

When we have no other than partisan legislation, and the dictates of reason and conscience are stifled by the lash of the party whip, then government of the people through their representatives becomes a mockery and a delusion.

SPEECH

OF

HON. JOHN LOWNDES McLAURIN,

OF SOUTH CAROLINA,

IN THE

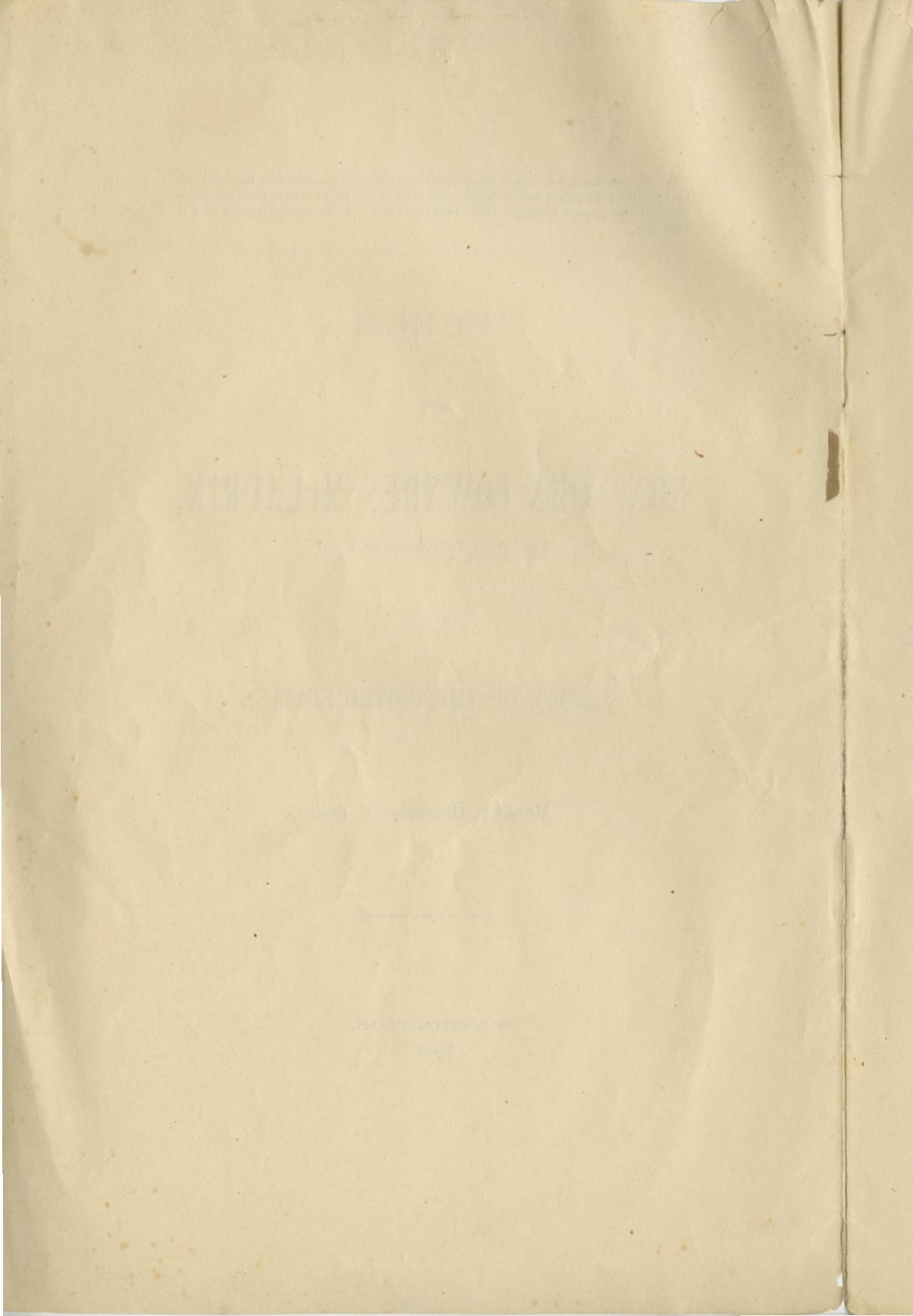
SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES,

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Mr. McLAURIN of South Carolina said:

Mr. PRESIDENT, I rise to a question of personal privilege, for the purpose of calling the attention of the Senate to the published statement that I have been excluded from the caucuses of my party, and hence would be without assignment on any committee. If that were true I would be greatly hampered in the discharge of my duty as a Senator of the United States. If this action had none but a personal effect I would not call the attention of the Senate to it; but it deprives the people of the State of South Carolina of an important part of the duties of a Senator and the Senate itself of that assistance which it was intended that I should render.

The only notice that I have ever had was last spring, before the adjournment of the Senate, when the chairman of the national committee, in the cloakroom, inquired of me why I had not recently been attending the caucuses of the party. I replied that I differed so widely with the majority of my associates on the questions growing out of the Spanish war that I had remained away from a delicacy of feeling, fearing that my presence would embarrass the deliberations. I suspected no ulterior motive or purpose, but when he replied, "Then it would be less embarrassing to you not to be invited to the caucus?" I saw at once what he meant, and replied, "Certainly," and rose from my seat and walked away.

This is the culmination of a controversy with which I can not charge the Democratic party, but fasten upon those in whose hands the leadership of that party has, I hope, been temporarily placed. It is far reaching in its effects, and unless understood it can not be thwarted, and unless thwarted it must to some extent

injure the entire country. It is for this reason that I ask the indulgence of the Senate, and request that the Senators follow the history of this matter closely.

SECTIONALISM THE CAUSE.

The surface view is that it is a fight against me by the Democratic party. If this was the case I would remain silent and fight my own battles, but the inside history will show it to be a concerted action on the part of some for the purpose of keeping alive a sectionalism which ought to be but a sorrowful memory, and its tendency, I fear, is to array section against section in the personal interests of a few men to the detriment of all other men. Our section is being rapidly emancipated from the shackles of poverty and prejudice, forged by the reconstruction following a cruel war, and knowing its brave, loyal, and intelligent people as I do, I have no fears as to the result when the true facts become known.

For many years past the people of the South have realized that in national legislation they did not secure their just proportion of the benefits, while bearing more than their proportion of the burdens of this Government. We have in times past made the mistake of indulging in invective rather than argument, and condemned the people of other sections instead of pointing out the remedy and trying to effect a reasonable adjustment by which the rights of all sections should be preserved. As the race question begins to be solved and the South from an agricultural section develops great commercial and industrial enterprises, the people are naturally beginning to divide in thought, as do the thinking people in all other sections. If this should occur the political career of some of the present leaders would be at an end. They could see Samuel J. Randall speak and vote in favor of a protective tariff and yet support him as a Democratic candidate for the Presidential nomination. They could support General Hancock, who called the tariff a merely local issue; they could indorse Senator David B. Hill, even, after he voted against the income tax, because those views, while diverse, did not endanger certain leaders.

But when a Southern man tried to obtain for his section a portion of the benefits of a tariff law that could not be defeated, and

called upon the South to secure, if possible, its just dues, not by wordy harangues, but by reasonable compromises, some men—fearful that their occupation would be gone if the people began to think for themselves instead of acting upon prejudice alone—are ready to humiliate and crush any Southern man who dares to think and reason for himself upon these great public questions.

CONDITIONS IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

In my State we have but one political party, and inside of that party we have a primary system, which is regulated by law. Under that primary system we have the widest latitude of thought and freedom of discussion. This has been forced upon us by the peculiar conditions which have existed since the war.

I have repeatedly stated on the stump and elsewhere that all I wanted was an opportunity to go before the people of South Carolina and present my views to them upon the great public questions of the day, and let them pass upon them. I have said, and I say again, that if they think I am wrong I am perfectly content to stop right there and let my political career end. But I claim that as a right. There is no Republican party in South Carolina as you understand a party elsewhere, and so long as the rights which we enjoy under our primary system are unabridged and left open there is no necessity for any other party in that State. This is all that it means. To me freedom of thought, freedom of speech, and liberty of action are worth more than a seat in the Senate or any office under this Government.

THE BEGINNING OF THE FIGHT.

On March 23, 1897, I made a speech while a member of the House of Representatives, which was the beginning of this whole controversy. The Dingley bill was under consideration, and I spoke in part, as follows:

In looking into the matter—

The Dingley bill—

I discovered enough to convince me, at least, that the interests of the laboring and producing classes of the South had to a certain extent been sacrificed. I imagined that I detected the fact that the enthusiasm and heat of debate, together with an intense opposition to the policy and principles of protection, had caused us to forget or neglect to demand a just reciprocity for our own people when at the beginning, as now, we fully realize that any and all opposition will fail.

I said that, under such circumstances, whatever consideration was given to Southern interests came almost without a demand and was always of such a character as to interfere as little as possible with interests in the North and East.

I went on then to say:

As Democrats, we have denounced the doctrines of protection and declared that the protected industries of the North and East were robbing the balance of the nation. Believing this to be true, and knowing that in spite of all our efforts for thirty years this doctrine still continues in operation, is it wise, is it just to our people not to demand fair play for our section? Must our own people suffer because of our obstinacy or pride? Let us demand equal privileges for all the products of the South, to the end that, if the tariff is robbery, our own section will cease to be its only victim. If protection really brings higher prices, as we claim, let the people of the South realize that fact when they market their cotton, sugar, tobacco, rice, lumber, etc.

The South needs new factories and other business enterprises to develop her resources and manufacture her raw material. It requires money to do this, and money she has not, neither will she ever have until she stops selling her raw material at a loss and buying the finished article back from New England at a high price.

I made the statement in the House—and I little dreamed of the storm it would create—that I was not discussing the question from a theoretic or philanthropic standpoint, but was simply demanding equal rights and a full share for my own section of all the benefits which might accrue from legislation, whether such legislation accorded with my political creed or not.

I went unexpectedly into a campaign for the Senate (where under our primary system every man has a right to vote directly for the candidate of his choice) with that speech as my platform. My Democracy was immediately attacked, but the people indorsed me by a large majority at the primaries. I outlined in that campaign what I thought, in a general way, was the proper policy for a Southern representative to pursue, and so far as I have been able I have followed that general course in the United States Senate. The people were thinking for themselves, which did not suit certain leaders, and from that day until this in South Carolina there has been conducted against me a campaign of calumny, falsehood, and trickery never equaled in the history of American politics.

THE FEDERAL ADMINISTRATION IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

If this was directed against me only I would not thus bring the matter before the Senate, fully realizing that this body is not interested in any personal political conflicts; but it has been used against two Presidents of the United States, and as a citizen of the United States, as well as a Senator, I protest against the dragging of the honored office of the Chief Executive of the nation into local political squabbles.

The principal charge made against my Democracy is that I was bought by the patronage of President McKinley, and renewed a contract of sale for myself under similar terms with President Roosevelt. Having the highest degree of confidence as well as a feeling of personal admiration for both, it is unnecessary for me to say that neither of them ever stooped so low as to bargain the public service of the country for any such ignoble purpose. It is true that an unfortunate condition existed in South Carolina under which President McKinley did not have confidence in the patriotic purposes of the recognized leaders of his party in that State, and that therefore, to some extent, the arduous and unwelcome work of selecting applicants for position was thrown upon me. If I had for one moment attempted to abuse this confidence by using it simply for my personal advantage, it would have been and ought to have been withdrawn. It was natural, where it was left to me, to choose a friend instead of an enemy.

After my election to the Senate the Democrats in both branches of Congress insisted upon a declaration of war against Spain. The President did his utmost to avert this, but, actuated by patriotism and laying aside all partisanship, the appropriation for the war was made and war was declared. The same spirit which demanded of me that I should vote to inaugurate the war under the Administration called for me to give that Administration my heartiest support in the conduct of the war. I deprecated any division between the political parties as to this matter, and still believe that it should have been wholly nonpartisan; and I know personally that such was the noble purpose of the then President of the United States. Where it was possible I secured the appointment of a Democrat; where it was not, the best Republican

available, to the end that our people might have a good Federal Administration. I wanted no more such horrors as burning post-masters, like the one at Lake City.

I was thrown somewhat closely in contact with the President during this war, and never did I hear a word from his lips concerning party advantage or disadvantage in connection with that subject. He was a broad American statesman, a patriotic citizen, and a Christian gentleman. Why, then, should I not agree with him as to the measures which he intended not to benefit his party, but to restore peace and prosperity throughout our common country?

SHOULD NOT ARRAY CLASS AGAINST CLASS.

The Democratic party has always claimed to be the party of the whole people and the true exponent of liberty and equality. The Democratic party has condemned the Republican party on the charge of seeking to create an aristocracy and destroy the true purposes of the Republic. In these latter days certain party leaders have made the mistake of trying to array class against class, and thus sought to establish an aristocracy in which these leaders should be the chief aristocrats. These class distinctions are detrimental to the best interests of our country, and have no proper place in a Democratic platform. To array class against class in the hope of securing fancied social and financial equality is to sow the seeds of anarchy and breed strife and discord in our Republic.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND SPEECH.

The United States Senate should be controlled by justice and reason, and here, as in no other deliberative body, should the widest and most nonpartisan expression be allowed upon grave public questions. It has seldom been the case that either great political party has ever been able to align all of its members upon any great public question, and it will be a sad day for this Republic when this is no longer true. Democratic freedom of speech has been honored and held sacred by every political party which has elected members to the Senate of the United States. I am at a disadvantage by being compelled to form my conclusions as to the charges made against my Democracy from the daily press.

THE ISSUES.

In a general way, through the newspapers, I learn that I am charged with not having opposed the cessation of hostilities between the United States and Spain and the perpetuation of the conflict between these nations. I am further charged with assisting the Administration in its policy to bring about a peaceful culmination of our difficulties in the Philippines. I am further charged with favoring an army sufficient in size to bring about an end to the sanguinary warfare which has been waging in those islands. I am also charged with favoring the upbuilding of our merchant marine. These are all the charges that have been made against my Democracy, and the charges are true, and I glory in their truth. I did not wish to vote against my party on any of these questions, and had it not been for the reopening of hostilities in the Philippines I would have deferred to the judgment of recognized party leaders and even voted against the treaty of peace.

But I was not in favor of prolonging the conflict between the United States and Spain, and I have never for a moment brought my mind to regret that that conflict has ceased. I am in favor of giving the Philippine Islands the best government and the largest independence possible under all of the circumstances. I am not in favor of foreign ships continuing to carry over 90 per cent of our exports.

The Democratic party has always been the party of free speech, fair play, with a love of justice and equality, and yet in all of the votes taken upon these serious questions, as to which men's minds would naturally and honestly differ, I find that Republican votes have been recorded against the propositions which I have advocated and Democratic votes in favor of those propositions. I see no effort on the part of the Republican party to discipline or exclude the revered senior Senator from the State of Massachusetts, the honored Senator from the State of Maine, or other Senators of that party who were not in accord with the position taken by a majority of the Republican Senators.

UNDER CAUCUS DICTATION THE SENATE NO LONGER A DELIBERATIVE BODY.

The United States Senate is supposed to be a deliberative body. Its decisions upon any subject should not be controlled by prej-

udice or partisanship. Its mission is to improve and conserve the interests of the States and of the whole people, and this is the first attempt in the history of the Senate for a political organization to so control legislation that it makes it a condition precedent that a Senator shall vote in accordance with caucus dictation or else be subjected to party discipline.

When the two political parties meet in caucus and compel their members to vote according to the caucus, then it makes it in the power of the majority of a majority to compel legislation, which a majority of the Senators elected and holding seats would oppose. It transfers the legislative power from the United States Senate to the majority of the majority of the dominant party in that body. There is no necessity and no utility in discussing a subject upon which every Senator's vote is compelled upon one side or the other by a political caucus. Such a precedent would completely destroy the entire purpose of the Senate, deprive it of its character as a deliberative body, and forever throttle free thought or free speech.

I would regret to see that the party to which I am attached by association and heredity make a mistake so gross and obvious as to go before the people with a proposition that free thought and free speech should have no place in the Senate of the United States, and there should be no policies except those of the dominant party expressed in their caucuses, held in dark rooms, hidden from public view, and participated in by none who oppose the schemes of the leaders who call the caucuses. We all know that a Senate caucus in either party is dominated by less than half a dozen men. When we have no other than partisan legislation, and the dictates of reason and conscience are stifled by the lash of the party whip, then government of the people through their representatives becomes a mockery and a delusion.

I also wish to protest in the name of the people who in part I have the honor to represent, and to whom, and whom alone, I owe an accounting for the trust confided in me. I do not owe an accounting to a party caucus nor to the gentleman who, during the past six years, has so ably guided the Democratic party to its destruction and buried it in national campaigns under an avalanche of popular disapproval. I owe an accounting to the people of my

State. I owe an accounting for my official actions to the Senate, of which I am a member. Either of these accountings I am ready, anxious, and willing to make. The gentlemen who have officiated over the downfall of the Democratic party and who now offer to crucify all who would resurrect the true principles of Democracy from the mire into which they have fallen have no jurisdiction over my conduct as a Senator of the United States.

WAS ELECTED IN 1892, PLEDGED NOT TO BE BOUND BY PARTY CAUCUS.

In 1892, in common with some of the Representatives in Congress elected that year from the State of South Carolina, I was elected on a platform in which I pledged myself not to be bound by party caucuses on financial questions or other issues involving the good of the whole country. Hence it will be noted that I came into public life with the express instruction of the people of South Carolina to use my own independent judgment. The instruction of independence which I received when I was elected to Congress has never been withdrawn, and my entire life as a Representative in the other House of Congress and a Senator of the United States has been spent under this instruction from my people. To those people, and none other, I am ready to give an accounting.

A DEFUNCT AND DISHONORED POLITICAL MOB.

I have no desire to wound the feelings or to criticise the honest opinions of any man, no matter how he may differ with me upon a public matter. But, in the name of Democracy, I enter my protest against any action by its leaders which will bring it into disrepute and make of it, instead of a party for the upbuilding of a great Republic, a party in favor of a petty country, jealous of growth and fearful of every great national enterprise. It is not the democracy of the past, but some strange organization which has brought an honored name to use as a shroud for a defunct and dishonored political mob. I am a Democrat, proud of the fact that under Democratic rule nearly every one of our present commercial treaties with foreign powers was negotiated, and that the Republican party, in forty years of rule, has not succeeded in improving the commercial policies of this democracy.

I am proud of the Democratic party that opened up the doors of China and Japan to the enterprise of our infant Republic. I

am proud of the Democracy that, after centuries of failure upon the part of the European nations to suppress the piracy of the Barbary States, compelled those States to stop their thieving by a few well-directed shells from a little wooden frigate. I am proud of the Democracy under which for forty years our country grew and prospered in commerce, in industry, in wealth, in population, in expanded area, and in the arts and sciences. I am proud of the Democracy that overrode the Constitution, as its leader claimed, when it was necessary to the protection of our people and the extension of our territory. I am proud of the Democracy which, when satisfied that no express authority was given in the Constitution for internal improvements, took the implied authority and built up our common country. That is the Democracy which has made United States history.

I am not proud of the Democracy, nor do I regard it as a Democracy, that, without any remedy to suggest, would so weaken the hands of our Government in the Philippines as to perpetuate bloodshed throughout that archipelago. I am not proud of a Democracy, if Democracy it be, which would allow foreign nations to retain control of our merchant marine. It is no Democracy which denies to its members the constitutional privilege of freedom of speech. It is no Democracy which has an aristocracy so close and exclusive that none are allowed within the party who do not accept the edicts of the leader of the party.

DEMOCRACY HAS ONLY SUCCEEDED WHEN SECTIONALISM HAS BEEN
AVOIDED.

Whenever the Democratic party has appeared before the country without sectional matters being made prominent it has secured the votes of a majority of the citizens of this Republic. It was sectionalism which defeated it in 1860, in 1864, in 1868, and in 1872. The mere prospect of a settlement of sectional differences caused it to be successful before the people in 1876, but owing to disturbed conditions it was defeated by an electoral commission. In 1880 the sectional feature was again made prominent through an attempt to quiet it. The nomination of General Hancock, in himself a most excellent candidate, brought about a discussion of the old sectional issues. In 1884 the Democratic party elected its

President upon a platform entirely devoid of sectional issues and resembling the platforms of the Democratic party prior to the civil war.

In 1888 the sectional issue came to the front again upon the question of elections in the South, and the result was the defeat of the Democratic candidate. In 1892 the same candidate was elected because he ran upon a straight-out nonsectional platform. In 1896 the Democratic party attempted to array the West against the East and provide a new sectional issue. It was overwhelmingly defeated. In 1900 the same combination was made as in 1896, and the result was the same, only a little more pronounced. The American feeling is in favor of justice, free speech, and equality. This is the foundation of the true Democratic faith. There is especially no room now for any sectionalism in politics.

If sectional feeling is engendered, if class is arrayed against class, it destroys that union of interest and of sentiment which alone can work out the vast possibilities of this great Republic.

Any political party which objects to the prosperity with which a beneficent Providence has blessed our entire country because, perchance, a few individuals obtain a larger degree of that prosperity than is obtained by others, is but trying to deprive us of whatever prosperity we may have. I believe in protecting the interests of the weak and helpless with much greater care than those of the strong and powerful, who are able to protect themselves. But it is not a protection to array these people against those upon whom they are dependent. The Democratic party, when at itself, is not cynical; it is not opposed to progress, it does not take a narrow view of governmental affairs, and those who seek to confine it within these limits are not the friends, but the enemies of democracy.

NO FAVORS TO ASK FROM EITHER CAUCUS.

I was elected to the Senate from South Carolina by practically a direct vote of the people. I took upon myself certain duties and responsibilities. It is my wish, as well as my pleasure, to carry these out to the fullest extent of which I am capable. This newspaper clipping apprises me that the Democratic caucus desire to take from me the means by which I can properly represent my

State. I have no favors to ask from the caucus of either party. Wherever I am placed, I will fearlessly carry out the purpose of my election, which was to give my best thought and most careful attention to matters which came up in the Senate, and to vote in accordance with my best judgment as to what would conserve the interests of the people.

Along the lines upon which the Democratic party act, upon the broad principles of right and justice, and for the best interests of the people, it will be more than a pleasure to me to assist in an humble way in carrying out their plans. There is with me no thought of partisanship in the matter. I do not propose, however, to place myself against a proposition upon which the best welfare of the people depends simply because it is in accordance with Republican policy. I do not propose, if I can control my feelings, to take this matter as a personal affront to the extent of allowing it to warp my judgment or to change my principles. I shall not be swerved from my course of duty by any criticism or opposition from those who claim to be the Democratic party in the Senate.

WHO DICTATED THE LAST DEMOCRATIC PLATFORM.

I will not be driven from my party, nor will I be forced into any party where I do not wish to go. The animus of these proceedings is more clearly shown by the fact that of the votes complained of not one was cast in opposition to the principles enunciated in any Democratic platform ever promulgated.

There never was a Democratic platform which declared against the treaty of peace between Spain and the United States. There never was a Democratic platform which suggested a plan other than that which is being carried out as to the government of our new possessions. There was never a Democratic platform that declared against the upbuilding of our merchant marine.

The gentleman who so ably guided the Democratic party to ignoble defeat constituted himself a committee on platform for the guidance of Senators as to questions which had never been passed upon by any authorized body or committee of the Democratic party.

These questions were not in existence at the time of my election

to the United States Senate, and have arisen out of the Spanish war. Both political parties were divided upon them. They were matters of the greatest importance and were new to our country. Thinking men disagreed and even changed their minds after having expressed an opinion. The President of the United States, who had the fullest opportunity for knowledge, believed that our plain duty was to give free trade to Porto Rico. He was convinced otherwise and changed his policy. The American people indorsed his change of mind by giving him an overwhelming majority. The United States Supreme Court divided almost equally, and not along partisan lines. Some of the ablest speeches in opposition to the policy of the Republicans were made in the Senate by members of that party.

In the Democratic convention at Kansas City no policy whatever was recommended, but the position was taken that "imperialism" was to be avoided.

I do not think there is a Senator of any party who will not agree to this proposition. Upon these questions where strong men are puzzled and only the weak see clearly it is to be expected that men will differ. If this difference unfits them to serve a party and the party demands an absolute uniformity of views, then that party has grown too narrow-minded to be of service in a deliberative body.

There are brave, honorable men on this side of the Chamber whom I revere and respect. I want them to understand my position, but I am debarred from discussing any but the public phase of this question. There is a personal phase which everyone understands who has kept up with this fight. The floor of the Senate is not the proper place for its settlement. On the great main issues upon which I have passed as a public man, as God is my judge, I have tried to rid my heart of self and follow the dictates of my conscience and judgment. I will bide the result without complaint, and with no bitterness in my heart toward any man who differs with me on great public questions.

