Suggested Citation:

Link, Arthur S. "Democratic Politics and the Presidential Campaign of 1912 in Tennessee." The East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications 18 (1946): 107-130.

DEMOCRATIC POLITICS AND THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1912 IN TENNESSEE[1]

By ARTHUR S. LINK

"If an exact account should be written of important events in this State during the past year, no novel of the season could compare with it in sensational features," wrote a Nashville woman during the early spring of 1909. "The one element lacking," she added, "is erotic decadence."[2] Even if one makes a charitable allowance of literary license to our Nashville observer, the fact remains that the Democratic party in Tennessee during the years from 1908-1912 was the victim of nearly every imaginable political hysteria. "To the outside world," commented an influential political journal, "Tennessee doubtless seems a State gone mad."[3] Families and churches were disrupted by political disagreements; to a degree business and social life was disorganized; and certainly it was evident to political observers outside the state that government had become a mockery, while the executive, legislature, and judiciary had, on one occasion or another, been prostituted to the vagaries of partisan politics.

So complex and manifold were the causes for the chaotic state of Democratic politics in Tennessee during the period 1908-1912 that the historian is hard put to it to unravel the tangled web of confused issues and bitter personal controversies, or to distinguish among them. Basically the chief bone of contention was the prohibition issue; it was upon this rock that the Democratic party foundered in 1910 and 1912. Prohibition sentiment in Tennessee antedates the Civil War, but it was not until the early 1870's that any really organized anti-whiskey movement got under way. In 1887 a proposed state-wide prohibition amendment to the constitution was decisively defeated at the polls; but the large vote cast in favor of the amendment (117,504 for; 145,234 against)[4] was an early indication of the widespread anti-liquor sentiment. In 1899 the legislature enacted a local option law for towns of less than 2,000 popula-

---

[1] Research on this article was financed by grants from the Julius Rosenwald Fund.

[2] Mrs. L. H. Harris, "The Willipus-Wallipus in Tennessee Politics," *Independent*, LXVI (March 25, 1909), 622.

[3] "Political Hysteria in Tennessee," *ibid.*, LXIX (September 22, 1910), 663.

[4] William H. Combs and William E. Cole, *Tennessee: A Political Study* (Knoxville, 1940), 40.

tion, and by subsequent amendments the law was extended to all cities and towns in the state by 1907. In the meantime the prohibition crusaders, chief among whom were such powerful organizations as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Anti-Saloon League, and the evangelical churches, had been assiduously at work. By 1908 only Nashville, Memphis, Chattanooga, and La Follette were outside the prohibition pale.[5]

State-wide prohibition was the leading, in fact, about the only issue in the Democratic gubernatorial contest in 1908, when former Senator Edward W. Carmack attempted to defeat Governor Malcolm R. Patterson for renomination. Patterson was a resourceful foe of state-wide prohibition and an advocate of local option; he was conservative on economic issues and — compared with Carmack — had a colorless personality. His political strength lay in the support he received from the powerful Democratic city machines, the liquor interests, and the bulk of the Negro voters, whose good will he assiduously cultivated.

Few politicians in the history of Tennessee have had as stormy a career, or so commanded the devotion of a large following of voters as Edward Ward Carmack. Born in 1858, the son of a Campbellite minister, Carmack was educated at the Webb School, afterwards read law, and entered the state legislature in 1884. As editor of the *Nashville American* from 1888 to 1892 and the Memphis *Commercial Appeal* from 1892 to 1896, he fought throughout for prohibition, free silver, and Bryan; and he resigned from the editorship of the *Commercial Appeal* during the campaign of 1896 because of a disagreement with the "Gold Democratic" owners of the newspaper.[6] In 1896 he was elected to Congress on a free silver ticket from Memphis, and was reelected for a second term in 1898. In 1901 he was elected to the United States Senate, where he served until 1907, when he was defeated for reelection by former Governor Robert L. Taylor.

The Democratic gubernatorial nomination contest of 1908 was bitterly fought between Carmack and Patterson. Carmack of course had the support of the church groups, the prohibitionists, and the progressive Bryan Democrats; Patterson was the candidate of the state machine, the anti-prohibitionists, the liquor interests, and conservatives in general. The result was one of the most memorable campaigns in the history of Tennessee. The Democratic party was split wide open on the liquor question and Patterson defeated his

[5] Philip M. Hamer, *Tennessee, A History, 1673-1932* (New York, 1933), 4 vols., II, 704.

[6] Kenneth McKellar, *Tennessee Senators as Seen by One of Their Successors* (Kingsport, Tenn., 1942), 464-465.

rival by a majority of some seven thousand votes.[7]

Shortly after his defeat in the primary contest, Carmack became editor of the *Nashville Tennessean,* which Luke Lea, an enterprising and ambitious young man of Nashville had recently established. Throughout the summer and fall of 1908 Carmack carried on a veritable crusade for prohibition in the editorial columns of the *Tennessean.* He also carried his fight to the Democratic state convention. In the determination of disputed elections, many of his followers were unseated, and he failed to secure approval of a prohibition platform commitment. But he did succeed in helping to nominate and elect a legislature, a majority of the members of which were pledged to vote for a state-wide prohibition law.

During Carmack's editorial campaign against Patterson, he took occasion to ridicule one of Patterson's chief political advisers, Duncan B. Cooper.[8] On the day the editorial was published, November 9, 1908, Carmack met Cooper and his son Robin on one of Nashville's main streets; gun play resulted in which the Coopers shot and killed Carmack and Robin Cooper was wounded. Thus ended the career of one of Tennessee's most turbulent figures. After a prolonged trial the Coopers were convicted of murder and were sentenced to twenty years in prison. The state supreme court upheld Duncan B. Cooper's conviction and ordered that his son's case be remanded for retrial, whereupon Patterson, on April 13, 1910, promptly pardoned the older man.

For a time after his death Edward W. Carmack was a more powerful factor in Tennessee politics in death than he had ever been in life. He was immediately canonized as the martyr of the prohibition cause by the church and prohibition press, and the political character of his assassination gave the prohibition movement exactly the impetus that it needed for successful achievement. The legislature in January, 1909, passed the prohibition law that was a memorial to Carmack's name and, when Patterson promptly vetoed it, just as promptly passed the measure over the Governor's veto. Officially, at least, Tennessee became "dry" on July 1, 1909.[9]

In the meantime, the prohibition Democrats had organized their faction into the so-called Independent Democratic party, of which Richard M. Barton of Memphis was the chairman and Luke Lea of the *Nashville Tennessean* (soon to become the *Nashville Tennessean and American*), and E. B. Stahlman of the *Nashville Banner* were the chief editorial spokesmen. The Independents carried their

---

[7] *Ibid.*, 474-475; William L. Frierson, "Edward Ward Carmack," *Dictionary of American Biography* (New York, 1928-1944), 21 vols., III, 496-497.
[8] *Nashville Tennessean,* November 9, 1908.
[9] Hamer, *Tennessee, a History,* II, 705.

fight into the judicial election during the summer of 1910 and, with the support of the Republicans who nominated no candidates, succeeded in defeating the regular Democratic nominees. The judicial campaign was just as bitterly contested as the gubernatorial campaign of 1908 had been; and Governor Patterson, who had entered the fight, now suffered his second serious defeat at the hands of the Independents. The prohibition Democrats refused to participate in the regular Democratic convention, which renominated Patterson for the governorship, and held a state convention of their own in Nashville on September 14. As a sort of last-ditch effort at reconciliation, Patterson withdrew from the gubernatorial contest three days before the Independent convention; but the Independents were by now in no mood for compromise and endorsed the Republican candidate, Ben W. Hooper, an outspoken advocate of prohibition enforcement and a leading "dry."[10]

It was one of the most amazing political conventions in the history of Tennessee, this meeting of the Independent Democrats, and the similarities between it and the national Progressive convention at Chicago in August, 1912, are striking. For there was, first of all, an almost perfect union of political and religious fervor on both occasions. "The impression upon a comparative stranger," wrote one astonished onlooker at the Nashville convention, "was that it was a great company (there were some 1,500 delegates) of three or four thousand men filled with deep earnestness, which was of high moral quality . . . . The atmosphere was heavy with aroused spirit of righteous indignation."[11] In the second place, both the Tennessee Independents and the Roosevelt insurgents were revolting against what they conceived to be machine, reactionary control of their respective parties.

The efforts of the Regulars to save their party from disruption and defeat were utterly fruitless. The regular Democratic state committee also resigned and a new convention met on October 6 and elected a new state committee, and nominated Robert L. Taylor for governor. But even Taylor, who had for years been the idol of the Democratic masses and a great conciliator, could neither win the election nor draw the warring factions together. The Independents stayed outside the party and elected Hooper governor; it was the first Republican administration in Tennessee since 1880.

Lea's newspaper, in its analysis of the election returns, declared:

> The Democrats of Tennessee elected Hooper not because of, but despite, the fact that he is a Republican. They elected him as the only way left

[10] George A. Gates, "Democratic Insurgency in Tennessee," *Independent,* LXIX (October 20, 1910), 866-867.

[11] *Ibid.,* 868.

open for them to destroy a corrupt political machine and to drive from power those men who have taken over the Democratic organization as a personal asset for their own base uses and defiled and despoiled the public service.

In making a fight for the destruction of the corrupt political machine the loyal and patriotic Democrats here in Tennessee have in no way impaired the National Democracy, for while they were purging the party of Pattersonism, they gave the full measure of the strength to the Democratic candidates for Congress, returning to the national house the eight Democratic members.[12]

Hooper's victory, the Independents declared, and the election of an anti-Patterson legislature marked a new turn of affairs in Tennessee history. The Patterson machine had been dealt a heavy blow, it is true, but it is doubtful that its power had been utterly destroyed as the Independents imagined. Certainly it was true that the Independent revolt had been an uprising of the progressive elements in the state Democratic party against ring rule, domination of the party by the liquor interests, and venality in the public service. It was in every respect a reflection of a general progressive revolt against the old order of things that was convulsing the South and the nation at the time. Needless to say, the ghost of Edward W. Carmack must have enjoyed the election post-mortems that filled the Tennessee newspapers on November 10, 1910.

Without an understanding of the causes for, and events leading to the disruption of the party in Tennessee in 1910, it would be impossible to comprehend the alignment of the Democratic factions in the presidential pre-convention campaign that followed during the next eighteen months.

On the same first Tuesday after the first Monday in November in 1910 when Ben Hooper rode easily to victory over Bob Taylor, a new political figure rose to prominence in the East. He was Woodrow Wilson, late president of Princeton University, who had left the University to accept the Democratic gubernatorial nomination at the hands of James Smith, Jr., and Robert Davis, bosses of Newark and Jersey City, respectively. Wilson had begun his campaign timidly because he thought he was a conservative but really was not sure of his political opinions; yet the impelling force of circumstances and the obviously corrupt domination of his party by a political ring forced him quickly to change his mind with regard to the leading issues. Before the campaign ended, he emphatically endorsed a sweeping reform program and repudiated publicly the very bosses who had gone to considerable effort to nominate him. All of which won him the support of the independent voters, most of whom were nominally Republicans, and the governorship of New Jersey by the

[12] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, November 10, 1910. There were, at this time, ten congressmen from Tennessee, two of whom were usually Republicans.

thumping majority of some 50,000 votes. And that, in a state which only two years before had given the Republican presidential candidate an 80,000 majority, was an accomplishment that made political observers sit up and take notice.[13]

In many respects it might be said that the congressional and gubernatorial elections of November, 1910, resulted in the creation of a new Democratic party in the country at large. In the first place, the Democratic landslide signalled the end of Bryan's domination of the party and brought to the fore a new group of Democratic leaders within the states and in Congress: Woodrow Wilson, whose victory in New Jersey was perhaps the most spectacular of all; Judson Harmon, elected governor of Ohio for the second time by a tremendous majority; Champ Clark of Missouri, the next speaker of the House of Representatives; and Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama, the ranking Democratic member of the House Ways and Means Committee and the leading proponent of tariff reduction and reform. Bryan, actually, had bolted the Democratic ticket in Nebraska; his power and influence in party councils would decline precipitously during the pre-convention campaign. In the second place, the Democratic victory brought to the forefront a new set of issues, preeminent among which was tariff reform, and laid to rest, at least temporarily, Bryan's favorite issues of free silver, anti-imperialism, and government ownership of the railroads (which he had broached in 1908).

Before the 1910 campaign had ended it was obvious also that Wilson would have the support of progressive Democrats for the presidential nomination in 1912. It was a tentative offer of support that they made, to be sure, predicated upon Wilson's successful administration of the governorship; but it was plain by election day that progressives preferred him to Judson Harmon, the conservative, respectable governor of Ohio. Throughout the southern states, where the Democratic party was divided into conservative and progressive factions that to all intents and purposes constituted separate parties in political contests, the progressive Democratic leaders looked to Wilson to provide a new liberal leadership for the party, devoid of the stigma of Bryanism, yet squarely advanced on the issues.[14] As

[13] All material in this article relating to Wilson is taken from my forthcoming book, *Woodrow Wilson, the Road to the White House*, to be published by the Princeton University Press.

[14] For a general treatment of the reaction of southern progressives to Wilson's rise to political power, see my "The South and the Democratic Campaign of 1910-1912" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation in the Library of the University of North Carolina), *passim*; for specific treatments, see my "The Wilson Movement in Texas, 1910-1912," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, XLVIII (October, 1944), 170-171; also my "The Democratic Pre-Convention Campaign of 1912 in Georgia," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XXIX (September, 1945), 143-146.

the *Nashville Tennessean and American* put it, "The anti-machine Democrats in Tennessee who aided in the election of Ben W. Hooper on a Democratic platform would have voted for that splendid type of leadership, Woodrow Wilson, in New Jersey."[15]

The reaction of the Democratic press in Tennessee to Wilson's entrance upon the political stage was typical of the remarks of pleasant surprise and enthusiastic comment one finds in most southern newspapers of the time. To begin with, Wilson was practically without a political past, and because of the general nature of his campaign appeals, southern observers saw him as both a progressive and a conservative — depending upon the point of view. The militantly progressive *Nashville Tennessean and American,*[16] for example, was elated by Wilson's victory in New Jersey and immediately began to boom him for the presidency. "It was a happy day," it declared, "when the scholar arrived in politics."[17] On the other hand, the conservative prohibitionist *Nashville Banner* and the conservative regular Democratic *Chattanooga Daily Times* were just as enthusiastic. Wilson, declared the *Banner,* was "the type of man whose success in the political field promises a return to the statesmanship of the old days,"[18] and the *Daily Times* confidently predicted that Wilson's wise, patriotic, and "conservatively radical" administration in New Jersey would win the support of an overwhelming majority of Democrats in the presidential nomination campaign.[19]

Events that followed in the course of Wilson's career in New Jersey from December, 1910, through April, 1911, moved so rapidly and were so spectacular in character that they must have left the average observer in Tennessee gasping for breath. When Boss James Smith attempted to win the senatorship in New Jersey (during December, 1910, and January, 1911), Wilson led the progressive revolt that succeeded in smashing Smith's senatorial ambitions and was largely responsible for the election of James E. Martine, who had been endorsed at a rump party primary. Actually the fight in New Jersey developed into a struggle for control of the Democratic party, and Wilson's success in breaking the hold of the Smith machine over the state party was his most significant accomplishment. To Tennessee Democrats who followed the controversy day by day in the

---

[15] *Nashville Tennessean and American,* November 10, 1910.

[16] The *Tennessean and American* was easily the leading progressive newspaper in the state; it was also the chief Bryan spokesman among Tennessee Democrats. See *ibid.,* December 20, 21, 1910, and February 12, 1911 for discussions of the direct election of senators, the initiative and referendum, and the recall; see especially the editorial of December 19, 1910, "The Democratic Party Must Be Progressive," for a discussion of the general issues.

[17] *Ibid.,* November 21, 1910.

[18] *Nashville Banner,* November 9, 1910.

[19] *Chattanooga Daily Times,* November 10 and 13, 1910.

newspapers, Wilson appeared as the defender of popular rights, political faith, and good government.[20] The senatorial controversy was really of profound importance in shaping the future course of Wilson's political career and of the Wilson presidential movement, for he was immediately thrust forward as the foremost Democratic progressive champion. "It requires the unselfish devotion to principle and the splendid powers of such men as Dr. Wilson," declared one Tennessee editor, "to wrest the reins of government from the hands of men who would prostitute it to the base service of greedy and corrupt interests." [21] The *Chattanooga Daily Times* observed that Wilson was revealing the "fearless and sterling qualities for large leadership that impress most emphatically his fitness for the leadership of the party in the nation."[22] The *Tennessean and American*, always anxious to lambast the Patterson machine, sought to point the moral and adorn the tale by comparing the political situations in New Jersey and Tennessee:

> The similarity of the conflicting forces in New Jersey and in Tennessee is so marked, and Dr. Wilson's position is so clearly and distinctly on the side of the people as against ring rule, official venality, force and fraud, that we need no committee to tell us where he would stand if he were in Tennessee. He would be fighting the James Smiths who have sought and are now seeking to convert both parties into servile and slavish agencies of greedy interests. He would be fighting those men who are serving insolent political machines instead of the great political parties.[23]

No sooner had Wilson won his victory over Smith than he set about to redeem his party's platform by securing the enactment by an unwilling legislature of a reform program which included a sweeping primary election law, a new public utilities commission empowered to set rates, a workmen's compensation law, and a stringent corrupt practices act,[24] as well as a number of other minor reform laws. The significance of Wilson's reform administration, coming so close upon his victory in the senatorial controversy, can best be understood when it is realized that it inevitably made him the leading and apparently the strongest contender for the Democratic presidential nomination. By the time the New Jersey legislature convened, Wilson had priority on the front pages of almost every Democratic newspaper in Tennessee. Tennessee Democrats ap-

---

[20] There was full reporting of the controversy in the Tennessee press. For typical editorial comments, see *Nashville Banner*, December 13 and 21, 1910, January 25, 1911; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, December 10, 1910, January 25, 1911; *Nashville Tennessean and American*, January 8 and 26, 1911; Knoxville *Journal and Tribune*, December 17, 1910, January 27, 1911.

[21] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, January 8, 1911.

[22] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, December 10, 1910.

[23] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, January 8, 1911.

[24] *Acts of the One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth Legislature of the State of New Jersey, Session of 1911* (Trenton, 1911), Chapter 183, pp. 276-325; Chapter 195, pp. 374-389; Chapter 96, pp. 134-145; Chapter 188, pp. 329-349.

plauded when Wilson almost literally kicked an obnoxious Democratic boss out of his office;[25] they followed his earnest appeals tc the legislators for the redemption of party pledges; and they congatulated themselves when he succeeded in securing the enactment of all of his reform program. "He absolutely refuses to be guaged by the measure of ordinary politics," declared the leading Chattanewspaper. " . . . If we do not take such a man we will be the losers not he." [26] The *Nashville Banner* gave what was probably the most accurate summary of Democratic opinion in the state in the spring of 1911, at a time when Wilson's pre-convention popularity was at its peak:

> No man in the late years of American politics has come more suddenly into national view or made a stronger impression on the American public than this erstwhile college president. His coming into public life has been unique, but even if he lacked experience in what has been called practical politics, he has given full proof that he did not lack study and knowledge of such matters. He has proved himself more than a match for the practical politicians with whom he has had to cope. He has succeeded in all he has undertaken, and he has undertaken things from which most governors shrink as being no part of their official duty and unnecessarily complicating their chances in politics . . . .
>
> The thoroughly educated man, free from any objectionable influences, one of clear common sense and strong character, is the ideal man in American public life and Woodrow Wilson approaches that ideal nearer than any man now prominent in the country's politics.[27]

During the early part of May, 1911, Wilson embarked upon a speaking tour of the West, during the course of which he made over thirty speeches in seven states. It was in effect his first important bid for the Democratic nomination in 1912, and he used his western audiences as sounding boards for his campaign appeals. Actually he said nothing new or startling, except that he believed in Christianity and in popular government — in the initiative, referendum, and recall (except the recall of judges), commission city government, and the like[28] — but he said enough to frighten fearful conservatives into believing that he was well on the way to becoming another Bryan.[29] Practically all the Democratic newspapers in Tennessee published Wilson's most important western addresses, and

---

[25] See *i. e., Chattanooga Daily Times,* March 26, 1911.
[26] *Ibid.,* May 28, 1911.
[27] *Nashville Banner,* April 25, 1911.
[28] For Wilson's western speeches see the *Kansas City Journal,* May 6, 1911; *Kansas City Times,* May 6, 1911; Denver *Rocky Mountain News,* May 8, 10, 1911; *Los Angeles Times,* May 14, 1911;*Pasadena Star,* May 13, 1911; *San Francisco Bulletin,* May 16, 1911; *San Francisco Chronicle,* May 17, 1911;Portland *Oregon Daily Journal,* May 19-20, 1911; *Portland Evening Telegram,* May 19, 1911; *Seattle Times,* May 21, 1911;*St. Paul Pioneer Press,* May 25, 1911; Lincoln *Nebraska State Journal,* May 27, 1911.
[29] See *i. e.,* New York *Sun,* May 13, 1911.

for the first time Democrats in the state could see what stand he took on national issues. Editorial reaction in Tennessee, on the whole, was overwhelmingly favorable to Wilson's new progressive departure. "Gov. Wilson is touching a responsive chord when he points out the prevailing evils and calls for their correction," commented the *Nashville Tennessean and American*. "He is representing the great progressive movement, not of one party, but of all parties. He is reflecting the views of the mass of American people."[30] Conservative editors, on the other hand, were pleased by the absence of demagoguery in Wilson's appeal and the sober temper and rationality of his speeches. They compared him to Bryan and observed that the Commoner suffered by the comparison.[31]

Interest in the course of the Wilson campaign did not, however, overshadow or diminish the struggle between the Independents and regular Democrats that was in progress in Tennessee during 1911. The legislature of that year was about as turbulent as any, and the two factions were, if anything, farther apart than they had been a year before. The Independents and Republicans in the legislature united into a solid bloc to prevent any weakening of the prohibition laws. This the Fusionists — as they were called — succeeded in doing; after a bitter and protracted struggle, they also elected Luke Lea, the prohibitionist leader upon whom Carmack's mantle had fallen, to the United States Senate.

While it was true that the prohibitionists had written their moral opinions into the Tennessee statutes in 1909, they had not come anywhere near assaulting the remaining strongholds (as they thought) of wickedness and sin — the cities of Memphis, Chattanooga, and Nashville, where the prohibition laws were openly flouted both by the saloon-keepers and the municipal authorities. Especially notorious was Nashville, where Mayor Hilary E. Howse made no effort to conceal his contempt for prohibitionists and their laws. In July, 1911, the *Nashville Banner* began a campaign to drive Howse from power in the municipal election in the fall. It charged that Howse's refusal to enforce the liquor laws was responsible for the rapid growth of liquor dens, gambling dives, and houses of prostitution; that the underworld and the city administration were working hand in glove; that there was no doubt that Howse was protecting the lawless elements in the city.[32] The presidents of twelve colleges and seminaries in Nashville, led by Chancellor James H. Kirkland of Vanderbilt University, entered their emphatic

[30] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, May 9, 1911.
[31] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, May 21, 1911.
[32] *Nashville Banner*, September 30, 1911.

protest against "The conditions of lawlessness and vice . . . unparalleled in the history of Nashville."[33] The Baptist ministers of the city, a week later, published a fervent appeal for a clean sweep,[34] but the struggle to dislodge the boss was unsuccessful; Howse was triumphantly reelected and was mayor of Nashville six months hence when he led the fight against Woodrow Wilson.

The organization in Tennessee of the movement to make Wilson the Democratic presidential nominee in 1912 followed a pattern typical of the movements in most other states. First came the spontaneous organization of Wilson-for-President clubs, such as the club organized at Columbia, Tennessee, in September, 1911.[35] The beginnings of the organized Wilson movement in the state, however, were auspicious and altogether encouraging to the New Jersey governor's friends. A group of Democrats gathered at the Maxwell House in Nashville on October 14, formed a preliminary state organization headed by five men strategically selected from four of the cities in the state, and sounded a call to the Wilson followers in Tennessee to take the lead in organizing Wilson clubs in their communities.[36] In the organization of the campaign which followed as a result of the Nashville conference, University of Virginia and Princeton alumni played a prominent role. Lewis M. Coleman, Wilson's fellow-student at Virginia, for example, led in organizing the Hamilton County Wilson Club in Chattanooga in November.[37] Robert F. Fisher, prominent Memphis attorney and Princeton alumnus, joined with Judge R. M. Barton and David Fentress to initiate a Wilson organization in Memphis.[38] The Reverend Doctor Josiah Sibley and D. C. Webb organized a group of Wilson enthusiasts in Knoxville in November.[39] After this flurry of activity, the organization of Wilson clubs came to an end with the formation of a club in Nashville in January, 1912.[40]

At the outset of the movement the Wilson leaders made an assiduous effort to disassociate their cause from the internal political squabbles that had disrupted the Democratic party in Tennessee. One is reminded of an identical situation in Texas, where

---

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.*, October 4, 1911.

[35] *Atlanta Georgian*, September 8, 1911.

[36] Judge John E. Richardson of Murfreesboro was chairman of the state organization. The other members of the exceutive committee were William L. Talley and Judge Robert Ewing of Nashville, Judge R. M. Barton of Memphis, and Lewis M. Coleman of Chattanooga. *Nashville Banner*, October 14, 1911; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, October 15, 1911.

[37] T. S. McCallie of the McCallie School was also a leader in the Chattanooga organization. *Chattanooga Daily Times*, November 7, 1911.

[38] *Nashville Banner*, December 2, 1911.

[39] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, November 10, 1911.

[40] *Wilmington* (N. C.) *Morning Star*, January 7, 1912.

the Wilson leaders, who were generally prohibitionists and progressives and opponents of Senator Joseph W. Bailey, protested that the Wilson movement was above factional quarrels. This simply was not true — either in Texas or Tennessee, or in any other state in the union, where the opposing Democratic factions invariably lined up behind different candidates. Actually the Independent-prohibitionist character of the Wilson movement in Tennessee was evident from the very outset. With a few exceptions, all of the Wilson leaders were prominent Independents; the leading Independent and prohibitionist newspapers in the state—the *Nashville Tennessean and American*, the *Nashville Banner*, and the *Knoxville Sentinel*, to mention only the leaders — were the leading Wilson journals.[41] In the rural counties, where the prohibition sentiment was strongest, thirty-five out of fifty-four newspapers supported the Wilson cause.[42]

Under these circumstances the regular Democrats did what they would probably have done had there been no split in the Tennessee Democratic ranks — they came out solidly against Wilson and supported either Harmon, Underwood, or Clark. Even the *Chattanooga Times*, which had been the most enthusiastic supporter of Wilson's candidacy in the state, turned its back on the New Jersey man. It declared in February, 1912 that Democrats were suspicious of any movement led and fostered by the Independents,[43] and by April was declaring that Wilson was "laboring under an erratic obsession" in his campaign appeals.[44] The Harmon, Underwood, and Clark supporters came largely from the ranks of the Regulars. Harmon, who spoke in Knoxville and Nashville during the campaign,[45] made a desultory campaign and had the support of the conservative Memphis *Commercial Appeal*.[46] Underwood's campaign in Tennessee was managed by none other than the notorious mayor of Nashville, Hilary E. Howse, and H. H. Mayberry of Franklin.[47] It made little headway among the people. Senator Bob Taylor set out in the fall of 1911 to lead the Clark forces and to secure Tennessee's votes in the national convention for the Speaker, but he, too, worked largely among the politicians and made no popular campaign.

---

[41] Other Tennessee Wilson newspapers were the *Tipton Record*, *Pulaski Citizen*, *Lawrence Democrat*, *Manchester Times*, *Morristown Gazette*, and *Lewisburg Tribune*.

[42] Columbia (S. C.) *State*, February 21, 1912

[43] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, February 28, 1912.

[44] *Ibid.*, April 21, 1912.

[45] At Knoxville on September 16, 1911; at Nashville on April 9, 1912. See Knoxville *Journal and Tribune*, September 16-17, 1911; *Nashville Banner*, April 9-10, 1912.

[46] For a leading editorial see Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, March 7, 1912.

[47] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, February 5, 1912; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, February 7, 1912; *Atlanta Constitution*, March 20, 1912.

After all, the situation in the Democratic party was such as to dampen the ardor of the most enthusiastic promoters of presidential candidates. What constituted the Democratic party — the Regular or the Independent faction? What if the Independents carried out their threat to hold a separate state convention, nominate their own delegates, and carry the fight to the floor of the national convention itself? How best could the two factions be brought together again, even temporarily, for the purpose of selecting the delegates? All these questions were infinitely more important than the question of whom Tennessee should support at the Baltimore convention and consequently so subordinated the national campaign to the considerations of local politics that for a time it appeared that no one really cared whom Tennessee supported.

Such was the chaos of Tennessee Democratic politics when Woodrow Wilson came to Nashville in February, 1812, to speak at the dedication of a new Young Men's Christian Association and, incidentally, to do a little campaigning on the side. Wilson's unknown brother, Joseph R. Wilson, city editor of the *Nashville Banner*, was among the group of Nashville citizens who greeted him on his arrival in the city on February 24.[48]

During the afternoon two hundred Democrats from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama gathered at the Hotel Hermitage at a luncheon given in Wilson's honor by the local Wilson organization. Judge T. E. Matthews presided and introduced the Governor with a felicitiously-phrased ecomium. Wilson was in high spirits; he had just returned from a successful speaking tour in the Mid-West, and he proceeded to discuss again the general issues of the pre-convention campaign — the tariff, control of monopolies, and the necessity for federal banking reform. All of which was very general and exceedingly vague. He concluded with one of his perorations (for which he was famous) which usually succeeded in ignoring the issues:

> What thrills my imagination is this — we are at the threshold of a great enterprise, the retranslation of American liberties in terms of our present day life. The party that first takes up this great programme will govern the country for the next generation . . . .
>
> Now, what should we do? We ought above all things to get together. This is a national enterprise. It is too big for any man or any set of men to declare that it shall be done in their way or not at all. The cost of failure is too big. We shall be judged for a generation as we act in 1912, for to fail now means that democracy in America will be denied fresh fruitage, that America has become a nation dominated by self-interests, and has joined

[48] The other members of the reception committee of the Nashville Wilson Club were Judge Thomas E. Matthews, General W. H. Washington, Lee Douglas, I. I. Pendleton, James T. Miller, Chancellor Kirkland, and Frank A. Berry.

the ranks of nations which go down because they have forgotten the destiny of men.[49]

It would perhaps be difficult to find a more general statement of rather vague idealistic objectives; but it stirred Wilson's listeners immensely. Hardly had he completed his concluding sentence when they were standing in their chairs, shouting at the tops of their voices.

On the following evening, February 25, Wilson spoke at the dedication of the YMCA building. It was a thoroughly Fusionist affair; Republican Governor Ben Hooper gracefully commented that if the Republican candidate for the Presidency had to be defeated, he hoped "the southern man who comes from New Jersey" would be elected. Independent Senator Luke Lea set off a riotous Wilson demonstration by declaring that Wilson was "The man whom the majority of the people of the United States want for their next President."[50]

The political character of the noisy demonstration, however, was in marked contrast to Wilson's speech on the occasion. He had come before the Association, not as a presidential candidate, but rather as a lay preacher, striving to interpret the meaning of Christianity to his audience. The chief success of the YMCA, he declared, had been its advancement of the spirit of Christ. Political liberty had been Christianity's unique discovery, he continued; America therefore ought not to have to be taught that greatness was spiritual, that it was the vision of goodness and the spirit of self-sacrifice that made a nation great.[51] The address drew from the Nashville *Christian Advocate* the observation that Wilson "places first things first, believing that there is liberty for the individual and for the nation only through surrender to Jesus Christ."[52]

Aside from the unpredictable number of new recruits his Nashville speaking tour brought him, and a sizeable amount of friendly publicity, the results of Wilson's visit were barren. When he left Nashville the political situation was in exactly the same condition as when he arrived and the pre-convention campaign picture was so confused by the Democratic rupture that no man could confidently predict the future. The problem of reorganizing the party was rendered highly critical when a sub-committee of the Independent state committee called a state convention to meet in Nashville on June 18 to select delegates to the Baltimore convention and to nominate candidates for presidential electors.[53] Should two Democratic state con-

---

[49] *Nashville Banner*, February 24, 1912.
[50] From an account in the *Nashville Tennessean and American*, July 3, 1912.
[51] *Ibid.*, February 26, 1912.
[52] *Christian Advocate* (Nashville), LXXIII (March 1, 1912), 5.
[53] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, March 19, 1912.

ventions meet and nominate different electors, the result might easily be the defeat of the Democratic ticket in the state. In order to forestall any such catastrophe, the Democratic editors of the state, sixty in number, met in Nashville on March 22, 1912, to formulate some compromise that would be acceptable to both factions. By a unanimous vote the editors adopted a plan whereby a state Democratic convention, in which both factions would be represented, should meet, elect delegates to the Baltimore convention, nominate candidates for the state supreme court and the court of civil appeals, and elect a new Democratic state committee. The reconciliation plan would become effective when a majority of both the Independent and Regular state committees had signed an agreement to accept the proposal as that of the Democratic party and had entered into full party fellowship with the leaders in the movement.[54]

The acceptance of the editors' plan by both Democratic factions ended the confusion which had discouraged the spokesmen of the several presidential candidates and was the signal for the beginning of a brief and intense struggle for control of the Tennessee delegation to the national convention.[55] Early in May the Wilson leaders opened headquarters in the Maxwell House, where G. Bibb Jacobs was in charge of operations. The prospect of controlling the state convention seemed at least within the realm of probability, and the Wilson managers thought there was an even chance that some such miracle would happen. The Clark men, too, were active and had set up headquarters a few doors away from the Wilson office in the Maxwell House. Senator Taylor had died in April, and in his passing the Clark men had lost a powerful leader; former Governor John I. Cox had assumed leadership of the Clark organization.[56]

Around May 12 Democratic politicians of all factions and groups began to gather in Nashville for the state convention, which was to meet on May 15. Luke Lea came down from Washington; Mayor Ed Crump and former Governor Patterson arrived from Memphis.[57] The managers for Wilson, Clark, Underwood, and Harmon hovered around the Maxwell House, and all seemed confident that their candidate would secure the support of the Tennessee delegation. On the eve of the convention, some 150 Wilson delegates gathered at the hotel for a last-minute caucus and soon afterwards published an optimistic prediction that Wilson's friends would control the state convention.[58] The opposition leaders, be it noted,

---

[54] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, March 23, 1912.
[55] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, May 3, 1912.
[56] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, May 9, 1912.
[57] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, May 13, 1912. Even Republican Senator Newell Sanders happened to be on the scene.
[58] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, May 15, 1912.

simulated an equal amount of confidence. Actually, the situation was still incredibly confused. No one seemed to know whether there would be a fight by either of the groups to secure instructions for their candidate, but the likelihood of such a struggle was made highly improbable when it was discovered that no candidate had a majority of the convention vote.[59]

The chief task before the convention, of course, was to re-create the Democratic party as an integral unit; and since tempers were already dangerously short, a fight in the convention over instructions would hardly be calculated to restore harmony, or even to preserve the semblance of it. When the convention met on May 15, therefore, the leaders agreed to divide the delegates-at-large equally among the four candidates. S. M. Young and George Fort Milton were chosen by the Wilson men; William A. Percy and Luke Lea by Underwood's supporters;[60] John A. Tipton and H. C. Adler by the Clark managers; and Nat Baxter and M. M. Allison by the Harmon men.[61]

Divided among themselves, without unity or singleness of purpose, the twenty-four Tennessee delegates at the Baltimore convention exercised practically no influence, certainly no important influence at all, in the deliberations of that body. They divided their votes equally among the four leading candidates on the first ballot; and although there were fluctuations in their voting,[62] they persisted in this division until the last ballot was taken.[63] With the exception of Luke Lea, there were also no leaders of any importance among the Tennesseans. Lea, however, was one of the most resourceful and influential Wilson managers at Baltimore; he it was who succeeded in effecting an alliance early in the convention between the Wilson managers and Roger Sullivan, Democratic boss of Illinois, an agreement that was as much responsible as any other single factor in Wilson's nomination.[64]

After the long and gruelling struggle in the convention had

---

[59] *Ibid.*, May 14, 1912.

[60] Senator Lea was an avowed Wilson supporter, although he had refused to take an active part in the Wilson campaign organization in Tennessee. He was elected by the Underwood men, who were aware of his personal preference in the matter, and agreed to vote for Underwood as long as Underwood's name was before the convention. See Lue Kea to Frank Dibrell, published in *ibid.*, October 22, 1912.

[61] *Pulaski* (Tenn.) *Citizen*, May 23, 1912.

[62] Harmon was eliminated as a candidate early in the balloting. On the tenth ballot the Harmon men in the Tennessee delegation went over to Clark and generally voted for him thereafter.

[63] *Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention . . . 1912* (Chicago, 1912), *passim*.

[64] I have discussed Lea's activities in my "The Baltimore Convention of 1912," *American Historical Review*, L (July, 1945), 698. There is also an excellent contemporary account of the convention, in which Lea figures prominently, in A. S. Link, "A Letter from One of Wilson's Managers," *ibid.*, 768-775.

culminated in Wilson's nomination on the forty-sixth ballot, the progressive, Wilson newspapers in Tennessee were naturally highly elated by the unexpected turn of events. "No braver or better men ever went to battle than those who led this conflict, and no greater victory for a righteous cause was ever achieved," declared Lea's newspaper. "The struggle was one against the combined forces of pelf and plunder, and to say the rights of the people were successfully defended against the assaults of such powerful interests is to say that those who waged and won this battle fully demonstrated their courage."[65] The *Nashville Banner*, which had never been overfriendly to Bryan, admitted that the Nebraskan had "flushed an ambuscade into which Wilson might have fallen," and proceeded to declare that "In Woodrow Wilson the Democratic party may find at once its Moses and its Joshua; the great leader who, properly supported, will deliver it from the long thraldom of defeat and the great ruler to give it permanent establishment in the promised land."[66] Significant, too, was the reaction of the conservative newspapers which had opposed Wilson's nomination and which, with amazing felicity and ease, became overnight the most ardent champions of progressive Democracy, ready now to defend Wilson against any charges the Republicans might make.[67]

Just as the Tennessee Democracy had done little to cause Wilson's nomination, it did little to secure his election. The root of the difficulty, of course, was the Independent-Regular controversy; and any hope that Democratic leaders might have had that Wilson's nomination would draw the factions together was soon disappointed by the continuation of the controversy during the summer and fall of 1912. Actually the acceptance of the editors' plan for Democratic reorganization turned out to be nothing more than an uneasy truce which was openly broken when the Regulars nominated for the governorship Benton McMillin, an anti-prohibition leader in the Patterson organization. There occurred during the early fall an amusing tug-of-war between the two groups, each bidding for the approval and support of Wilson and the national Democratic organization. From all outward appearances it would seem that the Independents, since they had been the leaders in the Wilson movement in Tennessee before the Baltimore convention, would secure Wilson's support. Then the *Nashville Democrat*, which had been established in 1911 as the newspaper spokesman of the Regulars, began a pressure campaign to force Wilson and the national committee

[65] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, July 3, 1912.
[66] *Nashville Banner*, July 3, 1912.
[67] See especially the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, July 3, 1912, in this connection; also Knoxville *Journal and Tribune*, July 3, 1912, for the reaction of a Tennessee Republican newspaper.

to support the Regular Democratic ticket. It published demands that Wilson come to Tennessee and speak in McMillin's behalf, and warned Wilson that failure on his part to do so might result in the defeat of the national ticket in the state. The state Democratic executive committee soon afterward followed up the *Nashville Democrat's* demands with a similar resolution of its own.[68]

The upshot of the matter was that Wilson found himself in an embarrassing dilemma. There are unfortunately no letters or memoranda in the Wilson Papers that reveal his thoughts on the Tennessee situation, but he was an exceedingly busy person with more serious problems to settle during the hectic days of October; and it is a safe assumption that he let William G. McAdoo, acting national chairman, and the national committee make the decision for him. In mid-October, therefore, McAdoo finally wrote Rice A. Pierce, chairman of the Regular Democratic state committee, that Wilson and the national committee were "not opposed to Gov. McMillin and the other Regular Democratic nominees for state offices in Tennessee," and that they were "warmly in favor of, and are supporting with all their power, the Regular Democratic nominees in every state in the Union." [69] It was about as non-committal an endorsement as McAdoo could possibly have made.

The publication of the McAdoo telegram set off again the fireworks of political controversy in Tennessee. Especially vociferous was the *Nashville Banner*, which rushed to the attack as soon as the telegram was published. It charged, first of all, that the Regular state committee had demanded from the Democratic national committee a sum of money sufficient to print the Democratic ballots and had threatened to leave the names of the electors off the Democratic ticket unless the money was forthcoming.[70] Pierce replied that he had made no such demands or threats,[71] yet the chairman of the Democratic state executive committee admitted that he had asked Wilson's "friends" to furnish money to print the ballots.[72] The *Banner* next charged the Regular Democratic leaders with trafficking with the enemy; Chairman Pierce, it asserted, had concluded an agreement with Theodore Roosevelt, when the Bull Moose leader was in Jackson, Tennessee, whereby the Progressives in the state would support McMillin for the governorship and the Regulars would support Roosevelt for the presidency.[73] When Pierce vehemently denied this charge of political treason, the *Banner* flung back the charges at him

[68] *Nashville Banner*, October 19, 1912.
[69] McAdoo to R. A. Pierce, October —, 1912, published in *ibid.*
[70] *Ibid.*
[71] *Ibid.*, October 22, 1912.
[72] *Ibid.*, October 23, 1912.
[73] *Ibid.*, October 19, 1912.

and pointed to the fact that he had not denied being in Jackson while Roosevelt was there. It was a malodorous affair, to say the least. The truth of the matter apparently was that Chairman Morton of the state executive committee visited national Democratic headquarters around September 1 and asked the national committee for money with which to run the campaign in Tennessee; and that after his return from New York, he asked the national committee for $15,000 to aid in carrying the state for Wilson and in electing a legislature that would send a Democrat to the United States Senate.[74] All of which was rather ridiculous, the Independents charged, in a state traditionally Democratic, and which proved, furthermore, that the Patterson machine was supported by "the liquor trust, the saloons . . . . the gamblers, bummers, loafers, and vagabonds."[75]

Despite the factional quarrels which precluded any united Democratic action in Tennessee during the presidential campaign, the mass of Democratic voters seem to have been genuinely stirred by Wilson's campaign appeals and desirous of his election. Wilson-Marshall[76] clubs were organized in every county and town in the state, and a woman's Wilson-Marshall movement was organized a week and a half before election day.[77] Needless to say, the Democratic newspapers, Regular or Independent, published Wilson's important campaign speeches and approved them (publicly, at least) enthusiastically. The New Freedom thus became official Democratic doctrine in Tennessee, and Regulars and Independents vied with one another in praising Wilson and berating Theodore Roosevelt and Taft.[78] Reviewing the presidential campaign a few days before the election, the *Chattanooga Daily Times* published an editorial which summarized most of what the Tennessee newspapers had already said:

> In no campaign in recent years has a Democratic leader so clearly and so courageously stated and advocated the basic principles of his party as Woodrow Wilson. He has driven straight ahead for tariff reform along right lines; for the destruction of monopoly through the reinstatement of regulated competition, and for the dethronement of bosses and the restoration of the powers of government into the hands of the people. He has not been diverted from his definite course in pursuit of these underlying principles by non-essentials, nor has he introduced fads and questionable isms to confuse the minds of the people. He has followed a direct path back to democratic simplicity and the rule of the people and their emancipation from the burdens

---

[74] *Ibid.*, October 23, 1912.

[75] *Ibid.*, October 19, 1912; see also *Nashville Tennessean and American*, November 2, 1912.

[76] Governor Thomas R. Marshall of Indiana, Democratic vice-presidential candidate.

[77] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, October 30, 1912.

[78] For typical campaign editorials from the Independent and Regular press, see *ibid.*, September 8 and October 13, 1912; *Nashville Banner*, September 3, 1912; *Chattanooga Daily Times*, August 31, 1912.

of privilege and caste. The people believe in him because in the two distinguished administrative positions he has held — president of Princeton university and governor of New Jersey — his conduct and record square with his democratic professions. These qualities of his have stood unassailable during a compaign that has brought out every conceivable objection active, alert and experienced opponents could muster against him. Sympathetic in every fiber of his being with the people, he has been able to impress them with his honesty, his courage and his sincerity and they are for him. His attitudes are sound because they are taken upon the immutable rock of human liberty and equality, and he is safe because the intelligence of the American people expressed in his favor will stand to and abide by the salutary policies he proposes.[79]

Although the Tennessee Democracy contributed nothing by way of leadership in the national councils of the party during the campaign, yet there remained one task — the matter of raising campaign funds for the Wilson cause — in which all the people could participate. And it was this issue, quite naturally, that figured most prominently during the summer and fall of 1912 in Tennessee. When the Regular state committee showed an amazing reluctance to take the initiative in the matter, the Regular and Independent editors took the lead and carried through a successful drive for funds to support the national ticket. Two days after Wilson was nominated, the *Nashville Tennessean and American* got under way a campaign fund drive by contributing $25.00. "If the people do not respond and themselves run their elections, as they hope to run their government," the newspaper warned two weeks later, "the professional campaign contributors will respond for them, and endeavor to control the elections as they have endeavored to do in the past."[80] By November 1, the *Tennessean and American* had collected $889.00 in its campaign for dollar contributions.

Although the Nashville newspaper was the first in the field, the Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, which began a drive for campaign funds on August 11, was much more active and successful. At first it appealed to the enthusiasm and good will of the Democratic voters by reminding them that since Wilson was the people's candidate, they, and not the monied interests which dominated the party in 1904, would have to support the ticket in 1912. "This is not a funeral procession," it declared. "It is a fight, and we had better get on our fighting clothes."[81] Yet, despite the badgering of the Democratic press, the people gave reluctantly and parsimoniously, if at all, and by the middle of October the *Commercial Appeal* was predicting that the Democratic campaign would collapse if sizeable

[79] *Ibid.*, November 3, 1912.
[80] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, July 19, 1912.
[81] Memphis *Commercial Appeal*, September 15, 1912.

financial reinforcements were not forthcoming. "Gov. Wilson's inherent popularity may carry him through," it declared, "but we doubt it. A victorious army can not move without rations."[82] This newspaper spurred a great burst of giving during the last two weeks of the campaign and managed to collect over $6,000 for the Wilson cause — and that was a remarkable achievement indeed.

Since the Democratic organizations in Tennessee could not stop fighting each other long enough to pull together for Wilson, McAdoo at the national headquarters in New York intervened and appointed a campaign contributions committee for Tennessee in late September.[83] While the newspapers solicited contributions from the people directly, the state committee concentrated their efforts on "frying the lard out of the politicians."

When one considers the condition of the party in Tennessee, the achievement of the newspapers and the state committee in raising $15,390.63 during the presidential campaign[84] seems indeed remarkable. Tennessee was the thirteenth state in rank, measured in terms of total contributions, and contributed more than either Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, California, or Indiana, whose governor was the vice-presidential nominee. Interestingly enough, Tennessee could boast of none of the 153 men who contributed $1,000 or more to the Wilson-Marshall fund.

It would be almost historical sacrilege to discuss the presidential campaign of 1912 in Tennessee without mentioning Theodore Roosevelt and his Progessive, or Bull Moose party. Roosevelt, it will be recalled, had campaigned for the Republican presidential nomination; and when President Taft was nominated instead, Roosevelt organized a new third party and went before the country on a platform that embodied a queer mixture of advanced social democracy and big business paternalism. Democratic newspapers in Tennessee completely ignored Taft, who made hardly any campaign at all, and concentrated their attacks against Roosevelt. They scored especially Roosevelt's inconsistencies — his refusal to allow southern Negroes in the Progressive party while admitting them to full party fellowship in the northern states; his charges that the Democratic party was boss-ridden and boss-controlled and his own striking similarity to the popular conception of a political boss; the commendable program of

---

[82] *Ibid.*, October 11, 1912.

[83] K. T. McConnico was appointed chairman of the Middle Tennessee area; William H. Carroll of Memphis, chairman of the West Tennessee district; and Lewis R. Coleman of Chattanooga was made chairman of the East Tennessee district. Mayor Hilary E. Howse and Judge Thomas E. Matthews, president of the Nashville Wilson Club, were named to direct the campaign fund drive in the capital. *Nashville Tennessean and American*, September 25, 1912.

[84] Rolla Wells, *Report of the Treasurer of the Democratic National Committee* (New York, 1913), 174.

social reform, which he advocated, contrasted with his suggestions for legalizing and establishing permanently the trusts.[85]

A vigorous and enthusiastic Progressive party was organized in Tennessee during the summer; yet, as Edith Snyder Evans points out, its members consisted largely of former Republicans, who broke away from the regular party organization, not because they were truly progressive, but simply because of factional differences within the Republican party organization.[86] Only one newspaper of importance in the state, the *Memphis News Scimitar,* supported the Progressive ticket. Nevertheless, the fact that Roosevelt polled in Tennessee almost as many votes as Taft — and that in its first test of strength — revealed that the foundations for a permanent third party had been well laid.

Roosevelt was almost pathetically anxious to win the electoral votes of at least one southern state. "Really if I could carry one of the eleven ex-Confederate States," he wrote his southern manager, "I should feel as though I could die happy."[87] Consequently he decided to carry the campaign through the heart of the South. His "swing around the circle" through the region in late September and early October took him to Little Rock, Memphis, New Orleans, Birmingham, Montgomery, Atlanta, Chattanooga, Knoxville, and Raleigh. He appealed to the southerners to throw off political tradition and lethargy, which had bound them to one party, and to join with the Progressives in their crusade for the social, political, and moral regeneration of the nation.

Roosevelt opened his Tennessee campaign at Memphis on September 26, when he spoke before the Inter-State Levee Association.[88] His address on that occasion, however, was non-partisan, and it was not until he spoke at Jackson on the following day that he began his political campaign in the state in earnest. He spoke next in Chattanooga, on September 29; on September 30 he made two addresses at Knoxville, in the Republican stronghold of East Tennessee. Needless to say, the Bull Moose leader spoke always before huge audiences and received one tumultuous reception after another in his tour through Tennessee. Yet his appeal fell largely upon deaf ears and he was soon to learn that people often shout one way and vote another. He did not carry a single electoral vote in any of the southern states in the election of 1912. Southern and Tennessee

---

[85] See, *e. g., Nashville Banner,* August 6, 8, 1912; Memphis *Commercial Appeal,* August 8, 25, September 18, 1912; *Chattanooga Daily Times,* June 4, September 10, 1912; *Nashville Tennessean and American,* August 10, October 15, 1912.

[86] Edith Snyder Evans, "The Progressive Party in Tennessee in 1912," unpublished M. A. thesis in the Library of the University of Tennessee.

[87] T. Roosevelt to J. M. Parker, July 15, 1912, Theodore Roosevelt Papers, Library of Congress.

[88] Memphis *Commercial Appeal,* September 27, 1912.

progressives, who might have been expected to support Roosevelt, had helped to nominate the Democraic candidate of their own choosing; many of them had risked their political lives in making the prenomination fight for Wilson. It was futile, therefore, for Roosevelt to hope that he could draw progressive support away from Wilson in the South. Southern conservatives, on the other hand, were not likely to vote for a man who advocated the adoption of judicial recall, woman suffrage, or a number of other reforms.

During the campaign there was at least some semblance of Democratic unity in Tennessee with regard to the presidential contest; but in so far as the state election was concerned there was as much discord and bad feeling as there had been in 1910. When the regular Democrats nominated Governor Benton McMillin for the governorship, the Independents again supported Governor Hooper, who had been renominated by the Republicans. The result was McMillin's defeat, by a vote of 123,828 to 114,369.[89]

On Tuesday, November 5, the people of Tennessee also cast a majority of their votes for Woodrow Wilson. Few persons had doubted that the result would be otherwise, for the Republican rupture had resulted in guaranteeing Wilson's election. In Tennessee Wilson received 130,335 votes (52.59% of the popular vote), Taft 59,444 (23.89% of the popular vote), and Roosevelt 53,725 (21% of the popular vote).[90] The enthusiasm of Tennessee Democrats over Wilson's victory was considerably dampened by the Republican success in the gubernatorial contest; and the Regular spokesmen warned their Independent foes that "The time will come when truth will win and the treacherous betrayers of their fellow Democrats in Tennessee will get their just desserts."[91]

Needless to say, the cup of the Independents ran over. Wilson's victory was in a very real sense their own; it was the fulfillment of a dream they had dared to dream in 1910 and of their own considerable efforts to give substance and reality to their hopes. In the state contest, also, they had triumphed for a second time. By standing immovable against the Democratic machine, they established definitely the principle that an anti-prohibition Democrat could not be elected governor; and they forced finally the reorganization of the state party in 1914 on an anti-liquor platform, with a prohibitionist candidate. "The people have shown their faith in Democratic principles," exulted Luke Lea's newspaper, [92] while the *Nashville Banner*, on the afternoon after election day, published perhaps the most

[89] *World Almanac, 1913* (New York, 1912), 761.
[90] *Ibid.*
[91] *Chattanooga Daily Times*, November 6, 1912.
[92] *Nashville Tennessean and American*, November 6, 1912.

fitting epilogue to this story:

The Democratic party comes again into complete control of the nation under happy auspices that should give it continued hold on power. It has chosen for the next President a man of great scholarly attainment, but wide awake in the ways of the practical world; of unusual force of character, but mild and restrained of manner. Very firm, quite aggressive, indeed, but thoroughly self-controlled; of marked conservative temperament yet fully abreast of the times and thoroughly progressive on those lines of progress that come of intelligent thought and a judgment based on accurate knowledge of the science of government drawn from both the past and present; an open enemy of the machine and defiant of bosses, yet withal a consummate politician who has made no blunders, but has astounded some pastmasters of the craft with the boldness and success of his movements . . . .

The old order has changed. The parties no longer reflect the crystalized sectional sentiment that attached to them so long after all sectional issues were dead. The Democratic party is now thoroughly national.[93]

[93] *Nashville Banner*, November 6, 1912.