

TAFT WINS MICHIGAN; WILL HAVE 20 VOTES

Delegates From State May Be Unanimous, But Eight Are Uncertain--Gains In Public Favor--Walter Wellman Explains Why Republicans of Varying Ideas Support Him

(By Walter Wellman.)
Detroit, Feb. 4.—Michigan is for Taft. Of the twenty-eight delegates from this state to the national convention at least twenty will be for the Secretary of War. The remaining eight may be for him also—indeed, the probabilities are that they will be, but until the situation develops a little further they cannot be regarded as certain. The four delegates at large and most of the district delegates will be instructed for Taft. An effort is making to secure a unanimous delegation, and unless something goes wrong it is probable the effort will succeed.

No one now denies that Michigan is a Taft state. There is no serious opposition to the Taft programme. No open work is being done for other candidates. The people and the politicians regard the outcome as already determined—that the vote of the state is for Taft. The only question is whether two or three districts are to stand out against the general will and wish of the Republicans of the commonwealth.

Although some exceedingly clever politics in behalf of Taft marks the recent history of events here, the silent, the compelling fact is the trend of public opinion. It is conceded by every one, even by men who favor other candidates, that a great majority of the Republicans favor Taft. The strength of this sentiment among the masses, as in Ohio, and many other states, has made it easy for those operating practically and looking after affairs to secure results. These men are so well satisfied with what has been done that they are now virtually resting on their oars. Their work is done. All they need to do in the future is to watch two or three districts where the results may still be regarded as in doubt.

When we come to look closer into the character of this public opinion, and the genesis of it, we find some very interesting and suggestive facts. If the case of Michigan is typical of public opinion generally in the West, we here get a quite accurate and instructive que to the current trend of thought among the American people on national affairs. The development of the Taft movement in Michigan may be ascribed to two distinct phases of public sentiment: The first is the belief among business and professional men that Judge Taft would make a strong and steady President. They admire his character and his services. Many of them especially the lawyers—and lawyers here as everywhere are leaders in politics—have met him and formed their estimate of him at close range.

and all that. But I believe this work can be carried on successfully without so much beating of the drum, without so much calling of men liars, without running amuck and shooting-up the town. I believe Judge Taft would preserve all the vital parts of Rooseveltism and drop some of the objectionable parts."

The second subdivision of public sentiment in this state is that found among the masses of people. It is Roosevelt idolatry pure and simple. It is a feeling that President Roosevelt is the greatest man the country has had in public life since Lincoln. All that Rev. Mr. Dixon and other ministers of the gospel are saying about Roosevelt as a John the Baptist, and all that Burke Cockran says about him as the only crusader the Republican party has, these people believe implicitly. They are of both political parties, of all political parties. They are sincere, enthusiastic, almost fanatic in their faith in the man and his works. In their eyes Roosevelt can do no wrong. He has them completely hypnotized. They love him and hate his enemies. They believe it was his enemies who brought on the panic in New York for no other purpose than to hurt their idol.

Now, the interesting thing is that these two phases of public opinion ran together and coalesced in the Taft movement in this state. As soon as it became known that Taft was Roosevelt's choice the masses were for him for that reason and no other. The most of them would have been for any man upon whose shoulders the mantle of their idol chanced to fall. The business and professional men were not for Taft because Taft was Roosevelt's choice, but because they admired and believed in Taft himself. With them the Secretary of War stood on his own merits. And when they began practical work for him, they found it an easy task because the masses were of their way of thinking for a different reason.

Hence it is not difficult to understand why and how Michigan has become a Taft state. Strong as was the movement for Taft among the men of affairs, and capably as they did their work they do not deny that if it had not been for Taft's inheritance of the Roosevelt following they might not have been able to carry the delegation. At any rate, there would have been a contest with the friends of other candidates, and the outcome probably would have been a divided delegation. Taft perhaps would have the largest block of votes, but Hughes, Knox, Cortelyou all had influential friends here. It was the Roosevelt voice that settled the matter once for all. Which may be sent down east to those eminent financiers and railway presidents who are quite sure that the only reason Taft cannot be nominated is because Roosevelt is for him—the men who have seriously and earnestly advised Taft to get out of the cabinet and cut loose from the President in order to make his nomination and election sure. Your average down east financier and railroad manager knows about as much of public opinion in the heart of the country as he does of men and matters in Mars.

Among the men of affairs in this state—and I have talked with those who have been in every city and large town during the past few weeks—one finds a great deal of opinion that President Roosevelt is losing a little of his hold upon the men who think for themselves and that Judge Taft is gaining upon their respect and confidence. One man expressed the thought in this way: "When the Taft movement in Michigan first assumed large proportions about 80 per cent of it was due to Roosevelt and the remaining 10 per cent to admiration for Taft himself. Now the probabilities are

that the percentages are about of equal volume. The President's vehemence doesn't wear as well as Taft's more quiet devotion to the same principles." Still another phase of opinion among the more active men of the state is worthy of comment. I have heard of it in many quarters. It is a belief, more or less general, that it is wise to go for Taft for the reason that if he is made the leading candidate with a probability of success on the first ballot, that more than anything else would stop the talk of rushing Roosevelt through and forcing him to run despite what he has said. This is true because every one knows Taft stands for Roosevelt and his policies. If there was danger of the nomination of any other candidate than the one known to be thoroughly satisfactory to the President, almost every one forces that there might be an eruption, an upheaval, at Chicago.

These Michigan business and professional men who are for Taft are not Roosevelt haters. On the contrary, they approve of the President and his work, some of them with qualifications with shading of warmth or coldness. What they cannot understand is that if they can see the way clear to get in the White House a steadier and quieter man than Roosevelt, why in the name of all that is good and great cannot the eastern men who oppose Taft and favor Hughes or some other candidate see the same thing.

Why can they not see if Taft is not nominated Roosevelt must be? The prevailing opinion here is the same as I have found in Ohio—that Taft is morally sure of the nomination, and that as long as this condition remains the men who would force the President's hand are not likely to make either serious outbreak or much headway.

WALTER WELLMAN.

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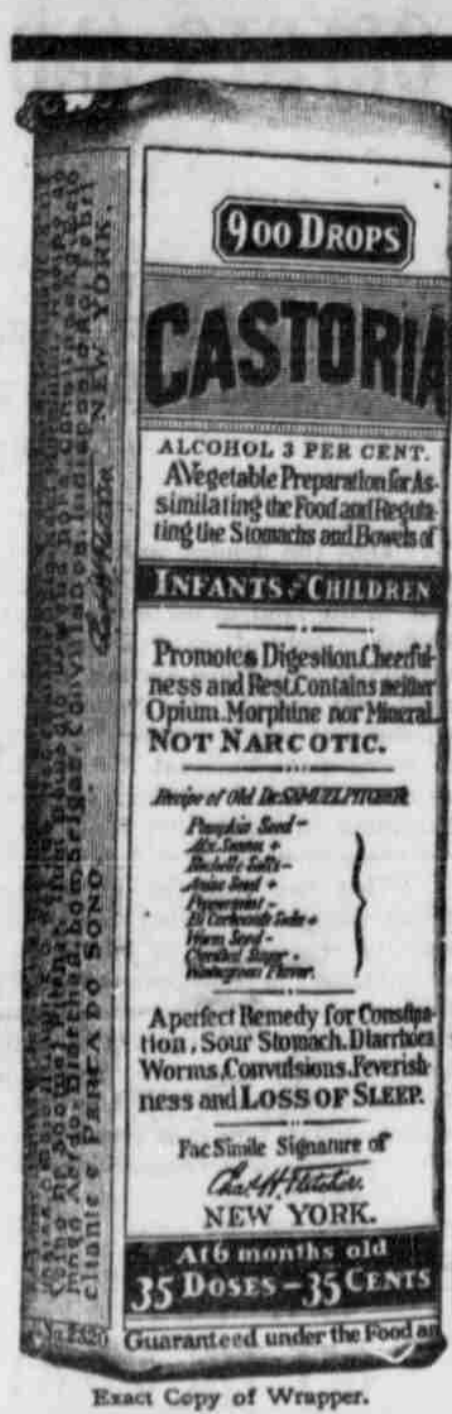
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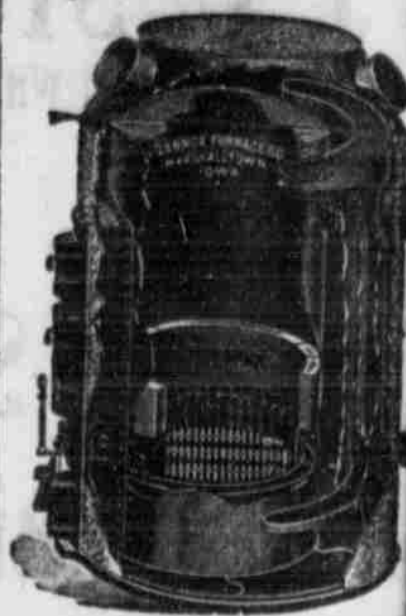
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