CHAPTER XXXI

DEMOCRACY SEARCHING FOR A LEADER


Jefferson resigned his leadership to his disciple Madison, who turned it over to his logical successor; Jackson made Van Buren his heir just as Roosevelt dictated Taft to his party. There were no particular shoulders upon which Wilson's mantle would naturally fall, and he refrained from indicating any choice. Wilson was an invalid, and thus Democracy was left without a leader in 1920. There was much good timber, but no towering oak.

Since 1920 Democracy has been searching for a leader. Not all Democrats have been searching. Some have been seeking to put this man over, or that man under. But the body of the party, the rank and file have looked-the candidates over, earnestly hoping for a leader or for one who would develop into a great leader.

The 1920 convention was such a search, and although the wrangling of factions in New York in 1924 attracted all the publicity given the convention's proceedings, the same search was conscientiously being made there by a large number of delegates. No Senatorial cabal at a secret meeting near dawn in a mephitic hotel room named Cox in 1920 nor Davis in 1924. The Democrats in convention were neither dictated to, stampeded nor led by the nose. However confused and turbulent may have been the methods by which these two conventions arrived at their conclusions, the conclusions arrived at were those of the delegates openly and honestly reached.

The Twenty-third Democratic National Convention, 1924 delegates, met at San Francisco June 8, 1920, and sat nine days. Called to order by Vice-Chairman of the National Committee, Bruce Kremer, Homer S. Cummings of Connecticut was chosen temporary chairman. His keynote speech was an able and reasoned eulogy of the Democratic administration and of Woodrow Wilson, and an earnest advocacy of the League of Nations.

The rules adopted did not mention the two-thirds rule but Senator Robinson, without objection, announced that a two-thirds vote was requisite to a nomination. The unit rule was adopted, excepting, however, district delegates selected by state laws not subjecting them to the authority of state committees or conventions.

Senator Joseph T. Robinson of Arkansas was elected permanent chairman. For a polished, logical and caustic arrangement of the opposition his keynote speech is worth the study of any convention orator. "It was a shame to the Senate," he said, "that it consumed a greater length of time in defeating the Peace Treaty than our Army and Navy took to win the war."

The first real action of the convention was to direct that the National Committee should consist of one man and one woman from each State. Telegrams were sent to various governors commending their favoring Woman's Suffrage or urging them to aid the adoption of the suffrage amendment by their states. The women delegates were very active in all the convention proceedings.

The at-sea-ness of the delegates was evidenced by the number of nominations for President, fourteen candidates being nominated and twenty-three voted for on the first ballot. The silence of the White House and the expectation, vain and utterly unwarranted in the face of his positive declaration to interfere, of some word from the President, largely was responsible for the uncertainty prevailing.

William G. McAdoo, late Secretary of the Treasury, Mitchell Palmer, late Attorney General, and James M. Cox, thrice elected Governor of Ohio, had long been and remained the three leading candidates. The candidacy of McAdoo was much handicapped by the fact that he was the son-in-law of the President; the foolish cry of the "Crown Prince" forced his friends practically to run him as a "drafted" candidate, he himself declaring that he was not a candidate and even requesting that he be not placed in nomination. Palmer's activities as Attorney General, especially his campaign against enemy aliens, gave him strength, and Cox's record as Governor and his strength in Ohio greatly recommended him, especially in view of Harding being the Republican nominee.
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In the order their names appear the following were placed in nomination for President—Robert L. Owen of Oklahoma; James W. Gerard, New York; Homer S. Cummings, Connecticut; Gilbert M. Hitchecock, Nebraska; Mitchell Palmer, Pennsylvania; Edwin T. Meredith, Iowa; James M. Cox, Ohio; Alfred E. Smith, New York; Edward I. Edwars, New Jersey; Andrew J. Volstead, Minnesota; F. S. Simmons, North Carolina; Carter Glass, Virginia; John W. Davis, West Virginia, and Francis Burton Harrison, New York.

On the first ballot McAdaoo received 256 votes, Palmer, 256, Cox, 124, Smith, 109, the remaining 33 votes being for favorite sons and scattering. The South was divided between McAdaoo and Cox, with the former a little the favorite; Palmer's whole strength was from the East; Smith received New York's 90 with scattered votes from Massachusetts. Cox passed Palmer on the seventh ballot and McAdaoo on the twelfth, the vote then being Cox, 404, McAdaoo, 375, Palmer, 201. After the thirteenth ballot a motion to drop the candidate receiving the lowest vote was rejected by a four to one vote. McAdaoo received his highest vote, 407, on the fortieth ballot, Cox receiving 400. On the forty-second ballot Cox received a majority vote, 540. Before the announcement of the forty-fourth ballot states changed their votes to Cox and the nomination was made unanimous.

General Lawrence D. Tyson of Tennessee, Governor S. V. Stewart of Montana, Senator James Hamilton Lewis of Chicago, David R. Francis of Missouri, Governor Alfred E. Smith of New York, E. L. Doheny of California and Franklin D. Roosevelt of New York were placed in nomination for Vice-President. Doheny's candidacy was the work of a few friends associated with him in the oil business; it had no political significance. All the candidates withdrew in Roosevelt's favor and he was named by acclamation.

Carter Glass was chairman of the platform committee; among his associates were Marshall, Beckham, Albert Ritchie, Walsh of Massachusetts, Walsh of Montana, Pat Harrison, Bryan, Bourke Cockran, and Pomerene.

Bryan made a hard fight in committee and before the convention for the incorporation into the platform of five planks—a dry plank demanding enforcement of the Volstead law and no increase of alcoholic content in beverages allowed to be sold; establishment of a national prohibition under joint control of the two leading parties with equal division of space in its columns; prevention and punishment of profiteering; no universal compulsory military training; and an amendment to the Constitution providing for ratification of treaties by a majority vote in the Senate. Bryan's dry plank was rejected, 330 to 156. A plank proposed by Bourke Cockran for the sale of cider, light wines and beer, the states to fix the alcoholic content, was rejected 727 to 356. An endorsement of a Soldier's Bonus law was rejected, 727 to 356. An endorsement of a Soldier's Bonus law was rejected viva voce. There was in the convention's whole proceedings no marked division along old lines between the Cleveland and Bryan elements or along sectional or geographical lines.

Some notable women were placed on the National Committee: Miss Elizabeth Marbury of New York, Judge Florence Allen of Ohio and Miss Carl Williams of Tennessee. Miss Williams, elected by the convention vice-chairman of the National Committee, was the first woman to distinguish in the organization of either of the two great parties.

George White of Ohio was made national chairman, W. D. Jamieson director of finance and W. J. Cochran director of publicity.

The exposure during the Republican convention that tremendous sums of money had been spent in securing support for the two leading candidates for the nomination, Governor Lowden and General Wood, destroyed their chances and left the Republicans in a muddle. The impasse was broken by the nomination of Warren G. Harding, late Governor and at the time United States Senator from Ohio.

Some time before the convention met, Harry M. Daugherty of Ohio had told some friends, if a widely current story is to be believed, how the convention was going to become hopelessly deadlocked, and how in some early morning hour, after the convention had been adjourned for the day, there would be a gathering of some party leaders in some smoke-filled hotel room and Harding would be decided on, and would be nominated when the convention reconvened. From several published reports of participants in such a meeting, it happened exactly that way.

It took only one ballot to nominate Governor Calvin Coolidge of Massachusetts for Vice-President; Senator Lenroot of Wisconsin was his chief competitor.

The Republican convention was controlled by the Republican Senatorial cabal, including Boies Penrose, ill in bed at his home in Philadelphia, but in constant telephonic touch with the convention. The keynote speech of Henry Cabot Lodge thoroughly deserves the title bestowed on it at the time—a "Hymn of Hate."
of Wilson. If extreme admiration of friends and extravagant condemnation by enemies are companion criteria of the greatness of a man, Wilson was honored by both conventions in 1920, one exalting him to empyrean heights, the other consigning him to abysmal depths.

Independent Republican journals described the work of the convention as the "perfect flowering of Old Guard politics," as putting the party back twenty years. Yet the party promptly rallied to its candidate. Taft and twenty-nine other Republican leaders, advocates of the League of Nations, swung into line, issuing a signed statement that they believed that the League had a better chance of adoption with a Republican success than with a Democratic one.

The platforms of the two parties were each good, of their kind, but the League of Nations that appeared to out the greatest figure in the campaign. Cox made a brilliant and aggressive fight. He soon showed that he was not a "wet" candidate and his able advocacy of the League of Nations won Wilson's endorsement. Cox charged that the Republicans with collecting huge sums of money for campaign funds and supported it by evidence of tremendous assessments. Will H. Hayes, Republican campaign manager, admitted to a budget of $3,000,000, maybe $500,000 more. The developments since then have destroyed any worth that might have been attached to statements made of Republican receipts and expenditures.

Harding let it be known that he would not be an autocrat in the Presidency, such as Wilson was accused of being. His administration was to be a government by the "best minds" of his party. "Back to Normalcy" was his slogan, and with that lotus-eating cry a tired people, tired with the strain of war and self-denial, weary of the high tension of leading the world, elected Harding by a vote of 16,182,000 to 9,147,000 for Cox—404 electoral votes to 127. The Prohibition Party polled 139,000, Debs, Socialist, 919,000 votes.

Then ensued the régime of the sinister Daugherty, Attorney General, the sordid Fall, Secretary of the Interior, the careless Denby, Secretary of the Navy, with his equally careless assistant, Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. Harding had unlimited and loyal confidence in those he believed his friends. In a few months there were more shameful scandals in our government, more graft and corruption and more ineptitude and carelessness than even the most crouding critic ever imagined against the whole eight years of the preceding Democratic administration. There was
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grant even in the Disabled Veterans' Bureau. The courts of the United States are yet engaged in recovering government property and convicting the transgressors, as a result of the work of Senator Walsh of Montana and other Democrats for investigation and recovery.

William G. McAdoo and Alfred E. Smith by their friends had been kept before the public as candidates for the Democratic nomination in 1924 ever since the 1920 convention. A large element of the party looked on Oscar Underwood as a better candidate than either and likely to win the nomination by a deadlock between the other two. John W. Davis and Senator Ralston of Indiana were prominent dark horses. The fact that McAdoo had represented as attorney Edward L. Doheny in some Mexican oil matters, although legal, legitimate and proper, blighted his candidacy in the eyes of many careful Republicans. The openly avowed opposition of Underwood to the Ku Klux Klan lost him many delegates from the section in which he should have gained his greatest strength, the South. Smith's religion was objectionable to a considerable element of the party and his alleged attitude to the liquor question was unpopular with a great many Democrats. Each of the three leading aspirants were, therefore, in spite of admirable records and qualities, heavily handicapped in the race for the nomination.

The Twenty-fourth Democratic National Convention, 1098 delegates, met at Madison Square Garden, New York City, June 24, 1924. Called to order by Cordell Hull, chairman of the national committee, Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi was named temporary, Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana permanent chairman. The rules of the last Democratic convention, including the two-thirds rule for the nomination of candidates for President and Vice-President, were adopted.

There were two sharp contentions over the platform. The committee reported a plank favoring the removal of the League of Nations question as a party issue by having it submitted to the people of the United States in a great referendum. A minority report called for the explicit endorsement of the League. After a spirited debate the majority report stood by a vote of 743 to 253. The other fight was one of Roosevelt, Jr. Ku Klux Klan resolution. The majority report was a general declaration for freedom of religion, speech and press, the old constitutional guarantees; the minority report condemned all secret political societies and named the Ku Klux Klan. The majority report prevailed by one vote, 542 to 541.
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The estimates of the strength of the Klan in the party and in
the convention differed widely. There were Democrats who,
impressed with the influence attributed to the Klan in various
States, greatly overestimated its power. Others regarded the
Ku Klux movement as a passing phase in our national life which
would endure only a few years just as similar organizations
and movements had in the past, the Anti-Masons in the
30's, the Know-Nothings in the 50's and the A. P. A's in the
90's.

Many candidates were placed in nomination for President,
Underwood, McAdoo, Smith, Robinson of Arkansas, Carter Glass
of Virginia, Senator Saulsbury of Delaware, ex-Secretary David
Houston, Senator SamuelRalston of Indiana, Governor Jonathan
Davis of Kansas, Governor Ritchie of Maryland, Senator Perris
of Michigan, James M. Cox of Ohio, Governor Charles M. Bryan
of Nebraska, Governor Brown of New Hampshire, Governor
George Sizer of New Jersey and John W. Davis of West Virginia.

The first ballot was, McAdoo, 431, Smith, 241, Underwood, 42,
Davis, 31. McAdoo’s support came mainly from the South and
West; Smith's from the North and East; Pennsylvania and
Illinois were divided. The divisional lines of the subdivisions of
the party, Western, Southern and Eastern, were visible but not
inflexible at the convention, and showed in the voting. The old
lines which had divided the party from 1896 until Wilson’s
election had practically disappeared. Bryan was influential, but
far from a dominant force.

Sixty-four ballots brought gradual but not decisive changes—
McAdoo, 438, Smith, 307, Davis, 123. Ralston and Cox then
withdrew and on the sixty-ninth ballot McAdoo reached his high-
est vote, 530. From that point he dropped slowly until on the
eighty-eighth ballot Smith received 362, McAdoo, 315.

All candidates offered to release the delegates from pledges
and instructions except McAdoo who coupled his consent with
the provisions that the unit rule be abrogated, the lowest can-
idate dropped on each ballot and a majority elect.

The great change began on the one hundredth ballot, Davis,
203, Smith, 351, McAdoo, 190. The following ballot showed an
effort by one element to substitute Underwood for Smith, coun-
tered by a transfer of McAdoo votes to Davis—Davis, 316,
Underwood, 239, Smith, 121, McAdoo, 52. The succeeding ballot
disclosed a move to bring forward Senator Thomas J. Walsh —
Davis, 415, Underwood, 317, Walsh, 123. The one hundred and
third and last ballot was Davis, 844, Underwood, 102, Walsh, 54.

The nomination was made unanimous.

Before any nominations were made for Vice-President, Senator
Walsh, whose conduct and presiding office had won him great
popularity and confidence, was offered the place and declined.
John C. Greenway of Arizona, Alvin Owsley of Texas, George L.
Berry of Tennessee, George Sizer of New Jersey, Mrs. Leroy
Springs of South Carolina, Governor Davis of Kansas, Bennett
Clarke of Missouri, W. A. Gaston of Massachusetts, ex-Secretary
Meredith of Iowa, James W. Gerard of New York, William S.
Fynn of Rhode Island and Charles W. Bryan of Nebraska were
placed in nomination for Vice-President. Bryan was nominated
on the first ballot; Butler of Tennessee receiving 208 votes.
Crisp L. Shaver of West Virginia was made chairman of the
National Committee, Emily Newell Blair of Missouri, Samuel B.
Amidon of Kansas and Frank Hague of New Jersey, vice-
chairmen.

President Coolidge had easy sailing in securing the Republican
nomination; Charles E. Hughes being in the cabinet and only
Hiram Johnson and La Follette opposing him. The "executive
momentum" carried him over on the first ballot, 1,108 to 34 for
La Follette and 10 for Johnson. Governor Lowden was nomi-
nated for Vice-President, but declining Charles G. Dawes was
named on the third ballot.

The La Follette Progressives held a convention on July 4th,
before the Democratic convention had made its choice and nomi-
nated Robert M. La Follette and Senator Burton K. Wheeler of
Montana. La Follette announced that he ran as an Independent,
not as the leader of a third party.

Before the Democratic convention had met the Democrats
were in hopeful mood. Coolidge's vote-getting capacity had not
then been demonstrated, and the oil disclosures were believed
to have thoroughly discredited the Republican Party. While the
convention was sitting there came the news of the indictment
and promised vigorous prosecution of Fall, Doherty and Sin-
clair. This and the definite announcement of La Follette that he
would make the race, combined with their own divided coun-
sels cut Democratic hopes in half. That La Follette would
draw votes from both the old parties was admitted, but the
discouraging fact was that he would simply lessen Republican
majorities or plurality, Smiley, he would cost the Democrats
electoral votes. His candidacy nullified, to a great extent, the
value of Charles W. Bryan on the Democratic ticket.
of colored votes received only 10,000 plurality over Hancock. Cleveland in each of his three campaigns received hundreds of thousands more white votes than his opponents. Not until the 1892 election did the Republican Party secure an undoubted majority of the white votes of the country, although enough Democrats voted for Roosevelt in 1904 to give him a probable white majority.

These facts, viewed in any aspect, are of vital interest. The solid Democratic South and the certain Republican Northeast fairly balance each other, but the Democrats have nothing to balance against this other sure and certain Republican asset: it is a heavy handicap. This advantage of the Republicans, coupled with their always vastly larger campaign funds, makes every fight an uphill fight for the Democrats.

A political diagnostican has pronounced that the Democratic Party is subject to periodic folly while the Republican Party is afflicted with chronic materialism. Between the two the choice may be difficult at times.

Practice and precedent, the War between the States and all the other great and small developments of one hundred and forty years have settled, or modified in application, one after another, many of the policies over which the Democratic Party and its opponents have disagreed. But the fundamental difference still subsists.

The Republican Party, as did the Federalist, believes in a material, paternal government conferring favors to certain important interests through whose subsidized prosperity the rest are diffused to the whole people, "trickling down to them," as Roosevelt expressed it in 1912. It is an adaptation of the old English policy—a government directly for the noble, the privileged, the rich, and indirectly for the mass. Fisher Ames described it: "Wrap up the influence of the moneyed class in the government; it was Hamilton's policy as stated by Lodge: A strong and permanent class bound to the government by immediate and personal pecuniary interest. It is their honest theory that such a government works out for the best of the whole people; that various industries should be fostered, favored, protected, subsidized by the government.

The Democrats stick to the principle, in the Constitution as originally framed and emphasized by the first ten amendments, as altered by later amendments and adapted to modern conditions. Their theory in its practical application is well stated in Van Buren's message, defining even better than Jackson the
Jacksonian dogma: This government was established to give security to the people under republican institutions and not to confer special favors on individuals or classes of them; it is not its legitimate object to make men or industries rich or give legislation in favor of particular pursuits. It is Jefferson’s ideal of opportunity, no privilege. It backs, in principle, back toward Madison’s position taken in the first debate in the first Congress: Industries and labor left to themselves will be directed to objects most productive and certainly more certain than the wisdom of the most enlightened legislature could direct them.

The Democrats believe that economic legislation and administration, like that of justice, should apply equally and directly to all. The public land policies of the parties illustrate the antagonistic ideas. From Jefferson down the Democrats have favored letting actual settlers obtain, directly from the government, homes out of the public lands, or conserving them for the benefit of the nation. Hamilton and his present-day disciples have consistently favored selling it in great blocks to syndicates, to smelter trusts or oil magnates, and have the nation profit through their development or exploitation of it.

There are differences enough, fundamental and immediate, to sharply define the line between Democracy and Republicanism. Wiser rules may profess to see none, but they are perfectly apparent to the practical interests, those that seek governmental advantages and favors. Hence the enormous sums contributed to Republican campaign funds, even in 1904 when they disliked the candidate; hence the astonishingly large contributions to Smith’s campaign in Illinois for the Senatorship and to Vare’s in Pennsylvania. Thus is explained Sinclair’s $250,000 to the Republican fund. These particular contributions were not bribes, but support to governmental policies the donors favored.

By its work in framing the government, by its work in establishing it on a sure foundation, by its administration of it for sixty years of its earlier life, by its work as a minority party, coupled with the accomplishments of the Cleveland and Wilson administrations, must the Democratic Party be judged.

Its history demonstrates fully its indestructibility, its ability to “come back” after disastrous defeats. That is due to its basic principles being sound and thoroughly American. It has made some mistakes, in abandoning and in applying those principles. Like other minority parties it sometimes has made concessions of principle to expediency and adopted for a time fads and aims to attract the support of the other elements of the opposition. Its current policies have at times been unwise or untimely; it has not always been wisely led, not always true to its leaders. But its history contains no such reversal of principle as Federalist, Whig and Republican records exhibit.

The party has established imperishable principles in an imperishable record of government. It has built an indestructible structure upon what Madison wrote into the Constitution. It has placed at its own and the nation’s head such lasting living forces as Jefferson, Jackson and Wilson.