find its solution now, as it has in the past, in the broad policies, humane methods and enlightened statesmanship of the Democratic party. To lighten the burdens of government and reduce taxation to the actual needs of the public service has been the watchword of Democracy. It has stood for thirty years rapping at the doors of the American Congress for a revision of our tariff laws, and it stands to-day for tariff reform in the nation and tax reform in the State. It does not comprehend, nor can it understand except as a matter of party expediency, how the Republican party in this State can parade itself in the stolen livery of the Democratic party in demanding low taxes, under tax reform in the State, and still urge and insist upon high taxes, under the name of the tariff, in the nation.

PARTY PROMISES.

If entrusted with power, the Democratic party will re-adjust the tax lists of the State in the spirit of complete justice to all interests—so just and fair that none can complain. It will not lay the mailed hand upon one class of property and exclude from the tax lists another, equally able to pay, but will enforce the Democratic doctrine of “equal rights to all and special privileges to none.” And the candidate we here name will stand as an earnest of our party’s pledge, and when elected and they assume the Executive and Administrative control of the governmental affairs of the State, they will be actuated by no motive other than to administer faithfully and well all the laws, without fear, partiality or favor; advance the interests of all the citizens of the State, and make her what nature ordained and God intended she should be, among the first in the Sisterhood of American Commonwealths.



“OUR GRAND OLD, YOUNG MAN.”
“THE FIRST CITIZEN OF THE COMMONWEALTH.”
“THE GLADSTONE OF AMERICAN POLITICS.”
“A LION OF THE FOLD OF JUDAH.”

HENRY G. DAVIS
Of the County of Randolph.