



HORACE BOIES

THE POLITICAL CAREER OF HORACE BOIES

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Horace Boies, Governor of Iowa for two terms (1889-1891, 1891-1893), was the only Democratic Governor of the State between the formation of the Republican party in 1856 and the election of Clyde Herring in 1932. Thus, as the only Democrat elected to the highest office in a normally Republican state, Boies was a conspicuous political figure. In fact he was conspicuous enough to cause some national speculation on whether Iowa was "a doubtful State."¹ For a period in the 1890's he became a leading national as well as a state force in the Democratic party. He was twice nominated by enthusiastic backers at Democratic National Conventions in 1892 and 1896 for the office of President of the United States. He was offered a position on President Cleveland's Cabinet during Cleveland's second term of office — an offer which he declined. Yet, despite his state and national prominence, very little has been written about Governor Boies. After 1902 he retired to obscurity from which he was rescued only by obituary notices more than twenty years later.

The active political career of Horace Boies comes at an interesting transitional period in American history — a period of rising industrialism and labor unrest, a period of agrarian crusades against the burden of taxation and the power of the "trusts," and a period of expanding national imperialism attendant upon the disappearance of the frontier within the country. His political contemporaries on the national scene were men like John Peter Altgeld of Illinois, William Jennings Bryan from Nebraska, and Richard P. Bland from Missouri. In his own State there was William Larrabee who had curbed the railroads, James B. Weaver who led the People's party in 1892, and Senator William B. Allison. What place does Governor Boies occupy among these men, how did he stand on the issues of his day, and what estimation can there be of him some fifty years after his active career? These are questions for which the following evidence is a partial answer.

Before he was nominated by the Democrats as their candidate for Gover-

¹ John N. Irwin, "Is Iowa a Doubtful State?" *The Forum*, 13:257-64 (April, 1892).

nor in 1889, Horace Boies was not particularly prominent in Iowa. He was a lawyer in Black Hawk County where he had been practicing since his arrival in Iowa in 1867. He had been a city solicitor in Waterloo, where he lived during this period, for "one or two terms."² Previously he had had some political experience in his former home in New York state where he had served a term in the State Legislature in 1857. Most of his life had followed a familiar pattern for men of his day. Born in 1827, he was raised in a log house in Erie County, New York, and received a very sketchy education sandwiched in between helping on his father's farm and working on the frontier in the Wisconsin Territory. He says of himself that he first arrived at Racine, Wisconsin, in 1844 at the age of sixteen with seventy-five cents in his pocket, and he spent that season working for \$12 a month. When he was twenty-one, he began reading law in the office of a country lawyer back in Erie County, New York, and two years later was one of four out of thirteen applicants to be admitted to the bar.³

When he was forty, Boies moved to Waterloo, Iowa, the home of his second wife's family, and there he practiced law for twenty-two years before he received the nomination for Governor. During this time he had invested the earnings from his law practice in Iowa land, chiefly in Grundy County to the west, until he was known as the second largest landholder in the county⁴ — a comfortable fortune for a man who had started life so modestly.

Politically he was a Whig until the formation of the Republican party, whereupon he joined the ranks of the new party, and as long as "it had a mission to fulfill, he was its zealous advocate and defender."⁵ It was not until he had moved to Waterloo that he changed his allegiance; in 1884 he cast his first Democratic vote for Grover Cleveland.

The issues on which Boies broke with the Republican party were both national and local in character. On the national level his opposition to the protective tariff drew him toward the Democrats.⁶ On the state level he

² Letter of May 3, 1897, *Horace Boies Correspondence* (State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa). See also correspondence with A. J. Edwards in "An Autobiographical Sketch of Governor Boies," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 14:373-8 (July, 1924).

³ Letter of May 3, 1897, *Boies Correspondence*.

⁴ *Waterloo Tribune*, April 6, 1923.

⁵ *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, September 4, 1889.

⁶ Johnson Brigham, *Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens* (3 vols., Chicago, 1915), 1:503.

was opposed to the Republican party's prohibitory law of 1884.⁷ Thus his vote for Cleveland in 1884 expressed his disapproval of the Republican party on both levels.

His stand against the prohibitory law was often misunderstood. Boies himself was the most temperate of men. In fact the only lodge to which he ever belonged was the Good Templars.⁸ It was not because of interference with his personal habits that he opposed the Republican prohibitory law. He explained his views somewhat later in a letter:

From the organization of the republican party to the time of the proposed amendment to the constitution of the State prohibiting the manufacture and sale of all intoxicating liquors as a beverage I had been a somewhat zealous member of that party. When the amendment was proposed without provision for compensating those whose property would be destroyed by it; by every means at my command I opposed it. I said what was true, that millions of capital had been invested in this state in breweries vinyards and appliances for the manufacture of wine under Statutes that substantially invited such investments, and to destroy this property without compensating the owners would be a political crime that would some day defeat the party guilty of it.⁹

But it was not only a question of property rights that caused Boies to oppose prohibition. He also thought it was an encroachment by the State upon the rights of the individual. "I opposed it also," he added in the same letter, "as a dangerous innovation in the fundamental principle upon which our system of government is founded — The largest possible liberty of the individual consistent with the welfare of the whole." This insistence upon individual rights was a part of his political philosophy which was to appear over and over again during his two terms in office.

Though he had not been politically active in the decade before his nomination as Governor, Boies had expressed his views on prohibition in a petition which he helped write in 1883. Thus his position on this issue was publicly known.¹⁰ When the Democrats met in Sioux City in September,

⁷ For a discussion of the prohibition question in Iowa during this period, see Dan Elbert Clark, "The History of Liquor Legislation in Iowa, 1878-1908," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 6:503-609 (October, 1908).

⁸ *Waterloo Tribune*, April 6, 1923.

⁹ Letter of May 27, 1898, *Boies Correspondence*.

¹⁰ Editorial from Davenport *Democrat-Gazette* (reprinted in the Iowa City *Iowa State Press*, September 4, 1889) describes the petition which Boies helped write in

1889, to draft the State platform and slate, there had not been too many candidates for Governor previously mentioned. The Democratic press was singularly reticent on possibilities. Benton J. Hall, in a letter to the *Ottumwa Democrat*, and Peter A. Dey of Iowa City had announced that they would not be candidates. The *Davenport Democrat-Gazette* presented three pre-convention candidates which were considered worthy — John E. Craig of Keokuk, W. W. Witmer of Des Moines, and Horace Boies of Waterloo. And to this list Joseph S. Tam, the Johnson County Democratic chairman, had added Judge W. H. McHenry of Des Moines.¹¹

Shortly before the Sioux City convention, a long editorial in the *Davenport Democrat-Gazette*, written from Waterloo and signed B. F. T. (probably Benjamin F. Tillinghast, a prominent Democrat) introduced Horace Boies as "One of the Sterling Men of the State." The article not only gave some pertinent biographical facts, but it also quoted from prominent Waterloo citizens their opinion of their fellow townsman. The author very wisely included prominent Republicans such as Matthew Parrott, editor of the *Reporter*, and J. C. Gates, Republican county chairman, among the people who praised Boies. After explaining that Boies was an abstainer despite his stand on prohibition, the editorial summarized his views as follows: "He is opposed to paternal government, to centralization, to the lavish expenditure and waste of public money and is heartily in favor of such reforms in electoral methods as will do away with the present corrupt practices and insure pure and honest results."¹² This was properly vague but it must have reassured many Democrats, because three weeks later Boies was nominated by Judge J. H. Shields of Dubuque and won on the first ballot. His nearest competitor, Mayor John Craig of Keokuk, won only 161½ votes to Boies' 502. The man who had never sought office, "and never will by his own choice,"¹³ found himself a candidate in his party by adoption, supporting a platform which opposed a high tariff and favored the Australian ballot, a liquor license law, and government regulation of railroads.¹⁴

which he claimed that prohibition would restrict immigration, destroy property, and substitute legal coercion for moral force. The petition closed with a plea for temperance, but pledged the signers to oppose prohibition.

¹¹ *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, July 17, August 7, 21, 1889.

¹² Reprinted in *ibid.*, September 4, 1889.

¹³ *Ibid.* Boies himself made a similar statement to A. J. Edwards in "Autobiographical Sketch of Governor Boies," 377.

¹⁴ *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, September 25, 1889. The platform was praised in a

There seemed little doubt, at least in the minds of Iowa editors, that the one and all-important issue in the forthcoming campaign would be that of prohibition. The editor of the *Iowa State Press*, on October 2, 1889, declared, "all other issues will be subordinate to that . . .," and Republican papers were certain that the Democratic victory meant that prohibition would be repealed immediately. "Iowa Democrats insist from year to year on keeping the saloon in politics," one Republican editor complained.¹⁵ A man signing himself "A Blackhawk Republican" wrote a long letter to the *Waterloo Reporter* asking, "Who is Boies?" He protested that he had lived in Waterloo for twenty years before he ever saw Boies. "I never met him at church, or at a social gathering, nor have I ever known him to take any active part in any public matter that concerned the welfare of the masses. Has he ever lifted up his voice to promote any moral movement?"¹⁶ It is apparent that Republicans felt that no man who favored a license law could be a moral force in a governmental office.

Meanwhile Boies went ahead with his campaign, patiently taking up point after point of the Democratic platform in his campaign speeches, never avoiding the crucial issue of his opposition to the prohibitory law, and explaining at length the reasons for his convictions. Again he mentioned the law as an invasion of the rights of the individual. "It reaches down to the foundations of our political structure, and involves the natural right of self government." He reiterated the argument that it endangered private property by pointing out that breweries and wineries had been established under full approval of the law since 1858 and that that investment had now been rendered illegal without compensation to the individual for his property. This, he believed, was a threat to all property owners in the State. "Can we expect capital to come into our state and take the chances of a dominant public sentiment that destroys it without mercy or remuneration whenever in the judgment of the majority, the public good demands it?" Combining these two principles — the rights of the individual and the sacredness of his property — Boies presented the proposed license law as the only fair solution, as "the application to this

New York Times article for being explicit and advanced. See Iowa City *Iowa State Press*, October 2, 1889.

¹⁵ See editorial in *Spirit Lake Beacon*, October 25, 1889.

¹⁶ Letter from *Waterloo Reporter*, reprinted in *Spirit Lake Beacon*, November 1, 1889.

question, of the principles on which our whole system of government is founded, namely: the right of self-government." He also added a special appeal to farmers on the question of prohibition, recognizing thus the strength of the agricultural vote in the State. He pointed out that farmers had previously sold "immense quantities of corn and barley" to the liquor manufacturers, and that the subsequent loss of this market "was no inconsiderable factor in the business prosperity of this state."¹⁷

Toward the end of the campaign, Boies' Republican opponent, Joseph Hutchison, was the victim of an attack by the Farmers' Alliance which undoubtedly cost him some votes. Hutchison had been a State Senator during the campaign to regulate the railroads in the previous General Assembly. It was this fact that the Farmers' Alliance seized upon. They printed the records of both Hutchison and Poyneer, Republican candidate for Lieutenant Governor, to prove that they had either stood on the side of the railroads or had refused to vote on crucial issues. In an article in the Cedar Rapids *Gazette* for October 23, 1889, J. B. Furrow, the president of the Farmers' Alliance, led the attack: "If the farmers of this rural state [who] are today trading a bushel of oats for a pound of (trust) sugar have so far forgotten their manhood . . . as to support such a man because a party has unfortunately named him as a candidate, they ought never again to complain." Even Governor Larrabee was forced to come publicly to Hutchison's defense. He announced that he "presumed" his record as published in the papers "was correct." His explanation followed: "I deem, however, the record of the past as compared with his present views and opinions of small importance." Larrabee's statement was not enough to rescue Hutchison's political fortunes and Boies was elected by a plurality of 6,573.¹⁸

Undoubtedly prohibition remained the chief issue of the campaign. At any rate the decline in the Republican votes came chiefly in the river counties which were notably anti-prohibition. Yet the Farmers' Alliance attack on the chief Republican candidate certainly did not hurt Boies as much as it did Hutchison. That Boies capitalized on the discrediting of his rival

¹⁷ Campaign speech at Iowa City, special supplement, Iowa City *Iowa State Press*, October 16, 1889.

¹⁸ Spirit Lake *Beacon*, November 1, 1889. Newton B. Ashby claims that Hutchison "had been for several years the leader of the 'Q' railway interests in the Iowa Senate." He also claims, "My exposure defeated Hutchinson [sic] and elected Boies the democratic nominee." *The Ashbys in Iowa* (n.p., 1925), 43. For vote, see *Iowa Official Register*, 1890, 190.

seems evident from his speech at a Waterloo victory celebration when he commended the Democratic party for its insistence upon "the control of corporations." The general Republican opinion, however, was that prohibition had given the election to Boies. A post-election editorial in the *Fairfield Ledger* commented: "every saloon-keeper in Iowa voted for Boies and Democratic candidates." When accounting for the defeat of the Republicans, an Iowa City editor pointed without hesitation to prohibition. "In Iowa City, for instance," he added, "it is safe to say that the majority of the Republican business men voted for Boies." Boies himself later agreed that prohibition had put him in office. "My first election as governor of Iowa was unquestionably due to my view of the prohibitory [sic] legislation of the State."¹⁹

Thus it seems evident that the issue which put Boies in the Governor's office in Iowa and consequently brought him nationally to the attention of the Democratic party was the local issue of prohibition. Yet, despite his vigorous campaign speeches, he was never able to force a license law through the legislature, and the second campaign in 1891 found him reiterating his speeches of 1889. That the Twenty-Third General Assembly was unwilling to pass a license law was not surprising. The Senate had twenty-eight Republicans to twenty-two Democrats and the House was so exactly balanced with fifty each that they could not even organize. For five weeks the balloting continued until, after the 136th ballot, the two parties finally worked out a compromise on the speaker and standing committees. Meanwhile the inauguration had to be postponed until February 27.²⁰

The fact that prohibition was the most important local issue of Boies' two terms as Governor is evident from his own preoccupation with it in an official capacity. His speeches devoted by far the most attention to this issue. It was dominant in his campaign in 1891 for his second term as Governor, and it was not until the Republican party finally revised its

¹⁹ Letter of May 27, 1898, *Boies Correspondence*. In five counties along the eastern edge of the State the Republican vote decreased as follows between 1888 and 1889: Dubuque, 1,240; Clinton, 1,133; Scott, 1,187; Des Moines, 1,307; Lee, 1,290. *Iowa Official Register, 1889, 75-192; 1890, 121-190*. Boies' Waterloo victory speech appears in the *Iowa City Iowa State Press* for November 13, 1889. Editorials from the *Fairfield Ledger* and the *Council Bluffs Nonpareil* were reprinted in the *Spirit Lake Beacon*, November 15, 1889. See also *Iowa City Daily Republican*, November 9, 1889. Fred E. Haynes, *Third Party Movements Since the Civil War . . .* (Iowa City, 1916), 197, also assigns the outcome of the election to the prohibition issue.

²⁰ *Journal of the House, 1890, 81-8, 106.*

platform toward loosening the rigid plank of strict prohibition that Boies was defeated for office when he ran a third time in 1893.²¹ Meanwhile he had not been able by the force of his approval to get a license law passed by either the Twenty-Third or Twenty-Fourth General Assembly, and he had weathered a storm of criticism by his remission of fines in cases violating the prohibitory law.²² The *Des Moines Register* epitomized the attitude of the opposition press by stating, "The Saloon is the magna charter [sic] of Democracy . . ." in an editorial on January 24, 1890.

Actually Boies was meticulous about the enforcement of the law and while he lamented the price of enforcement in terms of increased court costs, he carefully followed up each suspension of fines with letters to county attorneys asking that a check be made on whether further violations had occurred. The failure to pass a license law during his administration was a disappointment, and in his final speech to the General Assembly before leaving office in January, 1894, he reiterated his preference for "local option" and his opposition to the Mulct law which the Republicans now favored. The Ohio or Mulct law, he announced, "would send the saloon into every locality of the State, subject only to the fine imposed for maintaining it."²³ The State would have no possible way of regulating the

²¹ Benjamin F. Shambaugh (ed.), *Messages and Proclamations of the Governors of Iowa* (Iowa City, 1904), 6:285-93, 332-5, 376-81. The party platform adopted at the Democratic State Convention in Ottumwa, June 24, 1891, after complimenting Boies' previous administration, had as its first item, "we demand the passage of a carefully guarded licence tax law. . . ." *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, July 1, 1891. See Clark, "History of Liquor Legislation in Iowa," 591-4, for a discussion of the change in the Republican party on the prohibition question.

²² Boies was able to prove that he had suspended only 49 fines in liquor cases in 1890 compared with 90 suspensions by Governor Larrabee for similar violations in 1889. See letter of September 24, 1891, *Boies Letterbook G11-93*, 453-4. (Boies' official Letterbooks, numbered G11-85 to G11-100, are deposited at the State Department of History and Archives, Des Moines.)

²³ Shambaugh (ed.), *Messages and Proclamations* . . . , 6:378-9. See Clark, "History of Liquor Legislation in Iowa, 1878-1908," 596-9, for a discussion of Iowa's Mulct Law, passed in 1894, which provided for payment by persons selling intoxicating liquor of a tax of \$600. For enforcement of the prohibition law, see letter of June 4, 1891, *Boies Letterbook G11-92*, 362-3; letter of July 25, 1893, *G11-100*, 193-5. In this last letter, Boies' secretary was replying to a Texan who wrote to inquire whether it was true, as he had heard a prohibition lecturer say, that Iowa had abandoned half the county jails since the prohibition law of 1884. Boies not only gave the increased number of prisoners, but pointed out that court expenses had increased from \$339,457 in 1880 to \$659,655 in 1892. On December 17-18, 1890, Boies' secretary wrote 17 follow-up letters on suspension of fines. See *G11-85*, 440-63, 465-76.

class of people or the number selling liquor, nor would there be any safeguards to protect the young or intemperate.

It is true that his stand against prohibition brought Boies some fame outside Iowa. He was asked to defend his opinion at debates on the question in Ohio, Nebraska, and Kansas during his first term as Governor. In one of these he would have opposed the chairman of the National Prohibition Committee at a Chautauqua debate at Beatrice, Nebraska,²⁴ had he accepted. But Boies' reputation outside Iowa really dates from December 23, 1890, when he spoke in New York City to the Tariff Reform Club and thus made his views known on a national issue. This was not the first time he had opposed high tariffs, since as a part of the Democratic State platform in 1889 that issue had drawn his support in campaign speeches. In the interval between his election and his New York speech, the McKinley tariff bill had been passed by Congress in October of 1890 and the anti-protectionists took a hitch in their belts and settled down to the next round of the battle for tariff for revenue only.

In his New York speech, Boies set out to show the effect of high tariff on agriculture when he responded to a toast to "Our New Allies in the Northwest: What Our Farmers have a Right to Demand." The figures used in his speech, as he explained some years later, had been gathered by the labor commissioner who "without my knowledge prepared a circular letter and sent the same to a large number of practical farmers soliciting their estimate of the cost of producing an acre of corn: He received answers from nearly five hundred in all parts of the state, and of every shade of political opinion."²⁵ From these statistics Governor Boies attempted to tell his audience, which included many distinguished guests and fellow speakers such as ex-President Cleveland, Senator Carlisle, Governor-elect Russell of Massachusetts, Carl Schurz, and Henry Villard, of the plight of the farmer in the Midwest. First he gave his statistics on the cost of the production of corn in Iowa:

It is estimated by those making these reports that the cost of

²⁴ Letter of April 29, 1890, *Boies Letterbook G11-87*, 66. See also letter of April 13, 1891, *G11-92*, 36-7, and letter of November 11, 1891, *G11-91*, 363-7.

²⁵ Letter of May 27, 1898, *Boies Correspondence*. These statistics are available in the *Fourth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the State of Iowa, 1890-91*, 14, 15, 97-171. That Boies was following the tariff question very closely at this period is indicated by a bibliography on tariff which he sent, in response to a request, on October 20, 1890. See *Boies Letterbook G11-88*, 568.

producing an acre of corn ready for market is \$80.00 [sic, \$8.00]; that the average crop for five years has been 33 1/3 bushels, and statistics show that the average price of this corn in our local markets, soon after harvest, during such period has been 22 cents per bushel, making the entire value of the crop when marketed, \$7.33, or sixty-seven cents less than the actual cost of production at market rates of labor.

What is true of the production of corn in Iowa is equally true of all the great staples raised on her farms. When we consider the immense capital invested in the farms of a single state and are told that for five whole years it has not paid enough to compensate the labor employed, it is apparent that no other business in this country could have withstood such a condition of adversity during so prolonged a period. . . .

Boies then went on to relate the plight of the farmer who, although he provided the majority of imports for his country, was forced to buy manufactured goods at prices kept high by the protective tariff. The farmer must also, he insisted, "have a market for his surplus productions in foreign lands." As a warning to the businessmen and politicians, he added "that the men engaged in this industry [agriculture] are not going to wait for a home market to grow up around them that is large enough to consume the enormous surplus they annually produce. It is relief for themselves and not for generations unborn that they demand." He added that the farmers "are already thoroughly aroused. They are as fast becoming thoroughly organized."

He then went on to discuss the subject: "What Our Farmers have a Right to Demand."

They have a right to demand that in the future policy of this government no discrimination be made in favor of other industries at the expense of their own; that the power of the government to levy taxes be limited to the single purpose of raising revenue to be economically expended; that all property bear its just portion of that burden; that markets broad enough to consume the products of their labor and capital at compensatory prices, be as carefully looked after and nurtured as those that consume the productions of labor and capital employed in other lines of business.²⁶

By becoming thus the spokesman for the farmer of his area, Boies gave evidence that he was aware of the agricultural unrest which had been in-

²⁶ Entire speech quoted in *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, December 31, 1890.

creasing during the 80's. With the twin problems of growing debts and falling prices, the farmer was caught in a vise which gave rise finally to the political activities of the Populists. Boies never became allied to the Populist party, but on the matter of tariff reform, he and the Populists saw eye to eye.

Boies' New York speech almost immediately created a furor in the press. From all over the country he received countless invitations to speak, to send copies of this speech, or even to forward a photograph. He himself thought the speech the largest single factor in defining the issues for his 1891 campaign for Governor.²⁷ His reputation as a Democratic Governor strong enough to carry a Republican state began to grow until by the summer of 1892 he had become a logical candidate for nomination on the national Democratic ticket.

In Iowa, the Republican press claimed that the Governor had slandered the State in his effort to make clear the farmers' relation to tariff. The *Iowa State Register* ran an editorial on "The Governor as a Farmer" on January 16, 1891, in which it was charged that Boies had made a fortune on his own farms in Palo Alto and Grundy counties. The *Dubuque Times* was quoted to prove that, without putting any improvements on his farm near Grundy Center, he had raised "tens of thousands of bushels of corn which he feeds to the cattle brought from his pasture land north." The *Register's* conclusion was that if the Governor's experience was an example, farming in Iowa was not so bad after all. "Governor Boies . . . stirred up much more than he had any idea of doing when he went to New York City to misrepresent Iowa." The *Register* had previously run some articles in which it suggested that the burning of 100,000,000 to 150,000,000 bushels of corn as fuel would raise the price of every remaining bushel to fifty cents inside of three months. This argument was repeated after Boies' speech, with the conclusion that the plan was preferable to "that withering free trade"²⁸ which was all the Democrats had to offer.

²⁷ Letter of November 18, 1891, *Boies Letterbook G11-94*, 159; letter of September 14, 1892, *G11-97*, 645. See also letter of May 27, 1898, *Boies Correspondence*, in which he says ". . . I have always thought I was aided by what seemed to me a malicious criticism of an address I delivered before one of the political organizations of New York City during my first term." Between the speech on December 23, 1890, and April 9, 1891, he had received invitations to speak all the way from Bangor, Maine, to Seattle, Washington. See *Boies Letterbook G11-90*, 32, 54, 164, 320, 380, 618, for representative letters responding to invitations.

²⁸ Des Moines *Iowa State Register*, January 24, 1890.

The Governor's office was likewise besieged with letters of approval and disapproval for his stand on tariff. In replying to one of his critics, J. R. Stone, who accused him of slandering Iowa in his New York speech, the Governor mentioned that "The 'Register' thought the farmers ought to burn up a part of their corn and thereby increase the price," and then he contrasted his own solution: "I thought we ought to change our tariff laws so that citizens of countries that want our corn could bring their goods here and sell them to us and buy our surplus corn and carry it back to their people. You see we were both after precisely the same object, a higher price for corn."²⁹

Not all the farmers who wrote Boies after the New York speech disapproved, and Boies himself seemed to think that the speech had a good influence. In March of 1891 he instructed his secretary, Clifford D. Ham, to write a Shenandoah farmer, "that the farmers of Iowa have an intelligent understanding of the situation discussed in the New York speech notwithstanding the labored efforts of a partisan opposition press to mistake and falsify his position and the remedies he proposed; and he has received statements as to the sentiment of farmers in support of the speech from other parts of the State that you say exists in your section."³⁰

It was a sentiment which Boies had already gone out of his way to nourish. In appointing delegates to the National Farmers' Congress held at Council Bluffs the previous year (August 26-29, 1890), he had been careful to make certain that each official delegate was "a Democrat, or at least an advocate of Tariff Reform."³¹ Furthermore he was pleased by the wide circulation which his speech was given, feeling as he did that the farmers had been deceived when they supported protection which worked against their own interests. The Governor's office in Des Moines was besieged by requests for copies, and various Tariff Leagues reprinted the speech along with material appropriate to the subject. Early in January, 1891, Boies received an important letter commending his speech from Leonidas L. Polk, president of the Farmers' Alliance and Industrial Union. Recognizing the significance of such commendation, Boies forwarded this letter to New York

²⁹ Letter of February 28, 1891, *Boies Letterbook G11-85*, 624-7.

³⁰ Letter of March 3, 1891, *Boies Letterbook G11-90*, 654.

³¹ Letter of July 29, 1890, *Boies Letterbook G11-88*, 140. See also letter of July 2, 1890, *ibid.*, 28, and letter of August 14, 1890, *G11-89*, 154. See Haynes, *Third Party Movements . . .*, 226-8, for the character of these Farmers' Congresses organized in 1881.

to be issued along with his speech for distribution "among the farmers of Iowa and especially among the Republicans [where it] cannot fail to do much good."³²

This is not the only evidence that Boies was conscious of the growing unrest among agricultural interests. He had referred to it openly in his New York address and in several of his campaign speeches. And in 1891 he wrote Charles D. Fullen, the chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee in Iowa, to find out whether the author of a commendatory letter which he had received, was a member of the Farmers' Alliance or the People's party. If such proved true, Boies thought the letter ought to be used for publication. But while he was anxious to prove that he had support from such groups, he drew back from any third party entanglements, believing "that there should be no such division in the opposition to the Republican party in this State as the Peoples party movement precipitates."³³

It seems evident that Boies was too much of a practical politician to do anything to endanger votes for his party. As long as he could keep the commendation of the Farmers' Alliance as in 1889 when they supported his election or as in 1891 by his tariff views, he was willing to capitalize on that support. But when it became more and more evident in the months before the 1892 election that the agrarian crusade was going to take political form, he could not condone a third party to divide the not too large majority which the Democrats enjoyed.

It has been suggested that one reason the Populist movement did not thrive in Iowa was the comparative prosperity which the State enjoyed. Despite such figures as Governor Boies used to show corn production at a loss, Iowa was not nearly so badly off in climate, crops, and general agricultural progress as some of her neighbors such as Kansas, Nebraska, or South Dakota. Consequently Iowa in the late 80's and early 90's was not as fertile ground for the seeds of political unrest.³⁴ Perhaps added to this

³² See letters of January 18, 1891, *Boies Letterbook G11-90*, 363; March 15, 1892, *G11-95*, 556; June 3, 1892, *G11-96*, 600; August 22, 1892, *G11-97*, 489. For the Polk correspondence, see letter of January 18, 1891, *G11-90*, 297. For Polk's influence see John D. Hicks, *The Populist Revolt . . .* (Minneapolis, 1931), 174-5.

³³ Letter of August 24, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-97*, 516. See also letter of November 18, 1891, *G11-94*, 161.

³⁴ See Herman Clarence Nixon, "The Economic Basis of the Populist Movement in Iowa," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 21:373-96 (July, 1923), for an able presentation of this view.

economic reason was the straight political fact that Iowa, during those last crucial years before the national emergence of the People's party in 1892, had a Democratic Governor who was not only committed to his party's program of tariff reform, but also lost no opportunity to make clear to the farmers just how such a program would benefit them.

But to return to his support of the issue of tariff reform, Boies delivered another speech early in 1892 which won for him further national attention. Speaking before the Greystone Club in Denver on the subject "The Democracy in '92," he made it clear that tariff "is the issue and this alone will lead us to victory" in the coming presidential election. The speech reiterated some of the material of his earlier New York speech and added that the burden of taxation ought to fall on the shoulders of those able to bear it. Carrying this argument to its logical result, he "would place upon the free list all articles of prime necessity." Since he was speaking in a state not primarily agricultural, he was astute enough to add that not only farmers were hard hit by the tariff. "To all who live by toil of any kind, it is the crowning question in the whole list of economic problems. . . ." Adding that wealth was more evenly distributed thirty years ago, before the Civil War brought high tariff in its wake, he ended his speech with a blast against large trusts and corporations. "Upon one side is now arrayed the beneficiaries of these laws, aided by allies more powerful than themselves in the shape of trusts and combines that these laws have made possible, and so strengthened, they are in charge of the republican party."³⁵

By this time (February 9, 1892) Boies seemed already to be talking in terms of the coming National Democratic Convention. To his appeal to the working class in the Denver speech and his evident desire to be the spokesman for the agricultural interests of the Midwest, he now added an appeal to the Southern Democrats. In reply to a Southern letter of approval for

³⁵ Des Moines *Weekly Leader*, February 11, 1892. Boies' view on trusts and the necessity for the regulation of corporations he had expressed earlier in his official speeches, Shambaugh (ed.), *Messages and Proclamations* . . . , 6:277, 320-22, 338-9, 374-5, and more informally in his Waterloo speech printed in the Iowa City *Iowa State Press*, November 13, 1889. At about the same time that Congress was passing the Sherman Anti-Trust Act of 1890, a joint investigating committee was appointed in the 23rd General Assembly "specially charged to inquire into and to investigate whether or not there is or recently has been any combination, trust, agreement, understanding, rule or regulation between manufacturers or publishers of school books and wholesale or retail dealers therein. . . ." *Journal of the House*, 1890, 103.

his Greystone Club speech, Boies instructed his secretary to write to Montgomery, Alabama: "The interests and needs of the south and west as regards present commercial, industrial and political questions are largely identical."³⁶

Meanwhile the evidence from his official correspondence indicates how rapidly Boies' reputation was increasing outside his home state. With the National Democratic Convention only four months away it was evident that Boies was a likely candidate for nomination as President. Even before his Denver speech on February 9, the Des Moines *Weekly Leader* of February 4, 1892, was reprinting editorials from out-of-state newspapers entitled "Boies the Right Man," from the *Southern Reporter* of Sardis, Mississippi, and "Why not Boies?" from the *St. Louis Mirror*. Another suggestion from the New Haven, Connecticut, *Register* paired Boies for President with Russell of Massachusetts for Vice President. But the Greystone Club speech seems to have touched off a very considerable Boies boom. About a week later he was introduced as the principal speaker at a banquet in Omaha as the "rising statesman of the west and a future president."³⁷

Outside of Iowa the Boies boom took three forms. First there were the direct suggestions from individuals and clubs that his name be presented at the convention in June. To one of these, written as early as February 18, 1892, Boies' secretary responded: "Your suggestion in regard to the outlook for Governor Boies as a Presidential nominee is very good and timely and I shall convey it to some of the leading democrats of this state. The expression in this state and others toward Governor Boies for the Presidency is wholly spontaneous but a movement such as you mention is being considered."³⁸ Boies' own attitude toward his nomination was explained in another such letter from his secretary to John A. Clarke of Washington, D. C.

Governor Boies has not been a candidate for the democratic

³⁶ Letter of February 20, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-95*, 322.

³⁷ Des Moines *Weekly Leader*, February 18, 1892. This same issue of the *Leader* reported that Boies was second choice for President with the Minnesota Democratic State Central Committee. See *Boies Letterbook G11-94*, 153, 237, 258, 293, 369, 382, 387, 553, 621; *G11-95*, 7, 87, 96, 107, for examples of his many invitations to appear outside the State. For other evidence of his popularity in the South, see letter of May 16, 1892, *G11-96*, 455.

³⁸ Letter of February 22, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-95*, 354.

presidential nomination in the sense of seeking the same by personal effort. Holding the opinion, however, that no citizen has the right to refuse such nomination if a great party chooses to make it, he has given his friends in the state his permission for them to act as they think best. Speaking for such friends, which term might include all the Democrats of Iowa, rather than for the Governor I can say that the Iowa delegation at the Chicago convention will present his name for the nomination. They not only believe that he can carry Iowa by a good round majority but that he can gain other states in the northwest permanently to the democratic column and do as well as any other man in the other states.³⁹

This letter is interesting since it commits the Iowa Democrats to support of Boies some two months before the State Democratic Convention at Council Bluffs, May 12. It is also interesting for the suggestion that Boies could win the Northwest, a suggestion justified no doubt by press-clippings and requests for speeches from such remote cities as Portland, Oregon, and Tacoma and Seattle, Washington. Support came to Boies from both a variety of geographic areas and a variety of interest groups. Southern support for his candidacy was considerable, for example, as has already been indicated. On the other hand he wrote in May of 1892 thanking Afro-American Democrats for their support and added the hope that the effort "to increase the number of colored democrats of the Country will have all the success it so thoroughly deserves."⁴⁰

Another form which the Boies boom took between February and June of 1892 was a great increase in the amount of published material on his career and early life. The New York *Herald* had already printed an illustrated article early in January and from the time of the Denver speech until the Convention the Governor's office was deluged with requests for information. On Sunday, March 6, the New York *World* printed an "extended sketch" of his life, while during February and March Clifford D. Ham

³⁹ Letter of March 9, 1892, *ibid.*, 476. For similar letters to Amsterdam and Brooklyn, New York, to St. Louis, Missouri, and Danbury, Connecticut, see *ibid.*, 477, 478, 484.

⁴⁰ Letter of May 21, 1892, *ibid.*, G11-96, 492. For his popularity in the northwest see G11-96, 546, 599; G11-90, 880; G11-94, 369. It is probable, of course, that by the Northwest, Ham meant more specifically the northwest states of the Midwest, but it is also significant how far west interest in Boies extended. See footnote 37 for his Southern support, also his letter to J. E. Townsend of El Paso, Texas, June 7, 1892, G11-96, 632.

answered requests for information from the Youngstown (Ohio) *Vindicator*, the Jackson (Michigan) *Patriot*, the Chillicothe (Ohio) *Advertiser*, the Chicago *Times*, and *Frank Leslie's Weekly*.⁴¹ And these were for feature articles in addition to the frequent editorial mentions of Boies which helped to popularize his name before the Convention in June.

Finally the third part of the Boies-for-President movement was a greatly increased demand for him as a speaker, particularly outside Iowa. Most of these out-of-state invitations he declined because of his duties as Governor while the legislature was still in session. Sometimes, as to the Democratic League of California or the Iroquois Club in Chicago, he sent his regrets in the extended form of a letter which could be read in his absence or be used for publicity purposes. In all these statements for publication, Boies was careful to place his emphasis upon the Western Democrats and their problems.⁴²

Meanwhile in Iowa, Boies' friends were building toward a solid endorsement of his candidacy. In this effort Boies himself took practically no part. He thanked supporters for their "kind mention of him . . . for further political honors," instructing his secretary to add, "It is a matter which he feels must be left in the hands of his friends." As the State Convention drew near in May, he wrote Charles D. Fullen, the chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee, "I do not feel like making any suggestions regarding the convention at Council Bluffs. I am quite willing to leave that whole matter to the members of that body, nor could I under any circumstances have, much less express, any personal preference either as to members of the State Committee or its Chairman."⁴³

At the Democratic State Convention at Council Bluffs, May 12, enthusiasm ran high. John C. Bills of Davenport made the principal address, attacking the McKinley tariff and urging Boies for President as "a man without enemies." E. E. Markley of Mason City added, "Choose him to lead you in this fight and surely will the people confirm your choice; and when the ides of November are past so surely will a triumphant national

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, G11-95, 281-3, 320, 407, 559, 603.

⁴² For samples of invitations between February and June, see *ibid.*, G11-95, 193, 353, 386, 436, 444, 501; G11-96, 27, 30, 100, 158, 160, 249, 283, 373, 407, 524, 548. See letter to California Democratic League of March 3, 1892, G11-95, 419. For letter to Iroquois Club see letter of March 2, 1892, *ibid.*, 410-11.

⁴³ Letter of February 22, 1892, *ibid.*, G11-95, 352. Letter of May 10, 1892, G11-96, 408.

Democracy inaugurate as president Horace Boies." The convention then adopted a party platform which pledged its delegates to the Chicago convention to vote as a unit for Boies.

Recognizing his ability, his integrity, his pure character, his eminent fitness and popularity, we present his name to the national Democratic convention as a candidate for the office of president of the United States. In doing this we feel the great responsibility which devolves upon Iowa and our western Democrats; and while we pledge the faithful support of the party to the candidates of the national convention, we pledge the electoral vote of Iowa to him who has led the party to victory in three successive State elections and that the wishes of Iowa Democrats may be fairly and justly known and represented, we hereby instruct the delegates at this convention to use all honorable means to secure the nomination for president of Horace Boies, and vote as a unit upon all questions upon which the roll of States may be called in the National Convention.⁴⁴

Following the Council Bluffs convention Boies still firmly refused to direct activities for his own candidacy and wrote the delegation that he did not desire to "make the choice" between John F. Duncombe or J. H. Shields to deliver the nominating speech. It was a matter which he thought might better be left to the decision of the delegation. Nothing served to mar the optimism of the party. They made plans to establish headquarters at the Palmer House in Chicago and arranged to meet other delegates from out of state there. They took courage also from reports that the Democratic State Convention in South Dakota "went wild" when the name of Boies was mentioned, and reported to their newspaper friends in Oregon, "The democrats of the state are feeling very enthusiastic."⁴⁵

This was an enthusiasm which reckoned without the accumulated strength of Grover Cleveland, the strongest of the pre-convention candidates. The mere fact that Cleveland had once before been President added enormously to the confidence in his vote-winning powers, a fact which one Democratic newspaper in Iowa recognized in an editorial on the eve of the

⁴⁴ For an account of this convention see *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, May 18, 1892, and *Iowa City Weekly Republican*, May 18, 1892. The platform including the endorsement of Boies is to be found in the *Iowa Official Register*, 1893, 103-104.

⁴⁵ See letters of May 26, June 7, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-96*, 537, 632. South Dakota Convention reported in *Iowa City Weekly Republican*, June 1, 1892. Letter to Oregon of June 3, 1892, in *Boies Letterbook G11-96*, 599.

convention. After admitting that Cleveland would probably win a majority on the first ballot, the editorial went on to say that Boies' strength lay in being able to step in after Cleveland's chances were stalemated by his old rival from New York, David B. Hill. The writer even went so far as to admit that "Iowa has no objection to Cleveland [and] is not opposed to him. She simply stands for Boies, a candidate who made Iowa democratic, who can lead the national party to democratic victory."⁴⁶

Cleveland's forces imported Senator John M. Palmer to hold Illinois in line, brought Henry George and Congressman Tom Johnson of Cleveland to keep tariff reform in the foreground, and maneuvered the nomination for temporary chairman so as to defeat Hill's candidate. Against such organization the Iowa delegation scarcely had a chance. However the fact that Tammany stood firm for Hill and that there were dissensions reported in the Indiana and Colorado delegations gave some hope of defeating Cleveland.⁴⁷

The Iowa delegation was roundly cheered as it entered the convention hall on the second day, "the big blue banner with the picture of Horace Boies borne in front of them." Unfortunately the band played "Maryland, My Maryland" as his supporters paraded around the hall, which was perhaps not perfectly appropriate at the time, although five years later S. H. M. Byers wrote the words to the "Song of Iowa" and adapted them to the tune of the Maryland song. Following the nomination of Cleveland by Leon Abbett of New Jersey and of Hill by William C. DeWitt of New York, John F. Duncombe of Iowa nominated Horace Boies in the midst of a sudden thunderstorm which poured water through the roof of the wigwam. Boies was presented as "A man who has never been defeated, a leader of the party that changed the politics of the state from a republican majority of 78,000 to a democratic majority of over 8,000." He was named as "the representative of the fighting democracy of Iowa and of the great west. . . ." It was Boies' appeal to the West and to the agricultural interests which was stressed by the seconding speeches, first by Henry Watterson of Kentucky, then by T. J. Kernon of Louisiana, B. K. Tillman of South Carolina, and W. A. Clarke of Montana. The issue of candidate was of

⁴⁶ Iowa City *Iowa State Press*, June 22, 1892.

⁴⁷ For an account of this maneuvering for power early in the convention, see *Kansas City Star*, June 23, 1892; *Iowa City Daily Republican*, June 22, 25, 1892; *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, June 22, 29, 1892.

course decided in favor of Cleveland on the first ballot. Despite the fact that the Republican press back in Iowa cried "Horace is 'Mighty Small Potatoes' Outside of His Own State," Boies ran third with 103 votes, only a few less than David B. Hill's 114. The scattering of his 103 votes gives some indication of the pre-convention efforts of his friends. Most of them came from the South and the West, though Ohio gave him sixteen votes, a tribute to his early popularity in that State.⁴⁸

The Republican press in Iowa charged later that Boies could have had the Vice-Presidential nomination in 1892 if the Boies boomers had been alert. "But they were confident, and to such an extent that they would not enter upon negotiations which would have secured the second place on the ticket."⁴⁹ How much truth there is to this statement, it is difficult to determine. It is true that one account of the nominations for Vice President says that there were several calls for Boies, but the Iowa delegation sat silently through them and first cast its vote for Watterson, the man who had first seconded Boies. Finally they switched to Adlai E. Stevenson to make that vote unanimous.

As soon as the convention was concluded, Boies telegraphed his congratulations to Cleveland and prepared to put his shoulder to the campaign wheel.⁵⁰ The big issue in most of Boies' speeches was still tariff reform, and his help was constantly sought by Democrats outside of Iowa as well. He was even asked to help out with the campaign of Bryan in Nebraska and with the state campaigns in Illinois and Indiana, but all such requests he referred to the Iowa Democratic State Central Committee chairman to

⁴⁸ For Duncombe's nominating speech, see *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, June 29, 1892. Vote for Boies ran as follows: Alabama 1, Colorado 5, Idaho 6, Iowa 26, Kentucky 2, Louisiana 11, Massachusetts 1, Mississippi 3, Montana 6, Nevada 4, New Mexico 1, North Carolina 1, Ohio 16, South Carolina 14, South Dakota 1, Texas 6. See also Walter Ellsworth Nydegger, "The Election of 1892 in Iowa," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 25:359-449 (July, 1927). For the story of "The Song of Iowa," which was adopted as the state song in 1911, see Ruth A. Gallaher, "Songs of Iowa," *The Palimpsest*, 5:387-9 (October, 1924).

⁴⁹ Burlington *Hawk-Eye* reprinted in *Des Moines Tribune* for November 19, 1919. *Kansas City Star*, June 23, 1892.

⁵⁰ Telegram of June 23, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-97*, 64. "Accept hearty congratulations of all Iowa Democrats and be assured none will be more devoted to you than myself and those I am proud to number among my friends in the state. [Signed] Horace Boies." For an account of this campaign, see letters of June 28, July 29, August 5, 9, 1892, *ibid.*, 80-81, 310, 361, 399; letters of September 21, October 5, 24, 1892, *G11-98*, 3-4, 124, 241.

arrange his time so that he could do his best for the party. Most of his speeches were allotted to Iowa where, beginning in October, the State Central Committee arranged for him to speak every day until election with two or three speeches in each congressional district. A sample week beginning October 5 had him scheduled for Newton on Tuesday, Ottumwa on Wednesday, Mount Pleasant on Thursday, and Wapello on Friday — a healthy schedule for a man approaching 65. And the next week he made two speeches in Missouri before dashing to Chicago. It was a strenuous schedule but so successful that the crowds made outdoor meetings “an imperative necessity.” What pleased the Democratic party was that most of the engagements were in Republican counties where six years earlier there were not enough Democrats for a county organization.⁵¹

Boies' preoccupation with the tariff issue was evident in all these campaign speeches. To be sure it was primarily a national, not a state, election, and national issues like tariff were therefore more attractive than local issues like prohibition. Late in August he wrote to G. B. Harvey of the New York *World* thanking him for raising a Democratic campaign fund “to be expended in western states,” a fund which Boies was asked to help administer. In his letter he indicated that he was particularly pleased at the interest which easterners were taking in developing support both for tariff reform and the Democratic party in the West.⁵²

In a typical campaign speech at Carroll on September 15, he reiterated his arguments of 1891 and then disposed of the claim that tariff was supposed to benefit labor. “It has now been in force two whole years. Has it allayed the struggle or lessened the contest between capital and labor?” Tariff was also supposed to benefit the farmer, and since Boies was one, he was particularly interested.

In the spring of '91 the farmers of Iowa sold their oats of the crop of 1890 for 50 cents a bushel. In the spring of '92 they sold equally good grain of the crop of '91 for one half that money. What did the McKinley bill have to do with these prices? This and nothing more. It kept out of our market some of the products of labor in other countries. Nations are like individuals. They trade with those that trade with them.

⁵¹ Iowa City *Iowa State Press*, September 28, October 19, 1892.

⁵² Letter of August 24, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-97*, 515, reads in part: “I have long believed the most prolific field for the growth of democratic doctrines of tariff reform in this union is to be found in the agricultural states of the northwest. . . .”

Speaking somewhat later at Iowa City, he drew the campaign line sharply between the two major parties on this issue: "The democratic party is in favor of a tariff for revenue, the republican party claims to be in favor of a tariff for the protection of American industry. I don't believe there is any constitutional or moral right to tax the many for the benefit of the few."⁵³

When the election was over, the Democrats had lost ground in Iowa where an analysis of the vote by counties showed the rising People's party had hurt the Democrats as much as the Republicans, but Cleveland was elected and Boies was satisfied.⁵⁴ The result in Iowa belied the jubilant campaign boast of the Democratic *Iowa State Press* on October 19, 1892, that Boies had the confidence of the people who "are willing to follow where he leads." It was a sobering fact, with another gubernatorial election due in 1893, that not only was Cleveland unable to carry Iowa, but that ten out of the eleven Representatives elected were Republicans.

One other item of interest concerning Boies' nomination in the 1892 convention was the reward which Cleveland gave to him either to assuage Boies and his friends for the way they were out-manuevered in Chicago the preceding June or, what is more likely, as an astute attempt to keep the Democratic support in the Midwest and South to which Boies' nomination was testimony. So far as the Governor was concerned, he expected no such plum as a place in the Cabinet. In December of 1892 he wrote W. I. Buchanan, Agricultural Director of the Columbian Exposition, to thank him for the suggestion that Cleveland should appoint him to his Cabinet. Adding that he did not think it probable Cleveland would come to Iowa for a member of his official family, he continued, "So far as I am concerned I fully realize that Mr. Cleveland cannot properly offer me a position in his cabinet and I should greatly regret any effort on the part of friends to secure such a place for me."⁵⁵ Sometime between the first of the year and March 7, 1893, when the new Cabinet was sworn in, Cleveland offered Boies the position as Secretary of Agriculture. The offer was

⁵³ Iowa City *Iowa State Press*, September 21, 1892, contains Carroll speech; see *ibid.*, November 2, 1892, for Iowa City speech of October 28, 1892.

⁵⁴ See Nydegger, "The Election of 1892 in Iowa," 439, and Boies' letter of November 17, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-98*, 366, on the outcome of the election.

⁵⁵ Letter of December 10, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-98*, 543-4. Cleveland's offer was not expected by the Democratic press either which suggested that the agriculture post would go to Wm. H. Hatch of Missouri or to some Democrat of the north-eastern states. *Des Moines Weekly Leader*, January 5, 1893.

rejected, as Boies later said, "for the double reason that its acceptance would compel my resignation as governor of the state, and for the further reason that I did not believe myself qualified to discharge the duties of that office."⁵⁶

Boies' decision to continue in Iowa politics left him still the leading Democrat in his own State, and despite his announcement that he was unwilling to run either for a third term as Governor or for the Senate, he was again nominated by his party. The Republican victory in the presidential election of the preceding year had, however, been a bad omen. And when the Republicans added to their strength by abandoning their rigid stand on prohibition, Boies was defeated in 1893 by a majority of 32,161.⁵⁷ He did not cease to be a leader of the Democrats in Iowa, nor did he disappear as a national figure. He was still a spokesman for the agricultural interests, respected by the Populists who, according to the *Des Moines Weekly Leader* for January 19, 1893, refused to nominate a Senator on their ticket because they thought the Democrats would nominate Boies. But the issues on which he spoke were now changing. It was prohibition which brought him the governorship in 1889; it was prohibition plus his tariff reform speeches which re-elected him in 1891; it was tariff which brought him to national prominence in 1892; but after his defeat in 1893, it was the monetary question which became the major issue and kept him in the foreground up through the National Democratic Convention of 1896.

Boies' opinion on the issue of free silver developed very gradually throughout his period of active public service. In the Reform Club speech back in December, 1890, he had brushed lightly over the question of currency in relation to the western farmer's indebtedness. While answering the question "What Our Farmers Have a Right to Demand" he admitted, "They may also demand that a currency which is good enough for one man shall be made good enough for all others and plenty enough to preserve a just equality between its value and the value of the products of labor in all legitimate kinds of business." This was a sufficiently vague statement to

⁵⁶ Boies' statement appeared in an autobiographical sketch which he prepared in 1905. It was printed as an obituary in the *Waterloo Tribune*, April 6, 1923. See also "An Autobiographical Sketch of Governor Boies," 373-8.

⁵⁷ For a discussion of the Republican change in platform see Benjamin F. Gue, *History of Iowa* . . . (3 volumes, New York, 1903), 3:171-2; Brigham, *Iowa: Its History and Its Foremost Citizens*, 1:506; Cyrenus Cole, *Iowa Through the Years* (Iowa City, 1940), 403-404.

confuse both sides, yet except for a few minor references,⁵⁸ there is no record that Boies clarified his views until the spring of 1892 when he answered a letter from William Jennings Bryan. The letter in part was as follows:

Personally I do not think my own views have undergone any change on this subject. I think if called upon to state my position I should use substantially this language. I am in favor of bi-metallic coinage. As the term is generally understood I am opposed to a single standard of either gold or silver.

I believe every ounce of silver that the country can use as money without driving gold out of circulation should be coined and put into circulation either bodily or in the shape of certificates based thereon. I am, however, willing the democratic party shall go slow on this question and recognize as sincere the expressed fears of Anti-Silver Democrats and feel its way along honest lines with an honest purpose to finally reach permanent free coinage of both metals on terms that shall preserve absolute parity in the purchasing value of the dollars made from each of these metals.

It has seemed to me the friends of free coinage could consistently yield their views to this extent rather than jeopardize the success of our party by demanding more, and that Anti-Silver men ought to be willing to meet us on these lines. I do not know that it will be possible to harmonize the party on this vexed question. I am frank to say that I fear it will not be, and that this division will defeat us in the approaching presidential campaign, and it seems to me that with defeat to the democratic party at this time will come a blow from which the friends of free coinage will not recover in many years.⁵⁹

The letter is interesting for several reasons, first for the hint that Bryan was already mustering strength for free silver, second for the early suggestion of trouble in the Democratic ranks, and third for the rather typical conservatism of Boies who straddled the fence by opposing "a single standard for either gold or silver."

In March of 1893 Boies was asked for another clarifying statement, this time by an Iowa advocate of free silver, Judge A. Van Wagenen. He re-

⁵⁸ Letter of July 30, 1891, *Boies Letterbook G11-92*, 653; letter of February 6, 1892, *G11-95*, 180. In the second letter he declined an invitation from the *New York World* to write an article on national finance.

⁵⁹ Letter of April 26, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-96*, 267-8.

plied, "I have long realized the diversity of opinion that exists among Iowa democrats on the silver question. . . ." After admitting that he had stronger objections to a single silver standard than to a single gold standard, he went on to explain his opinion: "If all the gold and all the silver we produce at the present time was coined into legal tender even at a ratio as widely apart as the market value of the bullion of the two metals we would coin each year three times as many dollars of legal tender metallic currency, as we can from our gold alone." He then added, "This will not be attained by a course that deprives us of the use of our silver as money on the one hand or drives us to a single standard of silver on the other."⁶⁰ Whether this letter satisfied Van Wagenen or not, it probably exerted considerable influence on the Democratic party platform in Iowa, coming as it did from the Governor himself.

It would have been difficult for Boies to avoid becoming suspended on the horns of the currency dilemma. Since the Sherman Silver Purchase Act of 1890, it was increasingly manifest to the agricultural areas of the Midwest that the new legislation neither increased the money in circulation nor stopped the falling farm prices. These facts were also well known to Boies. The report of his labor commissioner in 1893, for example, gave factual evidence of the amount of indebtedness on Iowa farms.⁶¹ Boies himself did not attend the Bimetallic Convention in Chicago on August 1, 1893, but he sent a delegation of thirteen free silver men from Iowa headed by Van Wagenen.⁶² A month later Boies was drafted by his party to run for a third term against Frank R. Jackson, the Republican candidate. When the campaign began, bimetallism took its place on the platform along with tariff reform as a leading national issue. In the campaign debates which followed, one of the first questions which Jackson posed for Boies was whether, if elected, he would "be for repeal of Sherman law or for free silver?" In a speech at Jefferson, October 14, Boies replied that the question was a trick to force him to say he would in the future be a candidate for the Senate where he would have a vote on such an issue. But after

⁶⁰ Des Moines *Weekly Leader*, March 9, 1893.

⁶¹ *Fifth Biennial Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics for the State of Iowa, 1892-93*, 329-31, gives the number of families on unincumbered farms as 67,587, while the number on incumbered farms was 77,111, with 60,737 on hired farms. These facts were publicized in the Des Moines *Weekly Leader*, July 27, 1893.

⁶² Letter of July 21, 1893, *Boies Letterbook G11-100*, 462. Des Moines *Weekly Leader*, July 27, 1893.

charging this, he did reply "if I were in a position to vote upon the question of a repeal of the purchasing clause of the Sherman bill, I should vote for it because I believe it has done more than all other causes combined to bring about our present financial embarrassment."⁶³

In the following year, after Boies' defeat as Governor, he made the principal speech at the State Democratic Convention in Des Moines, August 2, 1894, as the permanent chairman of the party. It was an important speech for its influence on party policy both on the silver issue and the labor question. In it he charged that the party had not kept its promises on currency reform which "honor, conscience, and policy alike" required. He then went on to discuss labor which he admitted was "not a political issue" yet something he believed needed discussion because of the recent unrest in labor circles. After insisting that no man was more interested in the "legitimate advancement of the real interest of the manual laborers" than himself, he confessed that he had "been shocked by the flagrant breaches of the law that have characterized so many recent labor strikes. . . ." He was particularly shocked by "sympathetic strikes" like the railroad strike which had just ended and insisted that "the organizations responsible for them will be ground into dust under the heel of an awakened public sentiment that will never consent to see the laws that are absolutely essential for the protection of life and liberty openly and flagrantly violated."⁶⁴ Apparently Boies saw the need for currency reform chiefly as a problem for debtor farmers, while the economic problems of the industrial working class were beyond his concern. The ambiguity of his position was quickly perceived by the Republican press who used it two years later when Boies was again suggested as a Presidential candidate.⁶⁵

Meanwhile Boies, like many other Democrats, was increasingly preoccu-

⁶³ Des Moines *Weekly Leader*, October 19, 1893.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, August 9, 1894. Boies up to this time had been very friendly toward labor, insisting on laws to protect railroad employees and miners in the State, urging a state employment agency (see Shambaugh (ed.), *Messages and Proclamations* . . . , 6:278, 319, 326), accepting invitations to address workingmen's organizations (see Des Moines *Weekly Leader*, November 2, 1893; and letter of February 17, 1893, *Boies Letterbook G11-99*, 213), and receiving the complaints of individuals and organizations. See, for example, letter from Dubuque Trade and Labor Congress, April 13, 1890, in the files of the State Department of History and Archives, at Des Moines, Iowa, *G11-638 — Correspondence, Legislative*, or the several letters of complaint against railroads in *G11-722 — Correspondence, Railroads*.

⁶⁵ Iowa City *Citizen*, June 26, 1896, pointed out the inconsistency of Boies advocating the "enforcement of law and order against riotous strikers," but at the same

pied with the silver question. On January 8, 1895, at a Jackson Day speech at Omaha, Nebraska, his subject was "Issues of 1896." "In the whole field of National policies," he said, "there is, in my opinion, but one question of sufficient apparent importance to arouse the masses." That question, as he saw it, was "the ratio at which gold and silver shall be equally and freely coined. . . ." Two months later he joined the Democrats of Iowa meeting at Des Moines in support of a "Platform of Free Trade, Free Silver, Free Speech and Freeman."⁶⁶ It was assumed from this, and from a letter which he wrote to the *Alton Democrat*, that Boies was willing to declare for bimetallism without waiting for an international agreement. Yet in the Democratic State Convention at Marshalltown, August 7, 1895, a sound money platform won by a vote of 9 out of 11 while a minority report in favor of unqualified free silver was defeated.⁶⁷

Clearly Boies was again assuming leadership in his party on the currency question as he had before in the 1892 election on the question of tariff. The *Chicago Journal* as early as July 1, 1895, ran an exhaustive article on the ex-governor, confirming the idea that Iowa Democrats still looked on him as the leader under whom they would rally.⁶⁸ The *Iowa City Herald*, a Republican paper in favor of bimetallism, insisted on April 16, 1896, that Boies had himself started a Boies-for-President boom in his own county by his pronounced views on silver and that "the democratic papers are falling over each other to line up with the grand old man of Iowa." As the time of the 1896 Democratic National Convention drew near, it was known out-

time believing that debtor farmers should be allowed to repudiate half their obligations.

⁶⁶ Omaha speech in *Des Moines Iowa State Register*, January 11, 1895; report of Des Moines meeting, March 21, 1895, in *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, March 27, 1895. See also, *ibid.*, May 22, 1895.

⁶⁷ Boies had written a letter to the *Alton Democrat* on May 13, 1895 (reprinted in *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, May 29, 1895), in which he admitted that "conservative friends of silver have been forced to abandon one of the most deeply rooted of their political tenets and approve the course of those who insist upon unqualified free coinage of both metals at the ratio of sixteen to one, without safeguards of any kind. . . . I frankly admit that if the question is to be narrowed to the single issue of gold-monetallism . . . or unconditional coinage of both metals at the old ratio . . . I am in favor of free coinage. . . ." For an account of the Marshalltown convention, August 7, 1895, see *Iowa City Herald*, August 8, 1895, and *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, August 14, 1895.

⁶⁸ For a Democratic editorial on this article, see *Iowa City Iowa State Press*, July 3, 1895.

side the state as well that Boies would be a candidate. The *Review of Reviews*, for July, 1896, in its survey of likely Democratic candidates, picked Boies as "more likely perhaps than any other man to receive the nomination."⁶⁹

The Convention which opened in Chicago on July 7, 1896, was chaotic enough to make results unpredictable. Again the Iowa delegation went committed to vote as a unit for their favorite son, Horace Boies, but almost immediately they ran into trouble. Governor John P. Altgeld of Illinois, whose help they had sought in the months before the convention, seemed committed to Senator Richard P. Bland of Missouri, and the Republican press in Iowa ran such headlines as "Uncle Horace Put in Shade by Silver Dollar Dick."⁷⁰

In the first skirmishes over refusing to elect David B. Hill temporary chairman, and refusing to seat the "gold" delegation from Nebraska or the "gold" delegates from Michigan, rumors flew about the convention headquarters of the various delegates. It was generally recognized that Altgeld would have "more to say than any other one man about the formation of the platform and particularly as to the monetary issue." Consequently the Sherman Hotel corridors outside the headquarters of the Illinois delegation were full of reporters who noticed that there were no Boies men inside the inner sanctum. This was blamed chiefly on Boies' anti-labor speeches such as the 1894 keynote speech at the Iowa Democratic Convention. A formal protest against Boies on behalf of organized labor in Illinois was prepared for circulation to every state delegation at the Convention. Boies supporters, discouraged by their candidate's lack of popularity with labor, took heart from the rumors that Bland could not carry Ohio, Indiana, or Iowa. They figured that this would bring up Boies as a second choice compromise between the gold Democrats of the East and the radical silver men of the West.

Both sides, however, had reckoned without the personal magnetism of

⁶⁹ "The Progress of the World," *Review of Reviews*, 14:11 (July, 1896).

⁷⁰ Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, July 2, 1896. For an account of the Convention see *ibid.*, July 2, 9, 1896; *Review of Reviews*, 14:131-142 (August, 1896). Secretary of State William H. Hinrichsen of Illinois, when asked "How about Boies?" replied, "Well, we want a man who is a friend of labor." Burlington *Hawk-Eye*, July 2, 1896. For Altgeld's important role in the Convention, see Waldo R. Browne, *Altgeld of Illinois . . .* (New York, 1924), 270-81, and Harry Barnard, "Eagle Forgotten": *The Life of John Peter Altgeld* (Indianapolis, 1938), 359-73.

William Jennings Bryan. While "Mr. Bland and ex Governor Boies were, Cincinnatus-like, occupied on their farms . . . waiting with patriotic resignation to hear their country call,"⁷¹ Bryan was in the convention hall. On Thursday, July 10, he delivered his "Cross of Gold" speech on the party's disputed platform. By the next day, when the balloting began, Bryan's stock had risen so rapidly that he won on the fifth ballot. Boies, who had received 86 votes on the first ballot, dropped to 37 on the second and by the fifth could command only the 26 votes from Iowa. These too were changed to Bryan after the Illinois switch on the fifth ballot made it clear that Bryan had secured the nomination. Thus for the second time Boies' friends were unsuccessful in pushing the leading Iowa Democrat to the front of the national scene.

One more chapter remains to the story of Boies and free silver. While he helped lead his party in Iowa to bimetallism, he also was in the vanguard of the retreat from this issue. When the Democrats adopted free silver at the 1896 convention they also won the approval of the Populists who even endorsed Bryan for President. Whether this support frightened Boies is not clear,⁷² but late in the same year the Republican Burlington *Weekly Hawk-Eye* for December 3, 1896, was accusing him of changing his mind. "Farmer Boies has gone back on free silver, and declares that the issue of the future is not 16 to 1. . . ." Apparently Boies had sent a letter instead of attending a meeting of the "Popcrats." In his letter he announced that the question of the future was not free silver at 16 to 1, "but it is the broader question of whether or not the nation is to be tied to a gold standard and receive its paper currency through the instrumentality and at the will of private corporations, or have for its use a national currency based upon gold and silver alike, and controlled by the government instead of by syndicates [*sic*] and combinations. . . ." This expression was not exactly what the managers of the meeting wanted, and the letter was not read from the platform.

While Boies was beginning to think of currency reform on broader lines as early as December, 1896, it was six years before he actually led the

⁷¹ *Review of Reviews*, 14:138 (August, 1896).

⁷² Boies was willing to go along with the Populists only so far. Thus while he was anti-trust, he also grew very excited at the charge that he favored governmental ownership of such trusts as railroads and telegraph lines. See letter of February 20, 1892, *Boies Letterbook G11-95*, 329.

Iowa Democrats away from the free silver issue. On September 3, 1902, the Iowa State Convention at Des Moines refused to reaffirm the free silver Kansas City platform of the National Democratic Convention of 1900. "The victory of the conservatives was marked by the reappearance on a democratic convention platform of former Governor Horace Boies," the Council Bluffs *Nonpareil* reported on September 4, 1902. "He led the forces against reaffirmation. He presented the majority platform and made the longest address in its favor." Apparently feeling ran high at this Convention. Charles Walsh, the secretary of the National Democratic Committee, arrived early in Des Moines to lead the fight for reaffirmation. Caucuses were held on both sides, and Boies was chosen chairman of the conservative group. In an informal discussion between Boies and Walsh held impromptu in Walsh's headquarters at the Hotel Savery, Boies declared, "I believe in bimetallism, but you might just as well understand now that you can never get the people of this country to adopt the idea of 16 to 1." In the argument between Boies and S. A. Brewster of Ottumwa which followed, Boies grew so heated that his friends, fearing it was too much for a man of his years, led him away.⁷³

It was the first time since the Marshalltown Convention of 1895 that Iowa Democrats had by-passed the silver issue and both times it was ex-governor Boies who encouraged the decision. This was his last active appearance on the political scene. As the editorial in the Des Moines *Register and Leader* for September 4, 1902, put it, "Uncle Horace Boies grows old gracefully and with no loss of persuasive suavity. He is the grand old man of the revised and now only authorized edition of Iowa Democracy." His reward for resuming leadership in 1902 was to be nominated for Congress from the Third District to run against Colonel David B. Henderson but he was defeated.⁷⁴ After 1902, Boies retired completely from politics, spending most of his summers in Iowa and his winters in California.

His withdrawal followed thirteen years of active participation in state

⁷³ Des Moines *Register and Leader*, September 3, 1902. Bryan was furious with the Iowa Democrats; in his paper, *The Commoner*, he declared, "The democrats of Iowa have blundered and it is difficult to say who are to blame — the men who engineered the scheme or the men who are duped into believing that a party can fight best when on the run." Quoted in Des Moines *Register and Leader*, September 12, 1902.

⁷⁴ Autobiography printed in *Waterloo Tribune*, April 6, 1923.

and national politics. It is not an easy career to generalize about, and yet there are certain principles which run through his entire career and which can be gathered together to explain the political theory on which Boies operated. First of all he believed in as few laws as possible. "I cannot avoid the conclusion," he said in his second Inaugural, "that we legislate too much." The result of too much legislation was too much interference with the rights of individuals. Here is the theory behind his objection to prohibitory laws, for example, which "have invaded the realms of natural right and subjected the conduct of the citizen to the control of penal statutes, before such conduct invades any possible right of another."⁷⁵

Again and again during his two terms as Governor this matter of the rights of individuals came up. It was the principle upon which he vetoed a bill aimed at regulating itinerant peddlers, a bill which Boies considered in conflict with the Fourteenth Amendment because it abridged the privileges of a certain class and denied to them "the equal protection of the laws."⁷⁶ It was the principle which dictated his views on prison reform where he argued that a state "has no right except as punishment for a crime to interfere with this natural right" of a parent to care for his own children.⁷⁷ And when extended from individual rights to group rights, it underlay his opposition to protective tariff which, he felt, sacrificed the welfare of one group to the interests of another.

However, Boies' theory was limited by many environmental factors. He was himself financially successful, which helped keep him from being too radical a spokesman for his area. Thus while he was sensitive to the agrarian crusade of the debtor farmers in the late 80's and early 90's, he could not go as far as the Populists in supporting their interests. He could see the issue of protective tariff and free silver from the point of view of the Iowa farmer since he was one himself. But his doctrine of individual rights did not extend as far as approving of strikes. His was not an indus-

⁷⁵ Shambaugh (ed.), *Messages and Proclamations* . . . , 6:333.

⁷⁶ For his veto message see *Senate Journal, 1892*, 699-701; and Shambaugh (ed.), *Messages and Proclamations* . . . , 6:382-4.

⁷⁷ Letter of August 14, 1890, *Boies Letterbook G11-85*, 254-6. Boies' views on the conduct of state institutions could well be the subject of a separate monograph. They were based on his theory that the "state is certainly interested in reducing the number confined in these schools to the lowest limit consistent with the safety of society," and were well in advance of his time, a fact which he himself thought was unappreciated. Letter of November 30, 1892, *G11-98*, 473-4. See also letter of May 27, 1898, *Boies Correspondence*.

trial area, and his understanding of the rights of laborers was therefore limited. Likewise, he could disapprove of trusts and monopolies and believe in the necessity for regulating corporations without taking the further step, along with the Populists, of approving government ownership of railways.

Yet if Horace Boies showed the limitations of his environment, he often showed in addition the courage of his convictions. When his convictions were strong enough, as they were against prohibition, he was capable of carrying them in the face of majority opinion. His long and fruitless battle to get a local license bill through the General Assembly is testimony to the stubbornness of his conviction that prohibition violated the doctrine of individual rights. Furthermore he was willing to work with the minority party in his own state on the issues of tariff and silver. But he was temperamentally too conservative to become a radical, and too moderate to capture the imagination of his party nationally.