

Iowa People and Events . . .

How Dowell Went to Congress

In 1910, the conflicting ambitions of S. F. Prouty and C. C. Dowell, both Republican supporters of Sen. Albert B. Cummins, seemed sure to occasion the re-nomination on the Republican ticket in the Seventh congressional district of Cong. J. A. T. Hull, long a fixture in that position. A way was sought by the Cummins group to iron out the troublesome situation, as that year in several other congressional districts, they also were actively opposing the "Old Guard."

Prouty originally was championed by the aggressive MacVicar group, but had unsuccessfully contested with Hull for the nomination in several previous campaigns. Dowell had been a Hull supporter, as also was Cummins prior to the Prouty candidacies, but now believed it was time for the captain to step aside. Furthermore, Dowell felt that Prouty, after several attempts and not being able to command a majority of Republican votes of the district, should allow another to make the fight against Hull. Believing that he could secure a considerable portion of the Hull following and at the same time hold the Cummins strength in the district, he felt that he could become the party nominee.

Neither Senator Cummins, nor those directing his interests, were willing to make the choice between these men, although well understanding how important it was that the Progressive strength should be behind a single candidate opposing Captain Hull in the primary election, if they were to win from him the nomination.

After canvassing the situation, a friendly conference was determined upon, to be composed of men in the confidence of Cummins, including an equal number favoring Prouty and for Dowell, with a third group

from the Cummins state organization. The selection of those to sit in the conference was as follows: representing Prouty were Judge Jesse A. Miller, John C. Tate and Wm. B. Hanes; representing Dowell were Louis C. Kurtz, Emory H. English and Prof. C. N. Kinney; representing the Cummins state organization were G. S. Gilbertson and Ed D. Chassell.

The conference required several meetings, which were held in the law office of Sen. John B. Sullivan in the Youngerman building, Des Moines, the latter not being present during discussions, which were prolonged and at times somewhat heated. At first, both groups were adamant in their positions, each with belief in the possibility of convincing those of opposite thought.

The Prouty adherents urged that sentiment had crystallized sufficiently in favor of the judge, notwithstanding his losing two previous attempts to dislodge Captain Hull, so that it was perfectly clear to them that this time he could defeat him.

The Dowell supporters considered Prouty no stronger than previously demonstrated, insisting that it was clearly necessary to secure some of Hull's support to beat him, which they knew Dowell could get. The personal merits of the two men were not discussed, it being considered that both had equal claim upon practically the same group of Republicans, and individually had been popular in previous county campaigns, Prouty serving as district judge, and Dowell as state representative and senator.

After several conferences and some little maneuvering, agreement was finally reached that Prouty should again be the candidate in the immediate campaign, and if successful, for one additional term. Then, he would step aside for Dowell, and both to give full support to this program. The arrangement was considered binding and therefore was reduced to writing and signed by all members of the conference.

The Prouty men were jubilant upon the outcome

and knew the Judge would acquiesce without formal consultation. Kurtz and English were named as a committee to confer with Senator Dowell and obtain his support of the program. This was not easy to secure and the meeting with him was not pleasant. It was hard to make him see that a victory had been won for him, the full realization of which would be only temporarily delayed, and its fruits to be obtained without any expensive or arduous primary campaign. Moreover, he was the younger and could afford to wait. The situation was a bit baffling for him and the solution still unpalatable, but after consideration he gave his support to Judge Prouty. The latter won over Hull in the primary and was elected to congress, served the two terms specified in the agreement and was succeeded by Dowell, whose long and notable service equalled that of Captain Hull.

Many years later, the survivors of the conference again met in Senator Sullivan's office and burned the memorandum of recommendations preserved in his office safe. None of the candidates and only two of the conferees are still living.

Senator Kenyon An Idealist

Noteworthy in the election of senators from Iowa to the United States senate, was the last by its general assembly in 1911, the incidents of which are recalled in this issue by Sen. Leslie E. Francis, one of the leading participants. William S. Kenyon, of Fort Dodge, was the successful candidate, after ballotings each day at joint sessions of the senate and house during the Thirty-fourth General Assembly. Subsequently under provisions of the Federal law, senatorial nominations have been made at the primaries and senators elected in the fall.

The rivalry described was intense, although bitterness was not exhibited in any marked degree. The final election of Kenyon after the long contest between Iowa Republican leaders, and the elimination of Lafe

Young as an influential political factor in the state, were events that brought to an end the intense factionalism that had been rife among Republicans in this state for many years. Not that personal rivalries have not been spirited since, but nothing like that obtaining during the anti-Cummins decade.

When it seemed possible that Judge Deemer might become a "compromise" selection, some sort of a "deal" was said to have been arranged to later place Senator Joe Allen in the governor's chair, and make Ernest Moore lieutenant governor, which gave the Kenyon forces an uplift that finally carried him through. However, Allen did not become governor, as he and George Cosson split the Progressive vote, and W. L. Harding was nominated. But Moore did become lieutenant governor.

Though able and very ambitious, Judge Kenyon's sojourn in the United States senate proved to be an uncomfortable period in his life. Political intrigue and trading of influence were not to his liking, and he was definitely relieved when returned to duties upon the judicial bench. A sort of haunting fear of public criticism or reproof had hovered over almost his every act, and although naturally forthright and fearless, at times he appeared a bit timid. And finally, when he became a candidate in the primary for the second senatorial term, the importuning of voters for support proved positively distasteful.

During the canvass he was apprised of some other trades said to have been effected in behalf of his candidacy. He had voted against the seating of men in the United States senate because of irregular acts in their behalf charged against their friends in senatorial election campaigns, involving use of both money and influence, and he bitterly opposed the practice, which he considered dishonorable.

Now, he deeply felt the ignomy of his own predicament. One statement that especially distressed him concerned the proposed location of a certain normal

school in the district of a representative in exchange for his vote for Kenyon. Appealing to Charley Rawson, his friend and manager, to be absolved of the charge, only to learn that it was true that the suggestion had been made, Kenyon was amazed, distraught and humiliated. Rawson frankly said that of course they had made or tried to make all the trades and promises they could conjure up in securing his election. It was a blow hard for Kenyon to take.

Finally, the senator in his distress of mind traveled to the home of former Governor Larrabee at Clermont, for advice as to how he might proceed, while resting under such a charge. The wise old governor, ripe and experienced in the wiles of practical politics, placed his hand on Senator Kenyon's shoulder and consoled him by saying that political practices were difficult to reform, and that he should not be too much concerned with the political rumblings of campaigns long since quieted down and all but forgotten; also that there was an old adage that was truly applicable now, to "let sleeping dogs lie." Anyway, no new normal schools had been created or located, and evidently no harm had been done to anyone, after all. Thus, under the kindly advice of the tactful friend the senator was pacified; at least sufficiently to cool off, but still was resentful.

Judge Kenyon was a sensitive man and a high idealist. He was deeply sentimental and almost a mystic. He was the very soul of honor, pure-minded, with character unblemished, and a bit of a dreamer; so, he never became acclimated in the senate. One time, when the ever-present subjects of taxes and appropriations were bearing down especially hard upon the senate, and he had despaired of ever solving the true basis for the support of enduring institutions, a friend walked into his office and found him taking refuge in working on a plan to dignify and perpetuate "Mother's Day," having in mind his love and devotion to his own mother.

When rumor of irregularities in some department's administration was brought to his attention, he would have been happy to have started a probe of its affairs, even though many of his friends were in the department, but he was thinking of more ethereal things and the cleanup was not started.

Up at Fort Dodge there is a monument in Central Park erected to his memory, for that community honors him as one of its numerous distinguished citizens who brought fame to his home city, as well as honor to his well-spent life.

Mark Shake Rag Street, Mineral Point

On September 18, 1951, the third of the series of new official state markers was erected at Shake Rag Street in Mineral Point, Wisconsin, reports the *Newsletter* of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. In comment it says that the street gets its name because in an early day at meal time shaking of rags by womenfolk used to summon the men from the lead mines. In the 1830's tin miners from Cornwall, England, migrated to southwestern Wisconsin and built stone cottages similar to the ones in their homeland. Shake Rag contains the greatest concentration of these homes.

Many of the houses are slightly remodeled as private homes, but three — Pendarvis, Trelawny and Polperro have been restored authentically and are open to visitors. The traveler is invited to enjoy Cornish pastries, citron and plum preserves, saffron cakes and scalded cream upon reservation at the Pendarvis dining room. Newlyn, a guest house near Pendarvis, is one of the old original Cornish stone houses that has been restored and equipped with modern accommodations. The Shake Rag marker was erected by the citizens of Mineral Point.

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