The National election of 1924 and Nebraska

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THE NATIONAL ELECTION OF 1924 AND NEBRASKA

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of the Requirements for the degree of
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by
Loren A. Gammon
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INTRODUCTION

"...preserve, protect, defend the Constitution of the United States... so help me God." In a voice choked with emotion, the elderly New Englander read the typewritten oath of office. Solemnly, phrase by phrase, the younger man repeated the words. Thus, at 2:47 A. M. August 3, 1923, by the dim light of a coal oil lamp, Colonel John Coolidge of Plymouth, Vermont, administered the oath that made his son the thirtieth President of the United States.

The nation's attention was still focused on San Francisco, where, only four hours previous, Warren G. Harding had succumbed to a sudden illness. Only eight persons witnessed the ceremony in the New England living room-office. Millions were impressed by the simple but dramatic manner in which Calvin Coolidge became the nation's leader.¹

There was much to absorb the country's interest in the months that followed President Coolidge's brief statement indicating his intention to carry on the policies of the deceased Harding. During that time Germans staged bread riots; Italians bombarded Corfu; Greeks rebelled against their government; Arabs and Jews demanded settlement of their

¹William Allen White, A Puritan in Babylcon, pp.242-3.
land problems; Filipinos protested against the methods of Governor-General Leonard Wood; Japanese gratefully accepted American aid after their disastrous earthquake. Primo Rivera, Victoriana Huerta, and Adolph Hitler led revolts in Spain, Mexico, and Germany respectively. At home, the Veterans' Bureau was charged with neglect and poor administration; coal miners and railroad men threatened strikes; the Ku Klux Klan gave evidence of becoming an important factor in American thought and action; air mail pilots began to fly both night and day on a trans-continental route; three Americans were awarded the Nobel prize for their discovery of insulin; another American received a similar award for his study of the electron; Rogers Hornsby astounded baseball fans by the prowess a right-handed batter could display; Babe Ruth and the New York Yankees won the World Series from the New York Giants. Yet, in the midst of all of these events, the taciturn man in the White House demonstrated that silence can interest the public.

In 1924 the United States would elect a president. The action of the incumbent would influence the course of that election. His attitude on the questions of United States' entrance into the World Court, prohibition, farm relief and the veterans' bonus, were of interest to every American.

Both Republicans and Democratic leaders searched the opposing ranks hopefully for signs of intra-party discord.
A division was first noticeable among the Republicans of the Midwest where, as the party in control, they faced the prospect of being held responsible for the unfavorable prices of farm products.

The growth of the insurgent Republican bloc which was making party unanimity impossible symbolized this situation. Senators Robert M. LaFollette, Wisconsin, George W. Norris, Nebraska, William E. Borah, Idaho, Smith W. Brookhart, Iowa, and Hiram Johnson, California, had made harmony within the Republican Party unknown in the recent past. They promised to continue their opposition to many of the Administration's ideas. In 1922, the election of Robert B. Howell in Nebraska and Henrik Shipstead in Minnesota added strength to this group, for both men had been nominated against the wishes of party regulars.

Robert B. Howell's victory over Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock came after the Senator's statement that prohibition was an accomplished fact. This statement affected a reconciliation between Hitchcock and W. J. Bryan which led the latter to campaign for Senator Hitchcock and for his brother, Charles Bryan, for Governor.2

With her two irreconcilable Senators, Nebraska was more important as a symbol of discontent than for the state's

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eight electoral votes. The state of the Bryan Brothers and George W. Norris was waiting with the rest of the nation for President Coolidge to break his silence with a program for his party and for the country.
THE PRIMARIES

REPUBLICAN

Calvin Coolidge

Coolidge's campaign for nomination and election actually began with his message to the Congress on December 6, 1923. The Democrats had been irritated by his silence previous to that address. They maintained that through silence he hoped to win the nomination without committing himself upon the major issues of the day. Other potential Republican candidates had waited for the President to make a definite statement before announcing their opposition. Only Hiram Johnson was considered a serious threat to Coolidge, yet Governor Pinchot of Pennsylvania was accused of putting himself forward as a dry candidate when he engaged in criticism of Federal prohibition enforcement in his state.

Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin was known to have presidential aspirations. However, few believed that he would make a serious attempt to win the nomination. Frank R. Kent called President Coolidge a "20 to 1 shot" to win the nomination because he had the support of party leaders and the control of the southern Republican delegations. This meant that he could disregard public sentiment.1 Fear-

ing no wave of popular support that might upset their plans, the leaders in the Administration predicted Coolidge's nomination on the first ballot with fifty or sixty votes to spare even though conceding that the Midwestern States, including Nebraska, would probably give their support to Johnson or to one of the "favorite sons."

William Butler of Massachusetts was named national campaign manager for the President. Cleveland was selected as the convention site. It was said that Coolidge preferred that city over Chicago. Hiram Johnson's supporters charged that Coolidge feared their candidate's strength in the Chicago area.

The pre-convention campaign was fought in Congress through the months succeeding the President's message as men interested in their respective party's success debated the immigration bill, the soldiers' bonus, tax reduction, tariff revision, farm relief, and railroad rates. A restless Congress was beginning to show greater interest in investigating administrative indiscretions. With the Republican majority supposedly subservient to the insurgents and with the congressional investigations furnishing endless campaign material for the Democrats, President Coolidge returned to a policy of maintaining silence after his original message except to announce that swift action would be taken wherever it was needed to bring dishonest officials to justice.²

²Omaha Morning World Herald, Febr.13, 1924.
In Nebraska Ross L. Shotwell, Omaha attorney, led a movement to put young Republicans on the side of Coolidge in the primary election. Frank Reavis, former Congressman from Falls City, returned to Nebraska to manage the President's campaign. He established his headquarters at Lincoln in the office formerly occupied by the Bryan Brothers' Commoner. The President's decision to enter the Nebraska primaries against Mr. Johnson was formally announced in mid-January.

The Nebraska Senators remained silent on the question of supporting the President, but the rank and file of party members and the majority of the so-called Republican newspapers announced their decision to back the Administration. The Omaha Morning Bee asserted that farmers favored Mr. Coolidge since he was responsible for the only constructive measures put into effect except those of the progressive bloc. The Democrats considered the discontent of the farmers their strongest weapon in Nebraska.3

Hiram Johnson

Even before the death of President Harding, Hiram Johnson had been regarded as a possible candidate for the Republican nomination due to his prominence in the convention and campaign of 1920. His unceasing criticism of the Administration's foreign policy added to the uncertainty of his inten-

3Omaha Morning Bee, March 3, 1924.
tions. Harding had challenged him with a call for international cooperation and entrance of the United States into the World Court. In October, 1923, the California Senator was said to be waiting an excuse such as a similar declaration by President Coolidge in order to formally announce his candidacy.4 He was regarded as a potentially strong candidate in Nebraska as well as in California.5

Johnson announced his candidacy in November, 1923 with the declaration that he was still against the League of Nations and the World Court but favored "cooperation with ourselves as judge" as to the time and place. His bid for the Progressive vote was made with a statement that, "the ensuing contest will determine whether the Republican Party shall be the permanent instrument of reaction or whether it shall respond to present day conditions and aspirations."6 He announced his intention to enter the Nebraska Primaries a week later. He further stated that he planned to speak in Nebraska the following spring. By the end of February, petitions for Johnson delegates were circulated.

When it was announced that Frank A. Harrison of California would manage the Nebraska Campaign for Senator Johnson, Frank Corrick, Nebraska "Bull Moose" Manager, levelled the charge of "carpetbagger" against him. In his reply Harrison

4Arthur Sears Henning in Omaha Morning World Herald, Oct.4, 1923.
5Editorial in Omaha Morning Bee, Sept.20, 1923.
6Omaha Morning World Herald, Nov.16, 1923.
said that he was a Nebraska taxpayer. Later, Frank Hitchcock, Johnson's National Campaign Manager, met with Harrison in Omaha. A few days after this meeting, C. E. Sandall, delegate-at-large to the Republican National Convention in 1920, was named the head of the Hiram Johnson campaign in Nebraska.

On February 15, the Omaha World Herald printed a letter from Senator Johnson in which he attacked the Mellon Tax Bill and Coolidge for supporting it, as well as the President's opposition to the bonus. Earlier, the Senator had declared in an address to a Cleveland audience that such payments were an obligation because of promises made by Republican leaders. The letter also intimated that Coolidge was responsible in part for the Teapot Dome Scandal.

Johnson visited Nebraska to speak in both Lincoln and Omaha on February 18, 1924. He returned on March 24 and remained until March 27 in order to speak at the Omaha City Auditorium. In this series of addresses, he condemned Coolidge for associating with the men who perpetrated the scandals of the Harding era; for poor enforcement of the prohibition laws; for favoring the Mellon Tax Plan; and for opposing the veterans' bonus. During this second visit

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7 Omaha Morning World Herald, Dec. 19, 1923.
8 Ibid., Jan. 4, 1924.
9 Ibid., Febr. 19, 1924.
to the state, Senator Johnson also spoke in Fremont, Falls City, and Hastings. Frank A. Harrison accompanied the candidate to the state. Senator George W. Norris had aided Senator Johnson in a similar venture in 1920.

Perhaps these speeches in Nebraska aided Johnson in gaining a margin of 1743 votes over President Coolidge in the South Dakota Primaries. As a result of the victory in South Dakota the Californian's managers were more confident of victory in Nebraska. They asserted that the farm vote alone would assure the President's defeat. So certain were they of this that they advocated state preference delegates elected at large instead of election by districts as preferred by Coolidge's supporters.

Leslie M. Shaw, a former Governor of Iowa and Secretary of the Treasury under Theodore Roosevelt, spoke in Omaha on March 21, attacking Senator Johnson as a "bolshevik from California." He had nothing but praise for the Coolidge administration. The managers of the President's campaign declared that their confidence in Coolidge winning was based on the expectation that ninety per cent of the women would favor him.

Congressional Interest in the Congressional races centered around

10 Omaha Morning World Herald, Jan. 4, 1924.
11 Ibid., March 27, 1924.
12 Ibid., March 6, 1924.
George W. Norris' chances of re-election as Senator should his health permit him to run. His renomination was generally admitted to be only a matter of filing. He was quoted as saying that the other candidates would withdraw if he decided to run.  

Senator Norris announced in January, 1924, that he would again accept the candidacy "against his wishes." However, he remained in Washington instead of returning to Nebraska to take part in the primary campaign and asserted that he would continue to oppose the party whenever he thought it was wrong.  

Norris' decision to seek re-election was encouraged by A. C. Sorensen, Nebraska Attorney-General and Walter Head, Omaha banker. These party leaders counted on the Senator's popularity to increase the Republican vote.  

Other party members were not so anxious to have Norris renominated. Republican party funds were used to aid the campaign of Charles H. Sloan, Geneva. Norris in turn showed his disregard of regularity by announcing his preference for Hiram Johnson over Calvin Coolidge.

**DEMOCRATIC**

Nebraska Democrats centered their pre-primary interest

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13 *Omaha Morning World Herald*, March 27, 1924.
16 Abel V. Shotwell, Republican National Committeeman, in interview July 20, 1948.
on three men: William G. McAdoo of California, Alfred E. Smith, Governor of New York, and Governor Charles W. Bryan of Nebraska.

**William G. McAdoo**

Mr. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury under Woodrow Wilson and a prominent figure at the Democratic National Convention of 1920, was recognized as "a good bet" by Gilbert M. Hitchcock, publisher of the Omaha World Herald. In a statement released before the 1924 convention, he added that McAdoo would not necessarily receive his support.17 The former Secretary of the Treasury told Omahans that he was in the presidential race when a group of local Democratic women met him at the train in November, 1923.18

Governor Bryan had made the statement that no one connected with President Wilson's administration or the issues of the war could carry the West.19 By January 6, 1924, however, he had evidently come to believe that the sentiment among the Democrats in the state favored McAdoo. He explained that Nebraska and the West had voted down the League of Nations once, and he had feared that the nomination of any man identified with the Wilson administration would endanger the success of all Democratic candidates.20

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17 *Omaha Morning World Herald*, July 12, 1923.
who was a candidate for reelection as Governor, now appeared to believe that Democrats in Nebraska did not accept these conclusions.

Perhaps the sharpest blow to McAdoo's campaign was the revelation that he had been retained by the Doheny Oil interests. He met the issue squarely by demanding a hearing before a Congressional investigating committee. His statement to the committee that he had no connection with or knowledge of the illegal transactions was generally accepted. When he stopped in Omaha on March 21, he asserted that the Teapot Dome Scandal was entirely a Republican affair.21

The Republicans in Nebraska welcomed the implication of a prominent Democrat in the oil scandals. They countered the clamor for Attorney General Daugherty's resignation with demands that McAdoo be recalled by the Congressional Committee for further questioning. They charged that chairman Thomas J. Walsh, of the investigating committee, had covered up wrongdoing by Democrats, in fact, they charged that it had been partisan in its work.22 Leading Nebraska Democrats, however, seemed willing to accept the decision of a party gathering on February 18, 1924, in Chicago that McAdoo was still a proper candidate.

Dr. Jennie Califas, Omaha physician and National Democratic Committeewoman from Nebraska, asserted that Mr. Mc-

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21 Omaha Morning World Herald, March 22, 1924.
22 Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, March 4, 1924.
Adoo's name was the one most frequently mentioned as a likely candidate at a regional meeting of Democratic National Committee women in St. Louis in November\textsuperscript{23} and at the January meeting of the National Democratic Committee in Washington D. C.\textsuperscript{24}

In February, McAdoo announced his platform. In this he attacked corruption in Washington and proposed that an international conference be called to meet in the national capital to discuss means of promoting peace and reducing armaments. He also advocated the repeal of the Fordney-McCumber Tariff Act; the reduction of railroad rates; a more vigorous enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment; tax reduction by a plan other than that proposed by Andrew Mellon; the reform and reorganization of the Veterans' Bureau; the payment of the veterans' bonus; and the ratification of the Child Labor Amendment.\textsuperscript{25}

Arthur Mullen, Omaha attorney, expressed one Midwestern view of Candidate McAdoo thus:

"In his work as Secretary of the Treasury, McAdoo had shown a liberalism which satisfied Western standards. He was in so many ways a satisfactory candidate that his supporters were willing to overlook his connection with the Doheny Oil companies, although I, as a lawyer, felt that no lawyer had a right to desert his client in a crucial time, as McAdoo had done, for the sake of his own ambition; but out of

\textsuperscript{23}Omaha Morning World Herald, Nov. 16, 1923.
\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., Jan. 20, 1924.
\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., Febr. 19, 1924.
belief that he represented the desire of the liberals in the party I agreed, early in 1924, to become his manager in Nebraska."

**Alfred E. Smith**

Among Nebraskans Alfred E. Smith, Governor of New York, was recognized as a strong candidate for the nomination. To be successful, however, he would have to overcome strong Western and Southern antagonism to him because of his attitude on the liquor question and his affiliation with the Roman Catholic Church.

When the New York Governor signed an act repealing the Prohibition Enforcement Laws for New York State, and when he appealed to the various states for a more precise definition of intoxicating beverages, Dr. Jennie Califas sent him a telegram saying he had buried himself while trying to resurrect state rights. "He stood on the verge of greatness," she declared, for she had considered Smith the type of liberal candidate that the Democrats should nominate. Governor Smith later made a plea for enforcement of dry laws until such time as they could be modified.

**Charles W. Bryan**

It was common knowledge among Nebraskans that Governor Charles W. Bryan, the younger brother of the Great Commoner, William Jennings Bryan, would be a candidate for reelection.

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27 *Omaha Morning World Herald*, June 8, 1923.
28 Dr. Califas was an active member of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union.
as Governor. In addition he let it be known that he had presidential aspirations.

In speaking before a joint meeting of the Nebraska Progressive Party and the Nebraska Farmer's Union, in Omaha November 20, 1923; he advocated higher excess profits and surtaxes; tariff reduction; a reduction in freight rates; a reduction in coal prices; and a more strict prohibition law enforcement. He also voiced his opposition to entangling alliances, and favored a national referendum before Congress could declare war.29

Bryan's presidential candidacy was not considered seriously by Nebraskans. His grasp of details of state government made him a competent governor. However, he was not extremely popular. Members of both parties questioned his attempt to be a candidate for both offices.30

THIRD PARTY

Dissension in the ranks of the Republican Party was probably responsible for the early talk of a third party movement. This was encouraged and exploited at every opportunity by the Democratic press. They tried to see in every political event some reason for believing that the Republican Party would be hopelessly divided. The prospect

29Omaha Morning World Herald, Nov. 21, 1923.

30Interview July 15, 1948 with Edward Morrow, Assistant Editor, Omaha World Herald, and a reporter for the Lincoln Star in 1924.
of a significant third party, it was generally agreed, de­
pended upon the action of Senator Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin. He said there would be no third party if either major party nominated a liberal.31 He entered his name in only the Wisconsin presidential primary where he received twice as many votes as President Coolidge. Senators Norris and Howell, of Nebraska, it was widely believed, would support the Wisconsin Senator if he allowed himself to be nominated by a progressive group.

On July 6, 1923, a Federated Farmer Labor Party was organized in Chicago. This party announced a platform which was called "too red, communistic and bolshevik[sic] for even the radical state of Wisconsin." It advocated national ownership of resources and utilities; veterans' bonus payment through the imposition of inheritance taxes and other levies on wealth; a nation wide system of social insurance; national minimum wage laws; a national plan of maternity insurance; and increased control of industry by workers.32 It was reported two weeks later that the National Non-partisan League was planning to affiliate with the Farmer-Labor party. In October, 1923, the National Convention of the American Federation of Labor, meeting in Portland, Oregon, reaffirmed its traditional policy by voting against any political action as a third party.

31Omaha Morning World Herald, July 28, 1923.
32Ibid., July 6, 1923.
Nebraska, and particularly Omaha, seems to have been regarded as a suitable place to propose ideas of political revolt. Harley Nickerson of Milwaukee, Vice-President of the International Association of Machinists, speaking at a Labor Day Picnic in Krug Park, Omaha, told his audience that the laboring class of the country could not expect anything beneficial from President Coolidge. Eugene V. Debs, Socialist Presidential Nominee in 1920, spoke in the Omaha City Auditorium October 10, 1923. He praised Soviet Russia and proclaimed confidently that socialism would eventually come to the United States. Peter Mehrens, Omaha real estate operator, and later a member of the Omaha Board of Education, presided at this meeting.

The so-called Progressives announced November 19, 1923 that they would meet in either St. Paul or Minneapolis on May 30, 1924 to choose candidates for President and Vice President. The meeting was later postponed in order to follow the Republican National Convention. This was done with the idea of nominating Robert M. La Follette if, as was expected, President Coolidge were renominated.

The confusion in the ranks of the third party movement was demonstrated at the joint meeting of the Nebraska Progressive Party and Nebraska Farmer's Union in Omaha, November 20-22, 1923. The Reverend James L. Beebe, pastor of.

33 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 4, 1923.
34 Ibid., Oct. 11, 1923.
Grace Evangelical Church, Omaha, and Chairman of the Nebraska
Progressive Party presided. At this meeting William E. Borah,
Robert M. LaFollette, and Henry Ford were endorsed, whereas
at the very same time, another group, the "American Economic
League" was meeting in Omaha, and they endorsed only Ford.

During the previous summer a movement had been launched
to place Henry Ford in the White House either by way of a
third party or as the Democratic nominee. Mr. Ford's vague
statement that he might accept the nomination from either
party but would not be bound by a platform drawn by others
was enough to make a third party his only possible means of
being nominated. The movement seems to have been based in
the Midwest and particularly in Nebraska. Roy Harrop, Omaha
mining engineer, took the lead in filing petitions to place
Ford's name on the Progressive ballot.

Mr. Ford acknowledged the filing on October 11, 1923,
by not asking to have his name withdrawn. However, on Octo­
ber 30, his secretary stated that Ford would not be a candi­
date because he believed that he could be more useful to the
country as a private citizen. Harrop declared that he would
continue his efforts in Ford's behalf since the Secretary had
"hoodwinked his employer." He stated further that the auto­
mobile manufacturer did not know the amount of sentiment in
his favor. At about the same time, Ford released a state­

ment to the press that the country was safe with Coolidge. This disarmed the progressives who were planning to use him in order to capitalize on popular dissatisfaction and caused the Democratic Press to state that Ford was "back where he belongs" with the party of big business.\textsuperscript{37}

A convention of the People's Progressive Party held in Omaha, January 31, 1924, nominated Robert R. Pointer of Dearborn, Michigan for President and Roy Harrop, who was Nebraska Chairman and National Committeeman of the group, for Vice President. The party's purpose was declared to be "war on the money interests;" repeal of the Federal Reserve Act; direct loans of money by the government at three per cent; direct election of the president; payment of a veterans' bonus; a discontinuance in the issuance of government bonds; a provision for a popular referendum as a condition for declaring war; independence for the Philippine Islands; a provision for a national initiative and referendum on all laws; and development of rivers and harbors.\textsuperscript{38}

A group of progressives meeting February 12, 1924, in St. Louis named a national committee to convene in Cleveland, July 4, with delegates representing various farm, labor, and political organizations. This meeting, known as the Conference

\textsuperscript{37} Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, Dec. 20, 1923.

\textsuperscript{38} Omaha Morning Bee, Febr. 1, 1924. Confirmed by interview with Roy Harrop July 20, 1948. Harrop also declared that Henry Ford supported third party movements by financial contributions.
for Progressive Political Action, was the one which nominated Robert M. LaFollette as a candidate for President.

Charles W. Bryan's experience as a candidate for Governor on the Progressive Party ticket further illustrates the disunited character of those elements in Nebraska. On February 9, 1924, it was announced that petitions had been filed by members of the Progressive Party in order to secure the nomination of Bryan for Governor. He accepted the Progressive support. However, on February 22, at a convention of the party in Grand Island, there was a clamour for the removal of Bryan's name from the Progressive ballot. William H. Green, employee of the Omaha Street Department, and Executive Secretary of the Nebraska Progressive Party, and the Reverend James L. Beebe, Omaha minister, were the leaders in this rebellion within the party. It was expected that a court decision would be necessary to settle the conflict.

Governor Bryan, who had been on the Progressive Party's ballot in the 1922 election still claimed to have the support of that party, however, the Grand Island meeting nominated Edward Sughroue, Indianola farmer. George T. Hodge of Genoa, Nebraska Farmer's Union leader, criticized this meeting since it was not an official convention of the party. He said that the petitions which had been filed earlier represented more members of the party than did the convention. The affair was further complicated when the Secretary of State

39Omaha Morning World Herald, Febr. 24, 27, 1924.
Charles Poole, announced that Sughroue refused to accept the party endorsement as evidence of his intent to seek election. Therefore, the Governor’s name still appeared on the Progressive Party ballot. The following day Poole reversed himself, saying that Sughroue had accepted the endorsement within the prescribed five days and that his name would appear on the ballot as the Progressive nominee for Governor. A suit brought by State Senator W. J. Taylor, Merna cattle rancher, to have Bryan’s name struck from the ballot was withdrawn.\(^4\) Sughroue refused to withdraw his name so that both he and Governor Bryan remained as Progressive Party candidates. During this period of controversy the four Railroad Brotherhoods in Nebraska went on record in opposition to a third party in the state. They agreed to support Governor Bryan for reelection.

**PRIMARY RESULTS**

At the polls April 8, 1924, the Republicans of the state expressed their preference for Calvin Coolidge over Hiram Johnson, 79,676, to 45,032.\(^1\)

There either was not as much anti-Coolidge sentiment as Senator Johnson’s managers had believed, or the Progressives did not recognize the Californian as one of their group. This defeat in Nebraska plus losses in the primaries in Michigan and Illinois convinced Johnson that he could not

\(^4\)Omaha Morning World Herald, March 11, 12, 22, 1924.

\(^1\)A. E. Sheldon, *Nebraska, The Land and the People*, pp.1012-1014.
successfully combat the Coolidge forces.

George W. Norris was the overwhelming choice as Republican candidate for reelection as United States Senator, receiving 71,974 votes to 30,768 for Charles H. Sloan and 15,970 for Fred G. Johnson. Norris' renomination was interpreted as meaning that he still held the confidence of the people, and as a further indication of the people's repudiation of the Republican administration in Washington. Former Congressman Sloan, a resident of Geneva, claimed that the "bloc system of Ku Klux Klan, pro-Germans, railroad rate boosters, and non-Republicans who voted for Norris beat him." Attorney General C. A. Sorensen was irritated by this statement and replied that he and Senator Norris were in better standing with the party than Sloan since Senators Capper of Kansas, Borah of Idaho, and Howell of Nebraska, all had endorsed Senator Norris and the Republican voters had nominated him. Claiming that Norris had received the Negro and Catholic vote, Sorensen said he didn't believe the Ku Klux Klan could be given all of the credit or blame for his renomination.

In spite of this exchange of views the lack of ill feeling was so noticeable that it was said, "Nebraska has not held an election in years in which less of acrimony was noted."

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42 A. E. Sheldon, Nebraska, The Land and the People, pp.1012-1014.
43 Lincoln Star, April 11, 12, 1924.
44 Editorial in Omaha Morning Bee, April 10, 1924.
The Democrats of the state wrote in William G. McAdoo's name to give him 9,342 votes in the preferential primary. Charles W. Bryan received 1,497, W. J. Bryan 1,898, Henry Ford, 1,170. Only Ford's name appeared on the ballot. The Democratic Vice-Presidential totals showed William G. McAdoo, 224, Charles W. Bryan, 43, Gilbert M. Hitchcock, 135. Since all these were write-in votes, it was quite a tribute to McAdoo's popularity. According to James Lawrence, Editor of the *Lincoln Star*, McAdoo was undoubtedly the choice of progressive Nebraska Democrats.46

The Progressive Party's voters gave Henry Ford 1,123 votes and Robert M. LaFollette 312 in the Presidential preferential vote while John J. Thomas, former County Attorney of Seward County, received 906 votes compared with 153 for Senator Norris in the Progressive Party's Senatorial contest.

The progressive gubernatorial contest was decided thus: Charles W. Bryan received 1,329 votes, and Edward Sughroue 365. Governor Bryan was also renominated by the Democrats and the Republicans chose Adam McMullen of Wymore as their nominee for Governor.47

45Sheldon, *op. cit.*, p.1012.
46Interview July 21, 1948.
THE STATE CONVENTIONS

The Republican Party

Nebraska Republicans met in Lincoln May 1, 1924, for their state convention. Arthur J. Weaver, Falls City fruit grower, was the keynote speaker. All Republican nominees, including Senator Norris, were endorsed. A resolution to withhold support of Norris would have been introduced but for the intervention of Adam McMullen, the party's nominee for Governor. He hoped for party harmony and Norris' cooperation in the campaign. Harry E. Sackett, Beatrice attorney, was selected to head the Nebraska Republican campaign.

A controversy between Norris and some of the party leaders in the state was stimulated when the Senator notified the State Central Committee by letter that he would not support the entire Republican ticket, even though both he and the others had been endorsed by the state convention. He attacked the practice of voting by party and stated that he favored abolition of the party circle. Friends advised Norris to remember that repudiation of the state's Republican Presidential choice would be a repudiation of the state's

1Arthur J. Weaver was Chairman of the Nebraska Constitution Convention of 1920 and Governor of Nebraska 1929-31. Archibald J. Weaver of Falls City was also active in the Republican Party in Nebraska.

voters. He declared, however, that he had voted to override the President's veto and would not say he had been wrong to do so.

This caused some regular Republicans to threaten to remove the Senator's name from the Republican ballot. They secured an opinion from Judge William M. McCain, Fremont, endorsing the legality of such a proceeding. Defying such a move, Norris suggested a "recall primary" to determine his right to a place on the ballot. There was no legal provision for such a recall primary election, a fact Norris undoubtedly knew.³

Senator Howell pointed out that Norris sent a telegram in which he stated his intention to support some Republican nominees. Norris claimed that he could be a Republican without supporting Coolidge.⁴ He further stated that he didn't intend the letter to be published, and that he had not yet openly opposed the ticket.⁵

The Democratic Party

Former Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock, publisher of the Omaha World Herald, was temporary chairman and keynote speaker of the Nebraska Democratic convention held in Omaha May 1, 1924.⁶ Governor Bryan's address to the convention of one thousand delegates called for a definite stand on national

³Omaha Morning World Herald, May 9,10,11,20, 1924.
⁴Ibid., May 14, 1924.
⁵Omaha Morning Bee, May 13, 1924.
issues. He advocated that the Federal Reserve Board's deflation policy be reversed; an excess profits tax be restored and high income taxes levied; the Esch-Cummins Transportation Act regulating railroad operation be repealed; the McNary-Haugen Bill to maintain high prices for farm products be passed; the prohibition laws be strictly enforced; a bill to pay the veterans' bonus be passed; and the United States enter the League of Nations with stipulations to prevent entangling alliances.

The last three proposals were included in the state platform. Republican dishonesty, the high tariff and existing tax laws were also denounced.

The Progressive Party

The Nebraska Progressive Party also held its convention in Omaha, May 1. The party leaders declared that the names of men who were Democratic nominees could not appear on the Progressive ticket even though nominated by the Progressive Party voters in the primary. This was an indication of an essential difference of opinion in third party ranks. There were some who wanted to elect Progressives to office with the aid of the old parties; while others preferred to have no connection with the old parties even though it would result in failure to elect a single member of the Progressive Party.

6Omaha Morning World Herald, May 2, 1924.
7U.S. WPA, Nebraska, Nebraska Party Platforms 1858-1940, pp.419-23.
The convention authorized a change of name so as to conform to whatever name the Farmer-Labor meeting in St. Paul in June might adopt. The party announced a platform which favored government control of railroads and public utilities; a child labor amendment; assistance on long terms to renters and home owners; abolition of the Federal Reserve System; and reorganization of the League of Nations. The executive committee which was chosen included the Reverend James L. Beebe, Omaha minister, W. H. Green, Omaha city employee, Charles A. McDonald, Omaha carpenter, John M. Paul, Harvard farmer, Emil G. Stolley, Grand Island farmer and stockman, John O. Schmidt, Wahoo oil dealer, and W. J. Taylor, Merna stockman.8

THE REPUBLICAN NATIONAL CONVENTION

When the Republican National Convention met in Cleveland, June 10, 1924, Calvin Coolidge's nomination was considered a certainty. With William Butler, Boston attorney as his manager, the President was said to be dictating all policies and procedure at the convention.9

As early as February, 1924, Hiram Johnson had criticized President Coolidge for giving Georgia, Mississippi, Louisiana, and South Carolina fifty-four votes in the convention.10 C. Bascom Slemp, the President's personal sec-

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8U.S.WPA, Nebraska, Nebraska Party Platforms 1858-1940 p.423.
10Omaha Morning World Herald, Febr.15, 1924.
retary, is given credit for this move. The Republican convention of 1920 had directed the National Committee to adopt a just and equitable plan of representation within the following twelve months. The committee complied with this order. However, Coolidge, without legal authority, ordered the return to the traditional system of representation for the announced reason that northern negroes would be offended. The Credentials Committee at the convention approved the seating of negro delegations from Mississippi and Georgia and admitted the Puerto Rican Delegation over the protest of the Louisiana delegation.

The Rules Committee voted to give women equal representation on the National Committee. This was far more liberal than the action taken by the National Committee the previous winter, when women were made associate members without the power to vote. Nebraska and Iowa women were active at the convention. They planned to introduce a proposal for adherence to the World Court.

Coolidge's influence was shown when the keynote speaker, Congressman Theodore E. Burton of Ohio, spent considerable time praising the President and pointing out

11 Slemp had represented Virginia in Congress, 1909-1923. He was respected for his understanding of Republican Party politics in the South.


14 Omaha Morning World Herald, June 11, 1924.
that "the people—and all the people have confidence in Calvin Coolidge." He claimed that the people supported the President when he opposed the Congress on matters dealing with immigration, taxation, the bonus, and the World Court. The convention's permanent chairman, Congressman Frank Mondell of Wyoming, called for a regular Republican Congress to support the President.15

Senator George W. Norris did not attend the convention. His colleague, Senator Howell, incurred the displeasure of the Nebraska delegates by failing to pass out the tickets at the designated time. He was also tardy in paying his respects to the Coolidge headquarters.16

Some members of the convention wanted to support Coolidge in definite terms where his views opposed those of Congress. R. B. Creager, Texas delegate, wanted an anti-Ku Klux Klan plank and threatened to carry the question to the convention floor. The so-called "dry's" wanted the Eighteenth Amendment specifically mentioned. The Association Against the Prohibition Amendment wanted a modification plank. Delegates from the western states wanted a farm price parity plank.17

Senator Howell proposed a plank on agricultural relief as follows:

16Omaha Morning World Herald, June 10, 1924.
17Ibid., June 11, 1924.
"The persistent surplus of American farm products, resulting in lower prices therefor, at home as well as abroad has reduced the agricultural industry to such extremities as to render legislative relief imperative.

"We recognize the justice of the farmer's claim that, compared with world standards, he is entitled to as high prices for his products and efforts, relatively, as are enjoyed by our protected manufacturers and labor.

"Therefore, respecting such products consumed at home, we pledge the republican [sic] party to enact such legislation as shall afford the farmer United States prices for what he sells, inasmuch as he must pay United States prices for what he buys."

Howell later said that Nebraska "got nothing" at the convention, evidently feeling that the plank he offered was not seriously considered. Frank Reavis, former Congressman from Falls City, Nebraska, was a member of the committee that drafted the platform. Senator Howell was also dissatisfied with the platform's provisions on the bonus and taxation. However, he said that he could support Coolidge even though he disagreed with him. A lower tariff was needed, he believed, but he feared that it would bring a panic if enacted.18

When the platform was reported to the floor of the convention, only the twenty-eight Wisconsin delegates and six from North Dakota voted against its adoption. The platform proposed by the Wisconsin delegation was read to the convention and given a hearing with interruptions coming chiefly from the galleries. The introduction and rejection

18Omaha Morning World Herald, June 12, 13, 1924.
of the Wisconsin Platform had been anticipated for months. Its rejection was expected to result in the organization of a third party.19

The platform, which Coolidge supposedly dictated, was not as conservative as anticipated. It condemned dishonesty of officials of both parties and the sale of influence after leaving office. This was aimed at McAdoo. It favored collective bargaining, mediation, and voluntary arbitration, in much the form that organized labor demanded. It suggested the conscription and drafting of resources and services. This plank was demanded by the American Legion and opposed by organized labor. It denounced the League of Nations while Praising some of its activities. It pledged in general terms to aid the farmer by promoting diversification of crops and cooperative marketing. It criticized Congress for emphasizing tax reduction rather than tax reform. The platform omitted specific mention of either a veterans' bonus or the Ku Klux Klan.20

As expected, Coolidge was nominated on the first ballot. Gould Dietz, Omaha lumber dealer, was named a member of the committee to notify him of his nomination.

As his running mate the President first favored former Governor Frank O. Lowden of Illinois because of his activities

19Official Report of Republican National Convention, pp. 116-124, gives the full text of the platform proposed by the Wisconsin delegation.

in agricultural organizations. However, Lowden, declared, "I can be of more service to the country through the activities in which I am now engaged than I could be as vice-president."\(^{21}\) He was president of both the Holstein Breeders Association and the American Dairy Federation. The convention, nevertheless, nominated him on the second ballot and forced him to send a formal telegram of refusal.

When the delegates appeared to favor Senator William E. Borah, Senator of Idaho, Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana, produced a telegram in which the Idahoan announced, "I am not going to accept the nomination for Vice-President."\(^{22}\) The Senator declared that he didn't want to "sit mute and be a figure-head for four long years."\(^{23}\) Herbert Hoover, Secretary of Commerce, also issued a statement saying he would decline the nomination if offered to him.\(^{24}\)

At a meeting attended by Secretary Hoover, Senator Charles Curtis of Kansas, General James G. Harbord, New York, head of the Radio Corporation of America, Secretary of War John W. Weeks, Secretary of the Interior Hubert Work, Postmaster General Harry S. New, Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, Senator David Reed of Pennsylvania, C. Bascom Slemp, the President's Secretary, and Nicholas Murray Butler, Presi-

\(^{22}\)Claude G. Bowers, Beveridge and the Progressive Era, p.539. 
\(^{23}\)Claudius O. Johnson, Borah of Idaho, p.301. 
\(^{24}\)Omaha Morning World Herald, June 12, 1924.
dent of Columbia University, consideration was given to General Harbord, New York, for the nomination. Among other delegates Judge William S. Kenyon of Iowa and Senator Curtis were given increasingly favorable and frequent mention. On the roll call for nominations Illinois yielded to Nebraska. Albert W. Jefferis, Omaha attorney, nominated Charles G. Dawes. Mark W. Woods of Lincoln, a friend of Dawes, from the time the latter had practiced law in Lincoln, had from the first voiced his preference for the Illinois banker. Senator Howell and Frank Reavis desired that Judge Kenyon be nominated, yet on the roll call Dawes received all nineteen of Nebraska's votes.

The Republican press credited the almost unanimous vote for the President to the nominating speech by Dr. Marion LeRoy Burton, President of the University of Michigan. This address portrayed Mr. Coolidge as a man with "moral fiber and the epitome of sheer self control." Democratic observers declared that since President Coolidge had made the Republican party the real Tory party, the Democrats should be the liberal party with either William G. McAdoo or Alfred E. Smith as its candidate. After

25Omaha Morning World Herald, June 11, 1924.
27Burton's nominating speech is reported in the Official Report of the Republican National Convention, pp.134-152.
Dawes nomination the comment was:

"...the republican party has gained a candidate for vice-president who fits the head of the ticket and fits the platform.

"There is no more thorough going conservative, east or west than Dawes...He stands for the same things in politics and government that Coolidge stands for."28

In a telegram to Mark W. Woods, Lincoln, Dawes thanked the Nebraska delegation for its support and nomination.29

THE DEMOCRATIC NATIONAL CONVENTION

The Platform

The choice of New York City as the site for the National Democratic Convention was regarded by many as the first test of strength between the leading candidates. Chicago, St. Louis, and San Francisco had also entered bids. The distance to San Francisco was too great for that city to receive serious consideration. Then, Chicago withdrew her bid in favor of New York City, leading to a decision to meet in the east coast city.30 Both Chicago and New York City had offered $205,000. Even though McAdoo was said to favor a western city, the committee declared the choice was of no significance.31

As the convention assembled in Madison Square Garden,

28Editorials in Omaha Morning World Herald, June 9,14,1924.
29Lincoln Star, June 14, 1924.
30San Francisco was host to the 1920 Democratic National Convention. New York City had not been selected since 1868.
31Omaha Morning World Herald, Jan.14,15,16,1924.
June 24, 1924, political observers and party leaders realized that drafting a platform acceptable to all of the factions would be difficult. Prohibition, the League of Nations, farm relief, and the Ku Klux Klan were expected to be most troublesome. Prohibition was dealt with by a law enforcement plank. Gilbert M. Hitchcock undoubtedly had farm relief in mind when he stated that bread and butter problems would subordinate other issues. He probably had hopes of keeping the Klan and League issues off the floor of the convention, for it was already reported that there would be minority reports concerning these issues.32

Mr. Hitchcock was a member of the platform committee; Tom Allen, Lincoln attorney, was on the Rules Committee; and George O'Malley, Greeley furniture dealer and undertaker, on the Committee on Permanent Organization. Other positions held by Nebraskans were: Eugene O'Sullivan, Omaha attorney, and Charles A. Lord, Lincoln automobile dealer, members of the committees to notify presidential and vice-presidential nominees, respectively. K. C. Knutson, State Banking Commissioner, was an Assistant Sergeant at Arms, and Charles Kelpin, Omaha, was a Doorkeeper.

At its winter meeting the National Committee had urged that one-half of the convention's Delegates-at-Large be women. No change in the rule requiring a two-thirds majority to nominate was proposed. As the convention met, women members of the Nebraska delegation demanded one-half of the

32 *Omaha Morning World Herald*, June 26, 28, 29, 1924.
votes, but seating arrangements left no room for them with their respective delegations.

The majority report of the Platform Committee proposed a referendum on the membership of the United States in the League of Nations. William Randolph Hearst had mended his feud with Governor Al Smith, and was asking for a denunciation of the League of Nations in return for his support of the Democratic Party. His twenty-three newspapers warned the party leaders editorially not to let their admiration of Woodrow Wilson lead them to endorse the League of Nations. Senator Pat Harrison of Mississippi, the keynote speaker, made a bid for anti-League support when he advocated abandoning a principle if it meant winning the election saying, "Winning is not wicked. Strategy is no sin."33

Newton D. Baker of Ohio, Woodrow Wilson's Secretary of War, proposed an unqualified Wilsonian plank, favoring entrance into the League. He insisted that the provisions of the majority plank would lead to nothing. In a dramatic speech he declared:

"The Republican party has no foreign policy. It would be better comport with the dignity and interest of this great nation to face the question of international cooperation frankly and manfully. There is not a substitute for the League of Nations as an agency working for peace. The League of Nations never meant and the Democratic party never favored 'foreign entanglements' and meddling in the domestic affairs of others, or any impairment of sovereignty."34

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34 Ibid., p. 246.
He demanded that the Democratic Party favor League membership under such conditions as might seem appropriate to our constitution.

Former Senator Hitchcock of Nebraska had proposed the following plank on the League of Nations to the Platform Committee:

"That the democratic party [sic] rejects the claim by republican leaders that as far as the United States is concerned the League of Nations is a closed incident. We cite the proposal of President Coolidge to join the League of Nations Court of Justice as conclusive proof of the continual growth of sentiment favorable to the League, and we point to the endorsement of the proposal by the republican national convention [sic] as proof that republican leaders have been forced to compromise with league [sic] sentiment."

"The democratic party [sic] without modifying its position on this matter is content to leave it to time and to nonpartisan decision while it dedicates the energies of the party in this campaign to the great domestic issues which press so earnestly for solution."

The convention adopted the majority plank thereby rejecting Baker's plank 742 to 353. All of Nebraska's sixteen votes were cast for the majority report.

The conflict over the party's official position on the Ku Klux Klan made the League vote seem a minor issue. The three planks proposed were: (1) The naming of the Klan as an undesirable organization. (2) A proposal favoring re-

35 The Omaha newspapers of 1924 often failed to capitalize the names of political parties and other words commonly considered proper nouns.

36 Omaha Morning World Herald, June 24, 1924.
religious freedom but not denouncing the Klan by name. W. J. Bryan favored this stand. (3) A denunciation of the Klan which traced the movement historically from 1856 to 1924. Senator Underwood of Alabama proposed this plank.37 Leaders realized that the issue could wreck the convention. However, they continued to search for an acceptable solution. Smith backers hoped to show that McAdoo was the idol of the Klan, while McAdoo men planned to release delegates during the vote on the Klan plank in order to avoid this charge. J. F. J. O'Connor of North Dakota in seconding McAdoo's nomination attacked the Klan.38

Arthur Mullen of Omaha, in an interview with a reporter of the New York World, said that he favored a plank against organizations which take the law into their own hands openly or in secret.39 Hitchcock made a similar statement. In retrospect, Mullen wrote: "In spite of economic and financial conditions, in spite of the growing need of the West for definite political action upon these, we went into the 1924 campaign hog-tied by a question of bigotry that didn't need to be there at all."40

National Committeeman Mullen blamed both the Smith and McAdoo factions for the party rending struggle that featured

37 Omaha Morning World Herald, June 28, 1924.
39 Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, June 4, 1924.
40 Arthur Mullen, Western Democrat, p.239.
the convention. Having accepted the chairmanship of McAdoo's campaign in Nebraska, he advised his candidate to openly oppose the Klan. The Nebraskan believed such a statement was absolutely necessary from a Democratic candidate, even though Coolidge might dodge the question.

Mullen blamed Tom Love of Texas for twice persuading McAdoo to withhold the following statement:

"I regret that the exigencies of politics are such that an effort is being made to involve me in a controversy over religion. I have stated repeatedly that I stand squarely upon the constitutional provisions that guarantee freedom of religion, freedom of speech and freedom of the right to peaceable assembly. My attitude with reference to bigotry and intolerance is well known. I have always stood for the widest freedom in matters of religion. My public and private record on this question is well known. I am opposed to any organization or movement that attempts to deprive any part of our people of their constitutional rights because of their religion or their nationality."\(^4\)

At Savannah Georgia, March 15, 1924, McAdoo had stated that he stood "four square with respect to every other organization on the immutable questions of freedom of religious worship, freedom of speech, freedom of the right of peaceable assembly."\(^4\) This was not considered to be a specific repudiation. Therefore, as the convention assembled, anti-McAdoo forces labeled his non-repudiation as an indication of a bond between him and the Klan. This probably weakened

\(^4\) Omaha *Morning World Herald*, March 16, 1924.
his position as the convention was anti-Klan.\footnote{Mullen, \textit{op.cit.}, p.244.}

The resolution to mention the Klan by name was presented in a minority report. Both delegates and spectators were disorderly during the speaking and voting on the question. At the time of voting the resolution was reported lost by only one vote.\footnote{Official Proceedings of Democratic National Convention, p.333.} The first announcement gave the result as 542 3/20 to 541 3/20, but a later count gave it as 546.15 to 541.85.\footnote{"The Democratic National Convention," \textit{Current History}, July, 1924, 20:730-3. Many states sent more delegates to the conventions than they had votes. The division of votes among the delegates caused such fractional results as occurred at this time.} Three of the Nebraska delegation voted to mention the Klan by name in the platform while the other thirteen were against the minority resolution.\footnote{Two authors, Wilfred E. Binkley in \textit{American Political Parties}, p.375, and Frank Kent in \textit{The Democratic Party}, p.491, ignored the official result and reported it as lost by one vote which was the general belief at the time.}

George O'Malley, Nebraska delegate, called this vote "the most dramatic moment of any political convention."
The balloting was conducted at two o'clock Sunday morning.\footnote{Interview with George O'Malley, Collector of Internal Revenue, Omaha, July 19, 1948.}
subcommittee resolution to name the Klan. It had been adopted in committee eight to three, with Senator David Walsh of Massachusetts, Newton D. Baker of Ohio, and Joseph A. Kellogg of New York in the minority. The latter two were under instructions to vote as they did.48

Both Smith’s and McAdoo’s backers claimed the vote had eliminated the other candidate. Both groups agreed that the question had been settled without a party split. They were concealing their real attitudes, however, for they were determined to fight to the end. One political commentator said that Smith, Brennan of Illinois, Hague of New Jersey, and David I. Walsh of Massachusetts, all of whom were Catholics, determined to die in the ditch before they would permit McAdoo to be nominated.49 At the same time the anti-Klan group, by their animosity during debate on the Klan plank, aroused in McAdoo’s supporters a determination to prevent Governor Smith’s nomination if at all possible.50

The Balloting

The vote on the Klan plank in the party platform was a test of strength for both the Smith and McAdoo forces. The outcome convinced each candidate that he would win when “favorite sons” were deserted in a rush for the winner’s band wagon. The “favorite sons” were, at the same time, led

48Omaha Morning World Herald, June 27, 1924.
49Kent, op.cit., p.492.
50Omaha Morning World Herald, June 30, 1924.
to believe that neither of the two major contenders could muster the required two-thirds vote for the nomination. Accordingly, most of them refused to withdraw their names in the hope that a deadlock would bring a rush of votes to them.

McAdoo, with a near majority of the pledged delegates and having additional enthusiastic supporters, held the advantage through the first eighty-six ballots. Before the convention assembled, his supporters had considered fighting the two-thirds rule. Realizing that such a move would be violently contested, they decided not to try such strategy. Having been a candidate since 1922, Mr. McAdoo was held in exaggerated fear by the East as a radical. Yet, he was favored by "drys" in both the West and South. Smith was backed by the "wets" and "big business" interests of the East for the express purpose of preventing McAdoo's nomination. 51 James M. Cox of Ohio, Democratic nominee in 1920 was also opposed to McAdoo for his silence on the League and Klan issues. 52 Before the balloting began they conceded McAdoo 600 votes. However, they held that even if he received that number on the early roll calls, this would not foreshadow his nomination. 53

McAdoo's high mark was 530 votes, received July 4, ten

51 Kent, op. cit., p. 464.
52 James M. Cox, Journey Through My Years, p. 324.
53 David Lawrence in the Omaha Morning World Herald, June 25, 1924.
days after the convention opened. This was the sixty-ninth ballot. His campaign managers tried for four ballots to secure Virginia's twenty-four votes, but that delegation continued in support of Senator Carter Glass. Harry Flood Byrd, and John Stewart Bryan are credited for withholding the support of the Virginia delegation from McAdoo, thus preventing a possible rush of favorite sons' votes. At this point backers of Al Smith suggested that the two leading candidates address the convention. This was blocked by McAdoo's forces. Both groups realized the possibility of a stampede, especially since each candidate had a noisy group of enthusiastic supporters in the gallery. They were obviously exerting influence on the delegates. At McAdoo's request, the vote was reconsidered, but Smith refused on the grounds that he had been insulted. A resolution was offered for a closed executive session but with 538 McAdoo votes against the resolution and 551 Smith votes for the resolution it was defeated. Franklin D. Roosevelt, the Vice-Presidential nominee in 1920, proposed that Smith be permitted to speak to the convention. This proposal was blocked 437 to 604.

On the seventy-sixth ballot, July 5, Smith reached a

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54 Byrd was chairman of the State Democratic Committee in Virginia.
55 Kent, op.cit., p.494.
56 Adoption of any rules change required a two-thirds majority.
new high of 368 votes. On the eighty-seventh ballot, July 7, the leaders were Smith 361½, McAdoo 333½, John W. Davis of West Virginia 66½, Carter Glass of Virginia 71, and Senator Samuel M.Ralston of Indiana 93. 58

Both camps refused to release pledged delegates. There were proposals to abrogate the two-thirds rule; to move to another city; and to nominate one President and the other Vice-President. However, neither candidate would withdraw from the Presidential contest without the other quitting. Furthermore, each group threatened to continue the deadlock to their respective second choices. After Governor Smith tried to unite all anti-McAdoo forces in support of Senator Joe Robinson of Arkansas, a proposal to drop the candidates with the fewest number of votes was blocked by the Smith forces. 59 This was the continuous attitude. Each side had the necessary strength to block any proposal of the other group.

William G. McAdoo finally withdrew from the contest after leading on the ninety-ninth ballot 353.3 to 353 for Governor Smith. He had been advised to do so earlier but had asked to be permitted one more drive in order to quit while leading Smith. The latter had told Franklin D. Roosevelt that he would withdraw whenever McAdoo did. 60

58 Official Proceedings of Democratic National Convention, pp. 774, 848.
59 Ibid., p. 802.
60 Omaha Morning World Herald, July 9, 1924.
The Nebraska delegates had gone to the convention interested in the nomination of a "progressive candidate." To most, this meant William G. McAdoo. There were a few exceptions and some who hoped that Governor Charles W.
Bryan might emerge as a dark horse. Bryan had announced himself a supporter of McAdoo. The Omaha World Herald had continually pointed to McAdoo's strength as an indication of the Democratic Party's progressive complexion. However, the Nebraska delegation was reported opposed to changing the two-thirds rule.61

Charles W. Bryan was recognized by some as the leader of the group. Others predicted that, while Bryan would attract much attention, Arthur Mullen would really manipulate from the background. Mullen had been chosen National Committeeman in a deal which had William T. Thompson of Lincoln run for Judge of the Nebraska Supreme Court with no opposition. Judge Chester H. Aldrich died and the Governor had appointed Thompson in April, 1924, to the bench to fill the vacancy.62 The Bryan-Mullen rapprochement was supposed to reunite the party after factional differences of years duration.63

Governor Bryan stated that Nebraska would not press an active candidate upon the party. However, he said that

61 Omaha Morning World Herald, June 18, 19, 21, 1924.
63 Thompson had defeated Mullen in the contest for National Committeeman in 1920. The struggle between the Hitchcock-Mullen group and the Bryans for state party control extended back to 1912.
he wanted to impress the convention with the West's importance in the coming campaign and the necessity for choosing a candidate acceptable to that section.\textsuperscript{64}

Former Senator Hitchcock wrote: "The Democratic party has now only to declare itself the party of the progressives of the nation, write a real progressive platform, nominate a real progressive candidate and go home...." In referring to the "Bryan for President" buttons that some Nebraska delegates were wearing, Hitchcock predicted that Bryan's votes in Nebraska's delegation would drift to either Smith or McAdoo after one or two complimentary ballots.\textsuperscript{65} With Governor Bryan favoring the latter it was expected that he would be the recipient of most of the Nebraska votes.

The Nebraska delegation did not join either the McAdoo parade or the anti-Klan demonstration which followed the nomination of Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama. Hitchcock declared that he and most of the Nebraska delegates would vote for McAdoo because he was the voters' choice in the Nebraska primaries.\textsuperscript{66}

\textsuperscript{64} Omaha \textit{Morning World Herald}, June 21, 1924.
\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}, June 21, 23, 1924.
\textsuperscript{66} \textit{Ibid.}, June 28, 1924.
Smith and McAdoo delegates. This obviously was an attempt by each group to keep the good will of Nebraska for the future.

The Nebraska governor, seated beneath the stage where he could face the body of convention delegates, was surprised to hear O'Sullivan eulogize Charley Murphy of Tammany. Hitchcock had blocked Fleharty from making the nomination because he was only an alternate. Dan Stephens, Fremont, changed his mind the last minute and refused to read Fleharty's speech. It was then that O'Sullivan volunteered.67

As balloting began, the Nebraska vote was, Bryan fifteen and McAdoo one. The latter vote was that cast by Hitchcock. On the fourth ballot Dan Stephens, Fremont, and J. H. Grosvenor, Aurora, changed to McAdoo. Eugene D. O'Sullivan changed to Smith on the sixth ballot and was followed by J. P. O'Furey, Hartington, and Otto Walter, Columbus, on the eighth ballot. Charles Lord, Lincoln, and William Sommerville, McCook, voted for McAdoo on the eighth, but the former changed back to Bryan when the Governor berated him. That made Nebraska's eighth ballot, Bryan, eleven, McAdoo, three, Smith, two.69

Val Peter, Editor of the Omaha German Tribune, wired Governor Bryan to do all he could to prevent McAdoo's nom-

67 Personal interview with Charles W. Bryan, Lincoln, Nebraska, March 7, 1939, cited by Robert F. Patterson in Gilbert M. Hitchcock, A Story of Two Careers.

68 Stephens, a Fremont banker, was chairman of the Nebraska delegation.

ination. Arthur Mullen prophesied: "McAdoo is going to be nominated before this convention is over"....with or without Bryan's five votes. Mr. Hitchcock predicted that spirit of compromise would exist as a result of the Klan vote, and most delegates seemed to feel that the Klan issue had been forgotten. Governor Bryan was pressed to deliver the Nebraska delegation to McAdoo. 70

By the twenty-sixth ballot most of the Nebraska votes had moved to McAdoo. The votes on that and the thirtieth ballot were McAdoo, twelve, Smith, three, Senator Samuel M. Ralston of Indiana, one. Governor Smith's three votes were given by Eugene D. O'Sullivan, Otto Walter, and George O'Malley, while Mike Endres voted for Ralston. Governor Bryan was reported to be trying to hold Nebraska delegates in his camp thus hoping for an eventual break to himself. 71

As McAdoo's total reached 505½ on the fortieth ballot, W. J. Bryan named the eligibles and aroused the gallery's animosity by listing Albert A. Murphree, President of the University of Florida; Josephus Daniels, Secretary of the Navy under Woodrow Wilson, Joe Robinson, Samuel M. Ralston, Charles W. Bryan, E. T. Meredith, and McAdoo. He omitted any

70 Omaha Morning World Herald, July 1, 1924.
71 Ibid., July 2, 1924. Edward Morrow, Assistant Editor of the Omaha World Herald, and George O'Malley believe that Bryan was really trying for the Vice-Presidential nomination from the beginning.
mention of Alfred E. Smith. At this point Nebraska was still giving McAdoo twelve votes and Smith three with Mike Endres changing back and forth between Governor Bryan, Al Smith, John W. Davis, Senator Ralston, Senator Joe Robinson and Governor Albert C. Ritchie of Maryland.

W. J. Bryan and Thomas J. Walsh of Montana, the convention chairman, were mentioned, but Nebraska was not organized to promote a campaign for the elder Bryan. The Nebraska delegates began to complain about the cost of the prolonged convention and started thinking of switching to some other candidate in an attempt to lead in a break away from the deadlock. Mullen said there was no agreement between leaders that might indicate the final outcome. Telegrams from William Ritchie, Omaha attorney, and Dr. Lucien Stark, Hartington, urged support of the former's cousin, Governor Albert C. Ritchie of Maryland.

By the sixty-first ballot, on July 3, the tenth day of the convention, when the vote was McAdoo 469½, Smith 335, Davis 60, the convention began looking for a way to break the deadlock. Supporters of the two leading candidates said withdrawal proposals were ridiculous and each blamed the favorite sons for not quitting.

Hitchcock introduced the following resolution: "Resolved that it is the sense of this convention that begin-

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73Omaha Morning World Herald, July 3, 1924. Mr. Ritchie confirmed sending the telegram but declared he really didn't expect his cousin to be nominated.
ning with the (blank) ballot the candidate receiving the lowest vote should signify his withdrawal as a candidate until only three candidates remain before the convention."
The resolution was defeated 496 to 589½.74

Another Nebraska delegate, Dan Stephens of Fremont while blaming favorite sons for blocking McAdoo's nomination, prepared a resolution calling for the convention to adjourn to another city. It was generally agreed that the pro-Smith gallery was making a decision difficult. Four or five members of the Nebraska delegation even considered leaving proxies so that they could return home. They were feeling the strain of expenses after a stay of ten days.

The Nebraska delegates quarreled July 5 over votes cast by alternates after several of their number started for home. Mrs. Jessie Thurber challenged the vote as reported. The Permanent Chairman, Senator Walsh of Montana, ruled that only the alternate from a delegate's own district could vote in place of him. This led to the discovery that Mrs. Thurber had been voting illegally for William T. Fenton, Warden of the State Penitentiary, whose alternate, John M. Hall, was also absent.75

Another controversy over Nebraska votes occurred July 8 when Dan Stephens went home instructing Mrs. W. E. Berkley, 

75Omaha Morning World Herald, July 5, 1924.
Lincoln, and Charles Lord left instructions with Miss E. Ruth Pyrtle, Principal of a Lincoln school. When Hitchcock pointed out that both Stephens and Mrs. Barkley were Delegates-at-Large, and that Lord and Miss Pyrtle were from different districts, Chairman Walsh ruled that Mrs. Catherine McGerr must vote in place of Stephens as she was his alternate. C. A. Lord had given his proxy to Mr. Hitchcock who tried to pass it on to Miss Pyrtle, Alternate-at-Large, instead of to John M. Hall who was not at the convention. At the same time it was ruled that Mrs. Thurber had not voted illegally in place of Fenton, whose alternate was also absent. Nebraska was thus temporarily left one vote short as George O'Malley also left for home. 76

On the seventy-ninth ballot Nebraska gave the two votes previously cast for Governor Bryan to the convention chairman, Senator Thomas J. Walsh of Montana. At this time a motion to vote for only two candidates was lost. Nebraska voted on the eightieth ballot thus: McAdoo, ten, Smith, three, Robinson, one, Glass, one, and Daniels, one. The eighty-third was limited to McAdoo, ten, Smith, three, Bryan three, 77 On the following ballot Bryan picked up four votes to make the result McAdoo, six, Bryan, seven, and Smith, three.

Nebraska Republicans were undoubtedly expressing the

76 Omaha Morning Bee, July 9, 1924.
77 Endres, O'Furey, and Hall voted for Bryan on this ballot.
national sentiment of their party when they chided the Demo­
crats for demonstrating such inability to govern, and for
having so many bosses as Brennan, Taggart, and Hearst. One
of the Omaha papers referred to Governor Bryan as a "tool
of the bosses waiting for lightning to strike him." 78

Bryan continued to retain five votes in the hope of a
stampede to a dark horse. Also, their control would give
him something to use politically when a break finally came.
The five votes which McAdoo continued to receive from Ne­
braska were due to the preference expressed for him in the
primary. They were cast by Hitchcock of Omaha, Stephens of
Fremont, Lord of Lincoln, Grosvenor of Aurora, and Sommerville of McCook. Ralston's floor managers tried to get two
or three Nebraska votes.

Between the roll calls for the ninety-sixth and the nine­
ty seventh ballots, Eugene D. O'Sullivan, Omaha attorney, pre­
sented a resolution which provided for the clearing of the
main floor of all workers for the candidates. The resolution
also suggested that the convention vote by secret ballot.
This resolution was defeated.

When McAdoo and Smith withdrew, with the former leading
on the ninety-ninth ballot, the anticipated scramble for sup­
port of favorite sons occurred. Some of McAdoo's supporters
tried to rally votes for E. T. Meredith of Iowa, Woodrow

78 Editorial in Omaha Morning Bee, July 9, 1924.
Wilson's Secretary of Agriculture, David Ladd Rockwell, McAdoo's manager, was said to prefer Thomas Walsh of Montana. John W. Davis, West Virginia, was considered the legatee of Governor Smith's votes.

W. J. Bryan prevented support going to Gilbert M. Hitchcock when the former Nebraska Senator's name was mentioned. Party leaders were in almost continual session in the Great Commoner's hotel suite. His opposition to the former Nebraska Senator was enough to stop a movement in his favor.

As John W. Davis secured 210 votes on the one hundredth ballot, Nebraska gave Meredith, eleven, Bryan, two, and Smith, two. The state's delegates still refused to join the Davis bandwagon on the 103rd and final ballot dividing their votes as follows: Cordell Hull, one, Oscar Underwood, two, Alfred Smith, one, John W. Davis, one, Thomas J. Walsh, five, and E. T. Meredith, six.

After John W. Davis had addressed the convention, Walsh, the chairman, overruled shouts calling for his nomination as Vice-President. He declared the convention in recess. Before the vice-presidential balloting, Governor Charles W. Bryan of Nebraska was nominated. His name was presented to the convention by Harry B. Eleharty, Omaha. As the Nebraska Governor's total mounted, many states changed their votes as follows: Cordell Hull, one, Oscar Underwood, two, Alfred Smith, one, John W. Davis, one, Thomas J. Walsh, five, and E. T. Meredith, six.

votes to his column. His selection was primarily a bid for the support of the agricultural states of the Midwest whose delegations had generally been strong in support of McAdoo. All of Nebraska's sixteen votes went to Bryan.

Post-Convention Comment

Party leaders followed the convention with declarations of satisfaction and rushed to the support of the nominees. W. J. Bryan said there were no factions left, only harmony in the party. He had declined to second McAdoo's nomination because of the Nebraska Governor's candidacy. He was once quoted as saying that the party might as well nominate J. P. Morgan as John W. Davis. However, with brother Charles on the ticket, W. J. immediately announced his support.

Gilbert Hitchcock was another Nebraska party regular who had to change his position. Before the convention he had written,

"If a man like Davis were to be nominated by the Democratic party these interests (financial, Wall Street) could all go to Europe for the summer and forget about the campaign.

"They would know that it would have to be either Davis or Coolidge and they wouldn't care much which. They would know that the government[sic] would be in their hands and would be their kind of a government."

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80 Omaha Morning World Herald, July 11, 1924.  
81 Ibid., June 25, 1924.  
82 Ibid., July 10, 1924.  
83 Ibid., June 23, 1924.
After Davis' nomination, the Omaha World Herald declared that the Democratic nominee was an idealist like Woodrow Wilson. They expressed the belief that the candidate would "appear more liberal as the campaign goes on." He was said to be running on the best platform in the history of the party.84

John W. Davis evidently realized the contortions that some of his supporters were compelled to perform for he immediately declared himself to be a liberal in these words: "There can be no compromise with reaction. Liberal principles must and will prevail. This is the mandate of the hour, and I will obey it."85

Columnist David Lawrence declared Davis to be the choice of the convention, satisfying both wets and drys, labor and capital, and most Democratic Congressmen.86 Mark Sullivan, the popular historian, wrote that the bosses did not select Davis but that they did liquidate McAdoo. Since they feared the effect of his association with big corporations, and the fact that he was a dry, they introduced the Ku Klux Klan issue to excite bitterness. Sullivan called the Democratic convention an example of popular government

84 Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, July 10, 1924.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid.
with both sides of issues being debated freely and pointed to its willingness to name Senator Thomas J. Walsh, a Western dry progressive, as the vice-presidential nominee. Sullivan predicted a downward trend in the Klan's influence. He believed the vote on the Klan issue in the convention was the secret organization's high point. Two new influences, he pointed out, were exerted upon the convention. The attendance of women delegates and the broadcasting of the proceedings by radio were departures from the practices of previous conventions.

In an editorial, The New Republic declared that while the Republicans did not dare to allow frank discussion, the Democratic National Convention was, "really deliberating in an absurd, clumsy, noisy, and extravagant way." This was said to indicate that the Democratic party was, "still capable of assuming the moral responsibility of government." This, it was said, would give the Democrats the advantage of having fought out many issues that the Republicans still had to decide.

Another New Republic editorial called the Democratic platform, "a political catch-all," firm on a few issues but one that would surely cause Robert LaFollette to take the field. It, "straddles, evades, and whispers sweet nothings."

The fight over the Klan was said not to represent the true

feeling of the convention due to the unit rule. Thus, many delegates, the editorial contended, could not cast votes to name the Klan as an undesirable organization.

Frank R. Kent was most uncomplimentary in speaking of Governor Bryan.

"And then, while Democrats generally in the East were rejoicing over the selection of such a man as their Presidential candidate, the blow fell. Charles W. Bryan, governor of Nebraska and brother of William Jennings Bryan, was nominated for Vice-President. At once a chill succeeded the thrill. To the Democrats in the East, in the great pivotal states needed to insure election, the name of Bryan was abhorrent. The shouts of the jubilant Democrats died in their throats, and the opportunity was afforded the Republicans to picture the party as facing both ways, to play on the old Bryan string, to alarm the business interests over the prospect of a Bryan, through death, becoming President."

Kent reports that Bryan’s name was suggested by George Brennan, Chicago boss, in order to insure the winning of the West and W. J. Bryan’s support. He further said that it is doubtful that Davis could have won on any condition, but in any event another running mate such as Thomas J. Walsh, Newton D. Baker, or Edward T. Meredith would have produced a better showing.

THE THIRD PARTY NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

The confusion existing among adherents of a third party

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89 The unit rule in Democratic conventions required that all the votes of a state be cast as the majority of the delegates wished. It was modified in 1912 to free delegates elected in direct primaries. Even these could be bound by the state committee or convention.

90 The New Republic, July 9, 1924, 39:168.

in Nebraska was but a reflection of the situation in the nation at large. By June, Henry Ford was no longer considered a serious candidate. However, there were many who believed that Robert M. LaFollette would run. LaFollette had insisted that his name not be placed before the Republican National Convention. However, he did urge his supporters to fight for a liberal platform.

A Farmer-Labor-Progressive Party group held a convention in St. Paul, Minnesota during the week of June 17. It was thought that this meeting would nominate Senator LaFollette, even though he had branded the convention "communist" inspired. The communists who attended this meeting desired to nominate a candidate, whereas the other delegates, representing both farm and labor interests, preferred to endorse one of the major party candidates.

The delegates at St. Paul managed to unite on a plan for distributing delegates among the states. When the convention nominated Duncan McDonald of Illinois and William Bouck of Washington for President and Vice-President, the Nebraska delegates led an exodus from the convention hall.\textsuperscript{92} The influence of the communist group which had aroused the

\textsuperscript{92} In an interview July 20, 1948, Roy Harrop, who attended the St. Paul meeting, stated that Nebraska realized from the outset that the convention was likely to be controlled by Communists. He called it an example of communist tactics to take control wherever they were allowed to belong to a group.
Nebraskans' ire was in further evidence in August. The party's executive committee consented to the withdrawal of candidates McDonald and Bouck, and the endorsement of William Z. Foster and Benjamin Gitlow, New York, candidates of the Worker's Party of America.

What David Lawrence called "the real third party convention," 93 met in Cleveland July 4, 1924. It was known as the Conference for Progressive Political Action. The men who issued the call for the convention agreed that the communists who attended the St. Paul meeting were not to be admitted. Only presidential and vice-presidential candidates were to be endorsed. William H. Johnson of Washington, D.C., President of the International Machinist's Union was selected as chairman.

Tom L. Wilson, Second Vice-President of the American Federation of Labor, and a delegate from Nebraska, said his delegation favored McAdoo for the nomination. 94 Other Nebraska delegates were Thomas Kane, Chadron, J. F. Moredick, Omaha, and Charles McCloed, Stanton. Mrs. Fred Carey, Omaha, and Miss Mae Gund, Lincoln, were appointed delegates by Mrs. Marie Weekes, Temporary Chairman of the Nebraska Women's Committee for Progressive Action.

Robert M. LaFollette agreed to accept the party's nomination and was promptly endorsed by the convention. He an-

93 Omaha Morning World Herald, June 19, 1924.
94 Ibid., June 22, 1924.
nounced that he would campaign on the platform proposed to the Republican National Convention by the Wisconsin delegation. The keynote speaker, William H. Johnston, condemned in turn the Republican, the Democratic, and the Communist Parties.95

The convention of the Socialist Party met in Cleveland, August 7, 1924, and endorsed LaFollette. Eugene V. Debs, the party's presidential candidate in 1920, approved this action as an alternative to the party naming its own candidate.96

Before his nomination, the Omaha World Herald, predicted editorially that LaFollette decided to enter the campaign because it was his last chance. This newspaper predicted that LaFollette would fail because he appealed to sectional and class interests. He was not a good candidate for a national election.97

Some communist leaders admitted that the Cleveland convention delivered large groups of farmers and laborers into the hands of Senator LaFollette. This made a united farmer-labor front impossible.98 The Senator was accused of believing that he could get enough electoral votes to prevent a majority by any candidate; that the house would not decide

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95 Omaha Morning World Herald, July 5, 6, 1924.
96 Ibid., Aug. 8, 1924.
97 Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, May 29, 1924.
98 Omaha Morning World Herald, July 11, 1924.
on a president; and the senate would, through insurgent Republican influence, select a Democrat for vice-president who would become president.\footnote{Editorial in Omaha \textit{Morning World Herald}, July 9, 1924.}

\footnote{If no candidate receives a majority of all the electoral votes, the House of Representatives elects one of the three leading candidates. The representatives of each of the forty-eight states cast one vote. If no candidate receives a majority (twenty-five) of these votes by the date set in the constitution for the inauguration of the President, the newly elected Vice-President is inaugurated as President. The Vice-President is elected from the two leading Vice-Presidential candidates by the Senate, each Senator having one vote.}
THE CAMPAIGN

INTRODUCTION

Parties and candidates were plentiful by midsummer 1924. In addition to the major parties, seven other groups nominated candidates and announced platforms. The Farmer-Labor Party had originally endorsed Robert M. LaFollette. However, this group finally nominated William Z. Foster, Communist labor leader, and Benjamin Gitlow, Communist author. These candidates denounced the Wisconsin Senator as the tool of merchants, bankers and rich farmers. LaFollette and Senator Burton K. Wheeler of Montana became the candidates of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. They were listed in Nebraska as the Progressive candidates. The American Party named Gilbert O. Nations and Charles H. Randall. The leaders of this party adopted the constitution and by-laws of the Ku Klux Klan as the basis of their platform.

The People's Progressive Party chose Robert H. Pointer and Roy Harrop; the Prohibition Party H. P. Farris and Miss Marie Caroline Brehm; the National Independent Party John Zahnd and Roy Harrop; and the Commonwealth Party selected William J. Wallace as its standard bearer.¹ The Republican, Democratic, Progressive and Prohibition Parties were on the

¹Omaha Morning World Herald, July 14, 1924.
presidential ballot in Nebraska.

A short campaign was inevitable since the two major parties were late in officially notifying their candidates. President Coolidge planned to give less than twelve speeches. The party orators stressed the President's character and the accomplishments of Charles G. Dawes in international finance. Many thought the Democrats would emphasize their party stability and point to the disagreements between the President and Congress. William Butler, President Coolidge's campaign manager, and Clem Shaver of West Virginia, the director of Davis' campaign, were both new to national politics. Of course, both had the constant advice of veteran politicians.

REPUBLICAN

President Coolidge unofficially opened the national campaign as soon as his nomination was assured. At the annual luncheon of the Associated Press in New York City, April 22, 1924, he asserted that the United States, after settling the German Reparations question, should lead the way to world peace by calling another disarmament conference. He asked for, "complete coordination and cooperation in world affairs," adding, "We can help ourselves only as we help others."

Coolidge also commented that the surprising thing about the Senate investigation of the Harding Scandals

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2This was partly due, in the case of the Republicans, to the death on July 7, 1924, of Calvin Coolidge, Jr., son of the President and Mrs. Coolidge.
was not the large number implicated but that there were so few involved. The Omaha World Herald commented editorially that the President sounded, "like a 1920 Democrat in his foreign policy."³

He spoke out at that time against assaults on the Treasury. He reemphasized his position a month later in his message to Congress vetoing the bonus:

"We owe no bonus to able bodied veterans of the world war [sic]. The first duty of every citizen is to the nation. The veterans of the world war [sic] performed this first duty. To confer upon them a cash consideration is wholly unjustified. It is not justified when considered in the interests of the whole people; it is not justified when considered alone on its own merits."⁴

The Omaha Morning Bee defended the veto as a case of the President following his own convictions. They pointed out that the vote on the bonus had not been along party lines since both Republicans and Democrats were divided on the issue.⁵

After the Democrats nominated Davis and Bryan, the Republicans decided to center their attacks upon the vice-Presidential nominee. They emphasized the danger of Bryan's election by the Senate in the event LaFollette received enough electoral votes to throw the election into Congress.

³Editorials in Omaha Morning World Herald, Apr. 23, 25, 1924.
⁴Ibid., May 19, 1924.
⁵Editorial in Omaha Morning Bee, May 22, 1924.
Western Senators were urging Coolidge to boost the cause of irrigation in order to gain votes in the West.  

In his acceptance speech, August 14, 1924, in Washington, D. C., President Coolidge praised protective tariffs for maintaining American standards of living. He said they aided business, agriculture, industry, and labor. The farmer, the President said, needed leadership that would stay with him and not desert his cause for political or business expediency.

Due to the pivotal character of the Midwest, the attitude of the candidates on the tariff was important. Each party tried to convince the farmer that its traditional stand on the tariff was to his best interests. Both major parties anxiously watched the trend of prices. A July price rise led to comment that it was not due to the GOP but to shortages in Canada and Europe. Walter Head, a prominent Nebraska Republican, who returned from Europe in September, declared that we must reduce the tariff if we are to increase trade.

The editors of the Omaha World Herald probably best expressed the views of Nebraska Democrats when they wrote:

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7 Ibid., Aug. 15, 1924.  
8 Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, July 10, 1924.  
9 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 14, 1924.
"This newspaper is too close to the farming country and too close to the consuming public not to know well that the tariff is something more than a 'local issue'. It has seen collected too much of that $4 billion dollars each year, dollars which have come from the pockets that were strained to provide families with even fundamental necessities of life, and dollars which went into the pockets of wealthy manufacturing interests in the Republican's [Springfield, Massachusetts Republican] state and states adjacent, to think that the tariff is not a paramount issue in every village and hamlet, on every farm and in every home in every state in the United States, but particularly in the west, the middle west and the south."\(^{10}\)

Another phase of the Republican campaign strategy was to emphasize the character of Coolidge, the man, and to present him as the type of executive the people desired. "The presentation of President Coolidge as a silent, reserved man, an exponent of common sense, and a faithful performer of his daily task, rather than a heroic or spectacular figure was no accident of makeshift, but was a deliberate well calculated policy for which the President himself was responsible."\(^{11}\) By consulting an advisory board on all campaign utterances; by ignoring the Democratic nominee in his speeches and by refusing to engage in any public controversy, Coolidge appeared to stand for those virtues of stability, order and prosperity, which the average voter desired.

This plan was reflected in the editorial comment of many Nebraska Republican newspapers. They commended the

10 Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 29, 1924.

President for refusing to be stampeded by investigations and charges against public officials.\textsuperscript{12} The choice, as they saw it, was between President Coolidge with continued order and prosperity or someone else with uncertainty or radicalism.\textsuperscript{13} Two Nebraska papers claimed that Coolidge would make the best executive since he had demonstrated economy and efficiency in the conduct of his office.\textsuperscript{14}

The President's assumption of a quiet dignified role left to Charles Dawes the task of carrying a vigorous campaign to the people. The vice-presidential candidate denounced the Ku Klux Klan in his speech at Augusta, Maine, August 23, 1924, though Maine was considered one of the strongest Klan states. Davis, the following night, in a speech at Seagirt, New Jersey, stated that there was no place in the campaign for religious prejudices or racial feelings. He called for a similar expression from President Coolidge.\textsuperscript{15} LaFollette had already expressed the opinion that the Klan organization could not long survive due to the good sense and sound judgement of the American people.\textsuperscript{16}

Coolidge did not reply to Davis on this issue. It was reported that the Klan favored the President since he had

\textsuperscript{12}Editorial in Omaha Morning Bee, May 9, 1924.
\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., Nov.3, 1924.
\textsuperscript{14}Editorials in The North Platte Tribune, (Semi-weekly) Oct.31, 1924 and in Fremont Evening Tribune, Nov.3, 1924.
\textsuperscript{15}Omaha Morning World Herald, Aug.23,24,1924.
\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., Aug.9,1924.
not attacked it.\textsuperscript{17} Senator Wharton Pepper, Republican of Pennsylvania, declared that a Chief Executive who denounced an organization before it had broken the law would be false to his oath of office.\textsuperscript{18} In a conference with his running mate, Coolidge undoubtedly advised Dawes to refrain from repeating such antagonistic outbursts as he had given at Augusta.\textsuperscript{19} The Omaha \textit{World Herald} claimed that only the Democratic Party had met the religious question openly. The Democrats voted on a plank to denounce the Klan and gave consideration to both presidential and vice-presidential candidates who were Catholic.\textsuperscript{20}

Charles G. Dawes planned an extensive Midwestern speaking program. The Democratic \textit{Lincoln Star} declared editorially that Republican strategists feared that Coolidge could not hold his own against Senator LaFollette. The Chicago financier, it was claimed, could match LaFollette's efforts.\textsuperscript{21}

Dawes began his campaign to win the discontented farmers by speaking at Lincoln, August 30. In this address, he blamed the war for the plight of the farmer. He advocated a commission to study the problem of securing equality of earning capacity for industry and agriculture. In addition he stated

\textsuperscript{17}Omaha \textit{Morning World Herald}, Oct. 31, 1924.
\textsuperscript{18}Fremont \textit{Evening Tribune}, Nov. 1, 1924.
\textsuperscript{19}Editorial in Omaha \textit{Morning World Herald}, Aug. 28, 1924.
\textsuperscript{20}Ibid., Aug. 4, 1924.
\textsuperscript{21}Editorial in \textit{Lincoln Star}, June 14, 1924.
that reclamation projects reclaimed land only to compete against farms already over producing. At the time of this visit to Nebraska by the candidate, a two page advertisement in the Omaha Bee proclaimed Dawes the "big man of peace"; the "quiet American business man who makes President Coolidge's plan for world armament limitations practical." Dawes returned to Nebraska to speak in Norfolk October 9, and in Grand Island and Omaha October 10. Preparations in Omaha included front seats for Grand Army of the Republic veterans and loud speakers so that the crowd expected to be outside the city auditorium might hear. Contrary to expectations the candidate did not rant or cover the field. He spoke only eight minutes on the subject of foreign policy. The audience was amazed when he sat down and remained in their seats for a considerable time.

A series of debates between Congressman J. N. Tincher, Kansas Republican, and Alben W. Barkley, Kentucky Democrat, proved of great popular interest during the campaign in the state. These men discussed party politics and the policies

22 Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, Aug. 30, 1924.

23 Omaha Morning Bee, Aug. 29, 1924. The Republican leaders claimed that Dawes' plan for the payment of Europe's reparations and war debts insured European stability. Thus, it was argued, the President could safely offer a disarmament program to the nations of Europe.

24 Memorandum by William C. Fraser, Aug. 24, 1948. Mr. Fraser recalled, "the entire proceedings did not consume more than twenty minutes and in all my experience I have never seen a more surprised or disappointed crowd."
of the Federal Reserve Board at Kimball, July 21. Then, at Morrill, July 23, W. J. Bryan's early statements concerning John W. Davis were quoted by Tincher. Both candidates discussed the prices of farm products under Democratic and Republican administrations. Tincher defended the tariff as the best assurance of continued employment for workers in the sugar factories and beet fields. He asserted that agriculture should be represented on the Federal Reserve Board. On July 24, the Congressmen debated at Hebron.25

Abel V. Shotwell said the campaign was not a particularly difficult one for the Republicans in Nebraska. They were confident from the beginning. Party leaders felt certain that the Democrats had ruined their chances by arguing in their convention and were beaten before Davis was nominated.26

DEMOCRATIC

The major objective of the Democratic campaign was to achieve party unity. In addition the leaders sought to convince the nation that Davis was different from President Coolidge and that he, not LaFollette, should receive the


26 Interview with Mr. Shotwell, July 20, 1948. The National Committeeman was County Attorney of Douglas County, 1919-23.
progressive votes.

The public witnessed, for the first time, a convention and campaign by means of the radio. Due to the intra-party strife, the public's impression of the Madison Square Garden convention was far from favorable. The Democratic candidate did much to overcome this by the dignity of the campaign he waged. Clem Shaver of West Virginia was an unfortunate choice as party chairman. He did not wish the job. The campaign was further handicapped by poor publicity and improper organization.

Declarations of support by William G. McAdoo, David Ladd Rockwell, and Cordell Hull, made harmony within the party appear easier. W. J. Bryan and Alfred E. Smith eventually took an active part in the campaign. McAdoo gave little assistance, but promised to help when and where he could.27

Only the reactionary element of the Democratic party in the East really considered all these declarations of support to presage victory. In the Middle West not even the few reactionaries felt that the ticket had a ghost of a chance to win.28

Organization of a Davis-Bryan club was begun in Nebraska as soon as the nominees were named. The club's goal was 2,000

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28 Edgar Howard, Columbus, Nebraska, in interview July 18, 1948.
members paying at least five dollars each. Two Omahans, James A. Hanley and Harley Morehead were named President and Vice-President respectively.29

Before he became a nominee for Governor, Bryan had flirted with the idea of supporting Robert M. LaFollette in the belief that the Democrats would not nominate a candidate in sympathy with the West. He had even considered running with Mr. LaFollette in case he were asked.30 The Governor's nomination on a ticket with John W. Davis convinced him that his running mate, not Senator LaFollette, was the hope of the West.

Before the campaign was even underway, Governor Bryan risked public criticism by sending a telegram to President Coolidge protesting against requiring civilians to mobilize with military units on "National Mobilization Day."31 He was backed in this by Davis. A reply from President Coolidge stated that the proposed action was voluntary.32

As soon as he was nominated, Davis made a determined effort to win the support of labor. It was widely known that he had been an attorney for the J. P. Morgan interests, but

29Omaha Morning World Herald, July 17, 1924. Confirmed by interview with Clem West, Omaha, former Douglas County Democratic Party Chairman, who has in his possession a pamphlet describing the club.

30Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, May 31, 1924.

31Also called "Defense Day", this plan called for the mobilization, on September 12, 1924, of all civilian and military personnel. Bryan declared that he would call out only the National Guard. The governors of Colorado, Wisconsin, and Maine joined Bryan in a similar protest.

32Omaha Morning World Herald, July 30, 31, and Aug.12, 1924.
what was less well known was that he had also defended Eugene V. Debs, the Socialist labor leader, Mother Jones, the West Virginia United Mine Workers organizer, and had represented the Plate Glass Blowers Union. 33

Democratic campaign strategists placed Davis before the public as a liberal. Since his nomination was the result of a deadlock between two well known liberals, it was considered necessary that he win the support of the followers of both men if the party hoped to be successful in the autumn. The difficulty of forming an alignment with labor was soon apparent. Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, expressed opposition to Davis. Several requests were made to permit Davis to present his views at a labor conference, but this failed. 34

In his acceptance speech at Clarksburg, West Virginia, August 11, 1924, Davis promised farm relief, reasonable railroad rates, and freedom from the discriminatory tariffs. He sharply criticized the Republicans for the scandals of Harding's administration. 35

A week later Bryan accepted the vice-presidential nomination at Lincoln, Nebraska. The Governor attacked high prices, huge profits, the tariff, and burdensome government debts, but praised government aid to cooperatives. The views he

33 David Lawrence in Omaha Morning World Herald, July 11, 1924.
34 Omaha Morning World Herald, Aug. 8, 1924.
35 Ibid., Aug. 12, 1924.
expressed showed that candidates Davis and Bryan could stand together. Mr. and Mrs. Clem Shaver of West Virginia and W. J. Bryan, the latter representing the Democrats of Florida, attended the ceremony.

In the meantime Davis continued his efforts to remove any taint of conservatism. He quoted pre-convention speeches to show that he held liberal views on labor, on foreign affairs, and relative to personal liberty. LaFollette's lack of party backing in Congress to insure the enactment of progressive legislation was emphasized by the Democratic nominee. Davis claimed to have been pro-labor throughout his career.

Commenting on the West Virginian's proposed visit to Nebraska, a Grand Island newspaper accused the Democratic candidate of coming west in order to show that he was cut from the same liberal pattern as Governor Bryan. This paper stated:

"Bryan ought to go east and try to fool stand pat business men that he is a rock-ribbed conservative. As a matter of fact, neither of the Democratic candidates is likely to fool anybody. Davis has already lost the labor vote and he isn't likely to get the western farmers. But if he keeps chasing after the progressives, he is likely to lose out with the reactionary elements in the party which were largely responsible for getting him the nomination."

36 David Lawrence in Omaha Morning World Herald, Aug. 20, 1924.
37 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 3, 1924.
38 Editorial in Grand Island Independent, Sept. 3, 1924.
When Davis visited Nebraska he delivered a major address in Omaha, September 6. This speech was broadcast to an estimated five million people. Arthur Mullen presided at this meeting to which Governor Bryan, the Vice-Presidential nominee also spoke. The Presidential candidate indicted the Republican party for unduly favoring industry at the expense of agriculture and other interests. He claimed that the Republican deflation policy deprived the farmer of price equality—this after he had contracted debts to increase wartime production. The tariff, he said, was no aid to the farmer. He advocated re-establishment of the export market through official means, through international cooperation, through adjusting the tariff, and by reducing transportation rates. 39(a)

J. Francis McDermott, Omaha banker, recalled that Davis looked out of place on the platform with the politicians. McDermott, a Republican, said that the Democratic candidate looked and spoke like a true intellectual even disdaining in his address to claim to be a "farmer" to win the support of the Middle West as Coolidge had done by posing for the photographers. 39(b)

Enroute to Denver from Omaha, Davis spent a day in Lincoln and spoke from the train at Fairbury, Hastings, Grand Island, and Kearney. He upset precedent by inviting Nebraska's National Committeewoman, Dr. Jennie Callfas, to ride with him

39(a) Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 7, 1924.
39(b) Interview July 20, 1948.
during the trans-state train tour.

Arthur Mullen, Democratic leader, said that Davis' visit insured Nebraska in view of Dawes statements that the farmers had been too industrious and must wait for a commission to decide on any relief measures.40

After Davis campaigned in Nebraska the Grand Island Independent declared in an editorial that Davis was nominated as a third choice while Senator LaFollette's only hope was to secure enough votes to throw the election into Congress. The editorial stated that the United States had indulged in enough uncertainty during recent years. It advocated the election of Coolidge to insure stability in the National Government and in international relations.41

Later in September, after Davis' Nebraska tour, Mullen and the candidate conferred in Chicago. In October the Nebraskan published a letter from the candidate on "The Case Against Coolidge". In this the President was charged with poor leadership. His income tax plan had not been followed. The Japanese Exclusion Act was passed against his wishes. The President used poor judgement in vetoing the postal pay bill which had been approved by Congress 361-6 and 73-3. Finally, his veto of the bonus bill showed inability to lead Congress.42

40 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 11, 1924. Dawes had been quoted as blaming the low price of farm products upon excessive planting and overproduction. His proposals included the appointment of a commission to study the problem.
41 Editorial in Grand Island Independent, Sept. 23, 1924.
42 Omaha Morning World Herald, Oct. 23, 1924.
Bryan stumped the state vigorously. He addressed groups at Columbus on September 24, at McCook on October 5, and at York on October 15. He also spoke at Central City, St. Paul, Fullerton, Seward, and Plattsmouth, attacking the Republican policy on farm prices and labor, while praising Davis for his liberal standards. He appealed to progressives to back Davis as a man who could be elected.

The Governor's tour of the state was accomplished, for the most part, by automobile. Speaking at every crossroads and small town, according to Edward Morrow, at that time a reporter for the Lincoln Star, Bryan was still going strong at the end of his trip. Harry Oliver, a reporter who covered the tour, was said to be worn out.43

As election day drew near Davis' attempt to win the support of labor was still inconclusive. A few labor leaders, however, did come out in his behalf. George L. Berry, President of the International Pressman's Union, was one who endorsed his candidacy. Late in the campaign a group of New York City labor leaders withdrew its endorsement of LaFollette in order to back Davis.

Late in the campaign, the editors of the Omaha World Herald charged the Republicans with excessive expenditures in behalf of their candidates. They gave wide publicity to vague charges by LaFollette that financiers and big

43 Interview, July 15, 1948.
business had provided a huge "slush fund" for the Republican campaign.

In Nebraska they accused Walter W. Head, Omaha banker and the Treasurer of the Republican State Executive Committee, of asking each candidate for ten per cent of a year's salary. They reported that $100,000 had been expended in Nebraska, most of it for newspaper advertising. They considered that amount excessive.

There was some evidence in favor of this contention. In October, the Midwest News, published in Omaha and considered a spokesman for labor, changed its support of LaFollette to Coolidge and Dawes. For this reversal of opinion, the World Herald said, J. A. Lochray, editor of the paper, received $1,000. Val J. Peter's Omaha Tribune, received, according to the World Herald, $10,000 for its efforts to persuade Nebraskans of German descent to vote for Coolidge and Dawes.

None of these charges were substantiated before election day. Voters had to choose between believing these charges by a partisan press or believing the denials of the

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44 According to Roy Harrop, Lochray received $10,000. "Joe talked it over with me," he said, "and I told him he was through here if he took the money, but he was a poor devil. He wouldn't have sold out for $1,000 though."

45 Omaha Morning World Herald, Oct. 27, 29, 31, 1924. In an interview July 22, 1948, Mr. Peter said the money was paid to him for advertising. This explanation, he stated, was accepted by the Senate investigating committee headed by Senator Borah when they called the Omaha German editor to Chicago.
Republican Party leaders. They had to decide whether or not the amount of such expenditures was great enough to be called a corrupt practice.

When Governor Charles Bryan, who had earlier been re-nominated for Governor, received the nomination for Vice-President, it left a vacancy on the state Democratic ticket. Choosing a successor provided an opportunity for the party leaders to test their individual strength and their ability to work together as a group. The generally accepted belief that the Democratic candidate would be elected made eager aspirants plentiful. Among those mentioned for the vacancy were Mayor James C. Dahlman and City Commissioners John Hopkins and Dan Butler of Omaha, and Dan Stephens of Fremont. Charles Graff of Bancroft, Governor Bryan's opponent in the primary, was not considered a likely successor because of his pronounced opposition to the Governor's policies. T. S. Allen, brother-in-law of Governor Bryan, favored J. N. Norton of Polk. Both Arthur Mullen and William Ritchie declared that the nominee should be a man who would support the national ticket.

The Mullen-Hitchcock combination claimed to control the meeting. There were reports of a deal with the Bryan group in which Hitchcock would have become an ambassador or some equivalent position in return for his support of the Bryan

46 Dahlman was Democratic nominee for governor in 1910.
47 Omaha Morning World Herald, July 14, 17, 1924.
choice for Governor.] The widely held belief that W. J. Bryan had prevented McAdoo's votes from going to Hitchcock at the National Convention was expected to make the extension of the 1922 "Harmony Club" feeling difficult. When Arthur Mullen and Bryan conferred on selection of the nominee, John Hopkins, Omaha City Commissioner, Dan Stephens, Fremont, and J. N. Norton, Polk, were favored, although it was doubted that the latter would provide real strength in Douglas County.

William Ritchie and some other young Democrats attempted to organize a movement to nominate K. W. McDonald of Bridgeport. McDonald was County Attorney of Morrill County. Arthur Mullen and other veteran Democratic leaders had too much power for the move to succeed.

When the committee met in Lincoln, July 24, J. N. Norton was nominated on the seventeenth ballot. John Hopkins led for seven ballots and then withdrew. When Dan Stephens withdrew, Norton became the unanimous choice. His nomination left a vacancy on the State Senatorial Ballot in the Nineteenth District.

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48 The Mullen-Hitchcock and Bryan Brothers factions of the Democratic Party in Nebraska had supposedly been united in 1922. They combined to support Hitchcock for Senator and Charles Bryan for Governor.

49 Interview with Mr. Ritchie, July 23, 1948.
THE PROGRESSIVE PARTY

The Progressive Party Convention which nominated Senator Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin for President did not select a vice-presidential candidate. They left the choice to the Presidential nominee. After the nomination had been declined by Justice Louis D. Brandeis of the United States Supreme Court and John C. McSpavren, head of the Pennsylvania Grange, Senator Burton K. Wheeler, a Montana Democrat was chosen. Senator Wheeler announced his intention to back LaFollette, but he hesitated to accept the nomination. He was under indictment in Montana and felt that he might embarrass the campaign effort. A personal appeal by LaFollette moved him to change his mind. He accepted with the statement that, "Between Davis and Coolidge is only a choice for conservatives." Most Democrats expressed little concern over the selection, viewing Wheeler as a renegade Democrat just as LaFollette was a renegade Republican.

LaFollette's position among the independent groups was strengthened by the withdrawal of Duncan McDonald, the nominee

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50 A Montana grand jury charged that Senator Wheeler had taken money from oil prospectors. In return, the jury charged, Wheeler promised to obtain leases from the Department of the Interior. The bribery was reputed to have occurred after Wheeler was elected United States Senator but before he took office. A Committee headed by Senator William E. Borah of Idaho investigated the charges and declared that the case was an attempt to persecute Wheeler for his part in the investigation of the Harding Administration's scandals. The charge was subsequently withdrawn in the Montana court.

51 Omaha Morning World Herald, July 17-20, 1924.
of the St. Paul Farmer-Labor Party convention. This led the Senator to anticipate receiving the non-Communist Farmer-Labor votes thus leaving to the Foster-Gitlow ticket the vote of the Communists.

Senator LaFollette in his campaign attacked the major parties and their records for supporting special interests. He declared, "The paramount issue is to break the combined power of the private monopoly system over the political and economic life of the American people."52

The Progressive campaign in Nebraska emphasized the indifference of the two major parties to the important agrarian and labor issues. The Progressives hoped to add to their vote by capturing the German vote in the state since Senator LaFollette had opposed the draft in 1917.

Since the following Democratic Congressmen from Nebraska had favored the Howell-Barkley bill,53 Senator LaFollette urged their reelection: John H. Morehead of Falls City, Edgar Howard of Columbus, and Ashton C. Shallenberger of Alma. However, LaFollette said that he would not endorse the candidacy of the other three Nebraska Congressmen54 who had op-

52 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 25, 1924.
53 Introduced by Republican Senator Howell of Nebraska and Democratic Congressman Alben W. Barkley of Kentucky, this bill proposed the abolition of the Railway Labor Board. Instead, a dispute between labor and management, would be referred successively to a conference, a Board of Adjustment, a Board of Mediation, and a Board of Arbitration. The decision of the last named Board would be final and filed in a United States District Court. Both sides must accept this decision. The plan was not adopted.
54 Willis G. Sears of Omaha, M. O. Laughlin of York, and Robert C. Simmons of Scottsbluff.
posed the enactment of this important legislation.55

At a meeting in Lincoln on July 26 an unsuccessful attempt was made to read those who had attended the St. Paul Farmer-Labor Convention out of the Progressive Party. The resolution, which was introduced by George B. Wylie of Fairbury, was directed at William Green and William Beebe of Omaha, and W. J. Taylor of Merna. Taylor appealed to the convention over the head of the chairman. He demanded the right to be heard. He reminded the assembly that the Nebraska group led the revolt against the Communists at the St. Paul gathering. This statement convinced the assembly that the men in question should remain in the party.56

Like the Democrats, the Nebraska Progressive Party had to replace Bryan on their gubernatorial ticket. They chose Dan Butler, Omaha City Commissioner, who had previously endorsed Senator LaFollette. Butler recalled that the choice, which was first made by an unauthorized committee, was questioned. He did not seek the nomination or campaign actively.57(a) George Frank Fisher, political reporter for the Omaha World Herald at the time, stated that Butler accepted only because such a candidacy would keep his name before the public.57(b)

55 Omaha Morning World Herald, July 2, 1924.
57(a) Interview with Dan Butler, July 22, 1948.
57(b) Interview with George Frank Fisher, July 21, 1948.
Dan Butler was not registered as a Progressive. At the time of his selection he was away from Nebraska on vacation. He sent word that he was a Progressive but that he would not interrupt his vacation merely to return home to prove it. After the legality of this nomination was questioned by non-LaFollette Progressives, Butler was again nominated by the executive committee of the Progressive Party consisting of John M. Paul, Harvard, John O. Schmidt, Wahoo, and W. H. Green, Omaha. Dan Butler endorsed LaFollette again. This nomination was held legal, and Secretary of State Pool accepted the petitions. 58

Supporters of Senator LaFollette held a convention in Grand Island, August 19, in order to decide questions relative to what state offices and candidates would appear on the Progressive ballot with him. The official notice stated that it was called:

"...for the purpose of nominating Robert M. LaFollette and Burton K. Wheeler for President and Vice-President of the United States; to nominate eight electors pledged to vote for LaFollette and Wheeler for these offices; and to transact such other business as may meet the approval of the LaFollette and Wheeler National Campaign Committee." 59

The Omaha World Herald called this undemocratic and autocratic on the part of the LaFollette party. They pointed

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58 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 4, 1924.
59 Ibid., Aug. 8, 1924.
out that Nebraska Progressives had no voice in nominating the candidates. Furthermore the party’s national committee planned to dictate what subjects could be discussed.

The meeting failed to name a state ticket in spite of Taylor’s protests that such a course would cause the party in the state to be swallowed by the others. He said, "I don’t see how, with no state candidate in the field, we can cuss the old parties in the national field and support them at the same time in some other direction." 60

How to get the names of LaFollette electors on the ballot became a perplexing question to the Progressives. It was the original belief of Progressive Party leaders that electors should have been selected by party convention before May 1. Then it was suggested that the Senator might use Henry Ford’s electors or electors selected by the LaFollette group’s state convention. Major parties indicated that they would not oppose the placing of LaFollette electors on the ballot. LaFollette did not want to be on the ballot with Democratic candidates. Therefore, petitions for a separate set of electors were filed. 61

Senator Wheeler’s first address was in Boston on August 31. He attacked President Coolidge as "mythically strong and courageous" and Davis as "a man who would out-Coolidge Coolidge as a servant of Wall Street." 62

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60 Omaha Morning World Herald, Aug. 20, 1924.
61 Ibid., Aug. 15, 18, 27, 1924.
62 Grand Island Independent, Sept. 1, 1924.
In a radio address from Washington the following night Senator LaFollette promised to repeal the Esch-Cummins Transportation Act, to lower the tariff, to readjust tax schedules, to conserve natural resources, and to promote cooperative marketing free from governmental interference.

Labor Day, 1924, Phil LaFollette spoke in the morning at Krug Park in Omaha, to a Central Labor Union picnic. In the afternoon of the same day he addressed a State Fair audience in Lincoln. He called the two major parties the agents of capitalists. He attacked the Mellon Tax Plan and criticized President Coolidge's tardiness in acting in the oil scandal. But above all he censured the Republican Administration in Washington for failure to appoint a commission to study farm prices.

63 The Esch-Cummins Transportation Act of 1920 sought to encourage consolidation. It set up the principle of a "fair return" and "fair rates" on a "fair evaluation" of railroad property. The latter was determined by the Interstate Commerce Commission. The Commission was given complete jurisdiction over the financial operations of the railroads to protect the investing public. A Railway Labor Board was established to mediate disputes about wages, hours, or working conditions. This Board did not prevent the railway shopmen's strike in 1922.

64 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 2, 1924.

65 Andrew Mellon believed that high taxes would discourage business enterprise. In 1921 the wartime excess profits tax was repealed, the surtax reduced and the corporation tax slightly increased. In 1924 Mellon planned further reduction. Democrats and Insurgent Republicans combined to force greater exemptions for the low income groups.

66 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 2, 1924.
In mid-September, Nebraska Progressive leaders were still discussing the question of party slates. They disagreed among themselves as to what positions and candidates should appear on the ballot with LaFollette. The National Progressive Committee desired that only the names of Senators LaFollette and Wheeler should appear on the Progressive ballot. Some of the party supporters in the state wanted at least Senator Norris’ name included. Most of them agreed, however, that non-LaFollette Democrats should properly be excluded. There were others, however, who wanted the names of Governor Bryan, Senator Norris, and J. N. Norton to appear on the Progressive ticket. Yet Bryan’s vice-presidential nomination excluded him from such a ticket. They, therefore, proposed that only the names of LaFollette, Wheeler, Norris and Norton appear on the ballot. Frank A. Harrison, former Hiram Johnson adherent, by this time a supporter of the Progressive Party disavowed this slate. He was opposed to naming any state ticket. 67

After the visit of "Young Bob" LaFollette to Nebraska, the two Progressive candidates and Phil LaFollette, the Senator’s younger son, spoke to various groups in Nebraska. Senator Wheeler, in a Lincoln address, accused Governor Bryan of placing party loyalty above progressive principles in supporting John W. Davis. He called for government purchase and sale of wheat in order to stabilize its price.

67 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 14, 1924.
While in Omaha, Wheeler attacked corruption in Washington and Dawes for his attitude on labor. At the same time he endorsed Senator Norris. 68

When LaFollette spoke in the Omaha City Auditorium a one-dollar admission fee was charged except for a thousand free seats distributed by party leaders. He declared that prosperity for Nebraska depended upon a change in railroad conditions. He called for abolition of the Railway Labor Board and the enactment of the Howell-Barkley Bill. 69 This address, J. Francis McDermott stated, was statesmanlike in quality but a disappointment to LaFollette's followers who expected him to rip the opposition to pieces. 70 At Kansas City, LaFollette charged that the administration had turned its back on farmers, telling them to remedy their own situation. He blamed the high freight rates for part of their trouble. Then, the Senator outlined his ideas about aid to agriculture. He advocated the enactment of emergency legislation in order to equalize prices; a revision of the Federal Reserve System; and an investigation into the activities of the Department of Agriculture. 71

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68 *Omaha Morning World Herald*, Sept. 28, 1924.
69 See footnote 53, p. 83.
With election day only three weeks away, the confusion in the ranks of Nebraska Progressives was still in evidence. Frank A. Harrison, Regional Director of the LaFollette Independents, ousted Otto Mutz, Lincoln, from the state chairmanship. Harrison charged that Mutz was supporting a slate of candidates for state offices. Mutz then rented another office only two blocks from the Progressive headquarters in Lincoln. He next secured an injunction in which Harrison was prohibited from opening mail addressed to Mutz as State Chairman of the Progressive Party. After an involved series of court orders, the court decided that Mutz as elected State Chairman was entitled to the position. Harrison announced that he would continue to keep his office open.

The Progressive Party's hope of strong labor support was increased when the Executive Council of the American Federation of Labor endorsed candidates LaFollette and Wheeler. The rank and file of labor were not expected to unanimously follow their leaders who endorsed the Progressive Party candidates. LaFollette followers asserted that for once it was not a choice between two evils. The Omaha World Herald, however, insisted that the railroad policy advocated by LaFollette did not differ from that outlined by Davis.

The factors in Nebraska considered most favorable for

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72 Omaha Morning World Herald, Oct. 14, 16, 21, 1924.
73 Ibid., Oct. 22, 1924.
LaFollette were the long standing record of cooperation between himself and Senator George W. Norris, and the tendency of Junior Senator Robert B. Howell to vote and speak with the insurgent groups in the Senate. As soon as Senator LaFollette announced his intention of heading a third party, the defection of one or both senators from the Republican Party seemed likely.

Before any national convention convened, Senator Norris hinted that he would support Senator LaFollette and speak for him if asked. He said, "In 1912 I ran as a Republican and supported Theodore Roosevelt. I see no reason why I cannot support LaFollette in the same manner." Howell said, "I am a Republican." However, as a Senator his voting record was remarkably similar to LaFollette's.

Senator Norris alienated state Republican leaders soon after the primaries in April when he stated that he would not support the whole ticket merely because it bore the label Republican. Some of the party leaders advocated removing Norris from the Republican ticket following the National Convention when he expressed the hope that President Coolidge would be defeated.

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74 In 1912 Theodore Roosevelt bolted the Republican Party and formed the "Bull Moose" or Progressive Republican Party. William Howard Taft was the Republican nominee. Woodrow Wilson was elected.

75 Omaha Morning World Herald, May 27, 1924.

76 Ibid., June 14, 1924.
The Omaha Morning World Herald was of the opinion that Norris would not bolt the party. Immediately after the National Convention, they wrote,

"Senator Norris does not belong in the Republican party. There is hardly one of its policies in which he believes. . . . . . the Republican party never adopted a platform so bad, or nominated a candidate so bad to stand upon it, that Senator Norris bolted either, or ever would bolt to support the best and cleanest Democrat living." 77

Like Norris, Senator Howell had voted with LaFollette for progressive measures many times in the Senate. 78 The Junior Senator spoke in behalf of both President Coolidge and Norris after he visited the White House. He promised Coolidge that he would support both party regulars and his Nebraska colleague.

The Nebraska Republicans finally decided that Norris was preferable to a Democrat, at least from a vote-getting standpoint, and they allotted to him some of the party's campaign funds. Sloan, who opposed Norris in the Republican primaries, had been furnished party support at that time. Party leaders remained silent while Norris attacked the Administration for its policies. 79

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77 Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, June 19, 1924.
78 Both Senators favored the veterans' bonus, the Child Labor Amendment, the revision of Mellon's tax plan, the reduction of the tariff, the reduction of railroad rates, the ownership of public utilities by the Government.
79 Omaha Morning World Herald, Aug. 2, 1924.
Senator Norris in opening his campaign for reelection at Grand Island, September 23, spoke in favor of the proposed amendment which would have abolished the party circle and party designation of candidates seeking office in Nebraska. Most party regulars were opposed to this amendment. For this reason the speech was poorly received by the party leaders. The Senator made only one reference to President Coolidge. He mentioned the fact that it was Coolidge who had prevented farm relief. In this speech Norris advocated higher tax rates wherever bearable; greater publicity for Federal income tax returns; parity prices for the farmer; a government controlled water power system; a modified government railroad control; and American entrance into the World Court.

After the Progressive Party endorsed Norris, he considered an open break with the Republican ticket in order to support LaFollette. It is interesting to note that the Senior Senator from Nebraska spoke for the Wisconsin Senator in Iowa but not in Nebraska. He evidently shunned an open break with party leaders in his own state. When the Senator spoke for LaFollette in another state, he was not campaigning in direct opposition to the future political fortunes of Nebraska Re-

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80 A.C. Sorensen, Attorney General of the State of Nebraska, and Senator Norris were the most prominent proponents of this plan. It would have eliminated the party circle making "straight" ticket voting impossible. Candidates would have had no party designation after their names. The proposal was defeated 163,932 to 228,485.

81 Omaha Morning World Herald, Sept. 25, 1924.
publican office holders and candidates.

The possibility that LaFollette's candidacy might cause a deadlock in the Electoral College thus throwing the election into the House led a Lincoln Republican to ask Senator Norris for whom he would vote for Vice-President in the event the Senate had to make such a decision. The Senator answered this question in Bridgeport. He said that he would vote for the man who had received the largest popular vote for the office in the Nebraska election. This, the Omaha Morning World Herald skeptically commented, meant a vote for Dawes. They wrote that Senator LaFollette would not be the one with the most electoral votes. Furthermore, they said that Senator Norris had never yet supported a Democrat, and thus would not likely cast a vote for Governor Bryan.82

Senator Norris followed a policy of attacking the activities of the National Administration while withholding comment on Presidential candidates. When he announced that he would not support Coolidge with LaFollette in the field, he was criticized by the Republican National Committee. Such action was not unexpected since Senator Wheeler was urging Norris' reelection in Nebraska and Senator Smith Brockhart of Iowa had demanded at the convention that Norris be nominated in place of Dawes on the Republican ticket. Both Senators Norris and Howell were deprived of patronage when they

82 Editorial in Omaha World Herald, Oct. 14, 1924. Val J. Peter stated that he and the Senator talked over and agreed upon the inadvisability of supporting LaFollette. Interview, July 22, 1948.
defended Senator LaFollette against a move to deprive him of committee appointments. 83

According to one source, Senator Norris did not make his stand for Senator LaFollette very definite or clear. Neuberger and Kahn, his biographers wrote:

"If there is any inconsistency in George W. Norris' long career it is the fact that in 1924 he was not an active adherent of his friend and mentor Robert M. LaFollette." 84

Norris must have felt that lack of support for President Coolidge was in actuality support for LaFollette, for he wrote in his autobiography:

"In 1924 as a successful Republican candidate for reelection to the Senate, I had supported my old friend and senatorial colleague, Robert M. LaFollette, against Calvin Coolidge. There was nothing hidden, secretive, nor subtle about it. I had indicated plainly by letter to the Republican leaders in Nebraska my inalterable purpose. There was nothing in common between my conception of national policy and Mr. Coolidge's philosophy of American welfare. I sympathized with the independent candidacy of Bob LaFollette in no less degree than I had supported Theodore Roosevelt in his organization of the Bull Moose movement. I told those leaders if people in the audience asked me to state my position, I would outline it." 85

POLLS AND PREDICTIONS

Political observers were most interested in what effect LaFollette's candidacy would have upon the strength

84 Neuberger and Kahn, op. cit., p. 155.
85 George W. Norris, Fighting Liberal, p. 286.
of the major parties. Many felt that the winner would be the party best able to stand desertion to the third party. They recognized that such action was most likely to occur in the Middle West, an area where both major parties recognized they must carry the election for success in the nation at large.

Leaders in both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party said that LaFollette was influencing the election outcome. Both groups claimed that he was splitting the opposing party, perhaps with the idea that making him part of the opposition would keep their regular party members in line. Arthur Mullen of Omaha predicted a Democratic victory on the basis that Democrats would vote with their party. The feeling of "1912 all over again" was general.86

The rising grain prices were bad for Progressive hopes. This party needed discontent to win. They could not afford to have the farmer placated and thus reunited with either of the two major parties. Their hope for a deadlock depended upon winning enough electoral votes so that neither Davis nor Coolidge would secure the necessary majority for success.

In June, 1924, Republican leaders claimed that Coolidge could win without carrying Wisconsin, Nebraska, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Iowa where the three can-

86 Omaha Morning World Herald, Aug. 17, 19, 1924.
didates met head-on. Even the Democrats feared that LaFollette and Wheeler would divide the Democratic vote and thus let Coolidge win. They pointed out that while Progressives claimed to be against both parties, they had usually voted with the Democrats in Congress and would thus be more likely to draw votes from that source. Labor support of Progressive candidates was an example of the diversion of Democratic strength. By October, Republican campaign managers predicted a Coolidge victory on the supposition that LaFollette could carry only North Dakota and Wisconsin.

The *Literary Digest* poll predicted a Republican victory nationally. It also prophesied that Coolidge and Dawes would win in Nebraska. Ballots returned from Bryan's home state gave these results: Coolidge and Dawes, 20,862, Davis and Bryan, 8,892, LaFollette and Wheeler, 8,883, the combined votes of five other candidates, 485.87

Across the nation, Democrats and LaFollette supporters charged that Republican postmasters marked the ballots for Coolidge and returned them. In Omaha destruction of from three hundred to five hundred undeliverable *Literary Digest*

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87 *Literary Digest*, Nov. 1, 1924. The *Literary Digest* sent 15 million postcard ballots. The recipients detached the ballot portion and returned it by mail. In 1924, 2,386,052 were returned. The editors relied upon mass returns to insure accuracy. More recent polls such as that conducted by the American Institute of Public Opinion take into account such factors as the age, political preference, economic class, religious affiliation of those polled.
ballots daily was claimed. Mullen said the poll was as worthless as the one in 1912.\textsuperscript{88} The Omaha \textit{Morning World Herald} commented:

"All informed people know that Coolidge's vote will be a minority and that it is extremely doubtful if he can win out by a plurality, and that instead of being first or second, he may even be third in the real poll that is taken at the ballot box."\textsuperscript{89}

Both Clem West and James Lawrence stated that they were pessimistic at the time about the Democratic Party's chances. The former blamed the religious controversy of the convention; the latter felt that Davis, while an excellent man, could not defeat Coolidge prosperity. William Jamieson, Candidate for Congress from the Second District was hopeful of personal victory and blamed the support of Roy Harrop by organized labor for splitting the vote and electing Willis G. Sears.\textsuperscript{90}

An example of a LaFollette supporter's attitude toward Nebraska results was given by Oswald Garrison Villard, editor of \textit{The Nation}, in an address in Omaha, October 12, when he claimed: "LaFollette strength lies in the farming districts as well as in labor circles. Particularly is this true in Nebraska." He said that the state was safe for La-

\textsuperscript{88} Omaha \textit{Morning World Herald}, Oct. 11, 1924. The 1912 \textit{Literary Digest} poll predicted that Theodore Roosevelt would be elected. Woodrow Wilson was the victor.

\textsuperscript{89} Editorial in Omaha \textit{Morning World Herald}, Oct. 14, 1924.

\textsuperscript{90} Interviews with Clem West and William Jamieson, Omaha attorney, July 23, 1948. James Lawrence, Editor of the \textit{Lincoln Star}, was interviewed July 21, 1948.
Follette if Senator Norris endorsed him. Senator Norris' indefinite policy did not increase hopes based on such a premise.

THE ELECTION RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

RESULTS IN NEBRASKA

Nebraska voted as the nation did on election day. President Coolidge and Dawes won the state's eight electoral votes but it was not a complete landside. Three Democratic Congressmen were elected\(^1\) while only one on the state Republican ticket was defeated.\(^2\)

\(^1\)Nebraska Blue Book, 1924, pp.420-21 lists the following results in the Nebraska Congressional Districts:

First District:
- John H. Morehead (Dem. and Prog.) 33,584
- R. H. Thorpe (Rep.) 29,755
- E. Luella Barton (Prog.) 1,555

Second District:
- William N. Jameson (Dem.) 24,756
- Willis G. Sears (Rep.) 38,382
- Roy M. Harrop (Prog.) 6,059

Third District:
- Edgar Howard (Dem. and Prog.) 46,631
- E. C. Houston (Rep.) 34,451

Fourth District:
- E. E. Placek (Dem.) 28,962
- M. O. Laughlin (Rep.) 32,235
- John O. Schmidt (Prog.) 4,563

Fifth District:
- Ashton C. Shallenberger (Dem. and Prog.) 37,766
- William E. Andrews (Rep.) 29,871

Sixth District:
- Charles W. Beal (Dem.) 31,275
- Robert G. Simmons (Rep.) 54,686
- Jesse Gandy (Prog.) 5,467

\(^2\)Charles H. Pool, Democrat, was elected Secretary of State over L. B. Johnson, Republican.
The actual count in Nebraska showed that Coolidge and Dawes received 218,585 votes, Davis and Bryan 137,289, La Follette and Wheeler 106,701, Herman P. Faris and Marie Brehm 1,594. In the Senatorial contest, Norris defeated John J. Thomas, candidate on both the Democratic and Progressive tickets 274,647 to 165,370.

Adam McMullen, Republican, won the governorship with 229,067 votes to J. N. Norton's 183,709 and Dan B. Butler's 35,594.3

3Nebraska Blue Book, 1924, pp. 407-19. The votes for other state offices were as follows:

Lieutenant Governor:
- P. J. Mullin (Dem.) 167,018
- G. A. Williams (Rep.) 219,965
- Granville Hummer (Prog.) 30,797
- J. F. Webster (Proh.) 11,064

Secretary of State:
- Charles H. Pool (Dem. and Prog.) 216,813
- L. B. Johnson (Rep.) 204,243
- P. B. Gilbert (Proh.) 11,543

Auditor:
- Clarence Harman (Dem.) 160,500
- George W. Marsh (Rep.) 215,817
- William A. Anderson (Prog.) 38,229
- David Fawcett (Proh.) 8,596

Commissioner of Public Lands and Buildings:
- L. A. Larson (Dem.) 151,769
- Dan Swanson (Rep.) 238,745
- R. W. Wiggins (Prog.) 31,240

State Treasurer:
- Lewis F. Langhorst (Dem.) 153,708
- Charles D. Robinson (Rep.) 231,330
- E. V. Stalley (Prog.) 35,295

Attorney General:
- Harry Fleharty (Dem.) 150,597
- O. S. Spillman (Rep.) 270,007

(See following page.)
Senator LaFollette's 106 thousand votes represented 23 per cent of the total vote cast in Nebraska. The map on page 103 shows that the Progressive candidate polled over 23 per cent of the votes in forty-four counties, secured more than one-third in twenty counties and was the choice of over 40 per cent of the electorate in four counties. This strength was most prevalent in the arid, poorer farming sections of the state and consequently, in the less densely populated areas. The fact that there was general dissatisfaction was evident from the results. The Wisconsin Senator received less than ten per cent of the votes in only four counties of the state. In thirty counties he finished second.

One writer, in evaluating the effects of rainfall and drouth upon independent political movements, attributed the support given to such ideas in certain areas of Nebraska to their particular climatic characteristics. He described the section running diagonally from northeast to southwest across Nebraska as having fewer advantages than land to the southeast. Here, he said, farming is profitable in good years, but drouths are usually more disastrous than in the region of greater rainfall to the southeast or in the ranching sections of the panhandle. Drouth years make

(Continued from previous page)
Railway Commissioner:
Floyd L. Bollen (Dem. and Prog.)  200,079
H. G. Taylor (Rep.)  213,568
Counts in which LaFollette polled over 40% of votes
Counts in which LaFollette polled 33-40% of votes
Counts in which LaFollette polled 23-32% of votes
Counts in which LaFollette polled 10-22% of votes
Counts in which LaFollette polled less than 10% of votes
poor political treatment seem worse, and the farmers vote their resentment. 4

Comparing the map on page 105 used by Mr. Barnhart and the results shown on page 103 shows this mid-state region as one where LaFollette was strong. The Gubernatorial Election of 1890, described in the article cited, showed considerable Populist strength in Sioux, Sheridan, and Hooker counties. LaFollette made a good showing in Sioux, Dawes, and Box Butte counties. This could be due to submarginal characteristics of this region even for successful ranching.

The map on page 106 indicates the predominantly Republican character of the results. Coolidge received a majority of the votes cast in thirty counties and a plurality in fifty others. This left only five counties polling a Democratic plurality, six giving LaFollette a plurality and two in which the Wisconsin Senator garnered a majority. Additional evidence of their strength is shown by the fact that the Republicans were third in only two counties, Greeley where the Democrats were first and Platte in which LaFollette was the victor. The five Democratic counties were among those traditionally carried by that party. 5

Average annual precipitation 28 inches or over

Average annual precipitation 20 to 28 inches

Average annual precipitation under 20 inches

John D. Barnhart, "Rainfall and the Populist Party in Nebraska," The American Political Science Review, August 1925, p. 534
Counties showing a Republican majority
Counties showing a Republican plurality
Counties showing a Democratic plurality
Counties showing a LaFollette plurality
Counties showing a LaFollette majority
The following table makes clear the relationship of the firsts, seconds and thirds in the ninety-three counties of the state.

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In the eighty counties where the Republicans were victorious, the Democrats were second in fifty-one cases, LaFollette in twenty-nine. Of the five counties carried by Davis and Bryan, only one voted for LaFollette and Wheeler as their second choice. This indicates a "regular" tendency toward the major parties in fifty-five counties notwithstanding the impressive showing made by LaFollette.

Compared with her neighboring states, Nebraska was a tri-partisan area. Iowa and South Dakota had scattered Progressive areas; the Democrats failed to make a showing. Large sections of Minnesota and North Dakota voted for LaFollette; the remainder of both states voted Republican. Wyoming had one third party section; elsewhere in the state Coolidge was triumphant. In Southwestern Colorado Democrats and Progressives each carried a small area; the Republican Party dominated the rest of the state. Every Kansas county voted Republican. Missouri, which was carried by Coolidge and Dawes, was about equally divided in area be-

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6Nebraska Blue Book, 1924, pp.404-5.
tween the two major parties. The Democrats and Progressives carried five and eight counties, respectively in Nebraska. The distribution was such as to indicate a dual challenge to the Republican Party.\textsuperscript{7}

As much as any one thing the election illustrated the difficulty of organizing a successful third party movement. The confusion within the Progressive movement in Nebraska has been described. Such disorder, which is inherent on the local level in such a political enterprise, undoubtedly alienated some potential LaFollette supporters.

Roy Harrop pointed out the difficulties which a new party must face. Disorganization and lack of money make it necessary for their members to work for little or nothing. As soon as they show promise, the regular parties offer them jobs which, as they are usually men of limited means, they cannot afford to refuse to accept.\textsuperscript{8}

To what extent LaFollette's candidacy influenced the final results is difficult to evaluate. George W. Norris' affinity with the Wisconsin Senator probably led many Republicans to vote for the latter.

LaFollette's candidacy did not defeat the Democrats. The Democrats would have needed ninety-four thousand of the LaFollette votes to win. It is difficult to believe that only twelve thousand Republicans voted for LaFollette.

\textsuperscript{7} Robinson, \textit{op.cit.}, p.22.
\textsuperscript{8} Interview, July 20, 1948.
WHY THE DEMOCRATS LOST

A Republican and a Coolidge victory only partially describes the election of 1924 in Nebraska. It was also a Democratic defeat. Local disgust with the election result was well expressed by the Omaha World Herald thus: "Sitting all buried amid falling leaves, we find ourselves wondering what in the name of the Sleepers of Ephesus is the matter with the Democratic Party. This is a serious question, and it clamors for solution. [The party of Jefferson deserves to look like something better than what the cat brought in."

The Democratic Party, in spite of attempts to make itself appear reunited, never recovered from its convention battles. McAdoo's followers were accused of knifeing Davis. The sincerity of W. J. Bryan in supporting the Democratic nominee, whom he had once denounced, was questioned. Having once expressed his supposedly true convictions, he could not fool the public by altering that judgement.

The religious issue had been too prominent and too bitterly fought in the convention for the Democrats to forget it so soon. Clem West said that many Catholics refused to support Davis as the Democratic candidate because of the anti-Catholic sentiment expressed by some of the party leaders during the convention. They were not even placated by the fact that Davis was considered by many to be the legatee of

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9Editorial in Omaha Morning World Herald, Nov. 9, 1924.
Coolidge was the only one of the six leading nominees who did not visit Nebraska, a tri-party area. This is not particularly strange for, according to Robert Smith, prominent Republican leader in Nebraska, such silence was a part of the Republican strategy. Coolidge ignored Davis' challenge to assert himself on the Klan and some other issues.

Every person the author interviewed expressed the highest regard for Davis' qualifications for the office of President. All agreed with James Lawrence's phrase, "He would have been an adornment to any group or ticket." They were also unanimous in the opinion that Davis was a conservative.

Opinion was not so unanimous on the Democratic candidate's efforts to appear to be a liberal. George O'Malley, Edgar Howard, and Fred Carey believed he wanted the Middle West to regard him as such. James Lawrence said that Davis did not attempt to pose as anything other than his true self. Here, Lawrence said, was Davis' greatest difficulty. He was not and could not have been a crusader. He was too much like Calvin Coolidge to be able to arouse the people to any sense of guilt in regard to the Harding administration scandals. He was too honest intellectually to accuse Coolidge of being personally involved. Davis was in no position to carry the country politically at that time.
One of the major qualifications in the selection of a vice-presidential candidate is his ability to carry his state or section for the party. Governor Bryan failed to do this.

The fact that the Wisconsin Senator did poll a considerable amount of the progressive vote meant, in the opinion of Edgar Howard, that Bryan's expected influence on that portion of the electorate was largely neutralized. Edward Morrow said that Bryan simply didn't "cut enough ice" as a national figure.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{WHY ROBERT M. LAFOLLETTE LOST}

The failure of Robert M. LaFollette to carry the areas of discontent demonstrated again the difficulty of dislodging the old parties. LaFollette's thirteen electoral votes represented 4,700,000 votes or sixteen per cent of the national total.\textsuperscript{14} Mark Sullivan said that in July LaFollette expected to get ten per cent of the total vote. In October Progressive leaders were predicting as much as twenty per cent of all votes.\textsuperscript{15} Many Nebraska third party affiliates actually expected LaFollette to win.\textsuperscript{16}

LaFollette failed to meet expectations in Nebraska, Kansas, and Iowa, "the farm bloc" states, where third par-

\textsuperscript{13}Interviews with Edgar Howard, Columbus, July 18, 1948 and Edward Morrow, Omaha, July 15, 1948.

\textsuperscript{14}The Wisconsin Senator carried only his own state. In 1912 Theodore Roosevelt received 27 per cent of the votes and 88 electoral votes.

\textsuperscript{15}Mark Sullivan, "Looking Back on LaFollette" in World's Work, Jan. 1925 49:325.

\textsuperscript{16}Interview with Roy Harrop, Omaha, July 20, 1948.
ties had always been able to muster their greatest strength. 
In Nebraska there had been no particular demand for the 
LaFollette candidacy. It had been brought to the state from 
the outside. Nebraska farmers were confident of the future 
and depending more and more upon one or two grain crops and 
scomning such aids to income as dairying or fruit growing.¹⁷
The farmers followed the old custom of returning the party 
in power to office whenever economic conditions are favor-
able.

Had either farmers or laborers followed their leaders, 
the Progressive Party's total might have been larger. In-
stead labor leaders were unable to deliver the working man's 
vote. It was the first time the American Federation of La-
bir had endorsed a candidate for the Presidency.

The Republican Party may have gained more from the 
third party. Conservative Republicans were united in a 
stand against LaFollette. President Coolidge could ignore 
the Democrats and the issues they raised to talk against 
LaFollette and Wheeler.

LaFollette was fighting for too many issues. Some 
who favored part of his platform were repelled by other 
provisions. Among these were the anti-monopoly plank, 
which was not as popular as before the war, and the Supreme 
Court plank¹⁸ which lost many votes for LaFollette.

¹⁸This was a proposed amendment to the United States Con-
stitution to allow Congress to override a decision of the 
Supreme Court.
The endorsement by the Socialist Party probably hurt LaFollette in Nebraska. It caused many to vote Republican in the fear that Progressives were Socialists under another name. Control of the press by the two major parties probably contributed to LaFollette's failure to win in Nebraska. The campaign of 1924 was conducted without the benefit of huge radio networks or talking motion pictures. Nebraska did not have a single station affiliated with a network at this time. Thus, candidates were unable to make the personal appeal which has become so significant in political campaigns.19

The 106 thousand Progressive votes in Nebraska were not an especially poor third. The Senator practically single-handedly inspired nearly five million Americans to vote for him. This indicated that some of the LaFollette ideas were popular. It was a warning to the Republicans that they could not abandon all progressive ideas.

WHY CALVIN COOLIDGE WON

As victor in the campaign Calvin Coolidge deserved much personal credit. This personal factor was the foremost reason for the Republican victory. Although lacking the force of a Theodore Roosevelt or a Wilson, Coolidge impressed himself upon the country. His tendency to let things ride, his lack of pressure on Congress, and the oil investigations

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19The American Legion opposed LaFollette because of his reference to the war as "putting the dollar sign on the flag," according to William Ritchie, in an interview, July 23, 1948. Ritchie served as State Commander of the American Legion in 1923.
which failed to smear him did not lessen his popularity. 20

Coolidge acted as the representative of government by and for the business men. With Mellon running the Treasury and a passive president, business could feel safe. The tides of economic prosperity and Republican political ascendancy were running strong. In the minds of voters the two movements were closely connected. Even the traditionally discontented farmer was in better circumstances. Good crops at better prices than in 1923 made him feel that Coolidge must be responsible for some of the improvement. Because economic conditions were favorable under Coolidge the voters accepted him with isolationism, high tariff, low corporation taxes, and all his other proposals to let the country continue on the course it had been following. 21

This vote for a man rather than a party was even more remarkable in view of the high character and exceptional ability of John W. Davis. It is difficult to defeat any incumbent who is fulfilling his office satisfactorily in normal times.

20 Sait, in American Parties and Elections, p.311-12, has described the appeal of President Coolidge thus: "He set himself up as the dutiful doer of a day's work; the calm man of iron industry; the executive who labored for economy and order in government; the President who worked for a reduction in public expenditure, and also managed to stand before his fellow citizens as the man who was trying to save their money and to cut down their individual taxes; who illustrated the humdrum but indispensable virtues of efficient administration—in these guises Mr. Coolidge not only compelled recognition as the chief asset of the Republican party, but more and more won a hold upon the plain and steady-going masses of the people."

21 Interview with James Lawrence, July 21, 1948.
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