

DAVID B. HENDERSON: SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

*By Willard L. Hoing**

The election of David B. Henderson of Iowa as Speaker of the House of Representatives in December, 1899, marked the beginning of the end of an era. Colonel Henderson was the last of the Civil War Speakers, the first man west of the Mississippi to hold this second highest office in the land, and the only Iowan ever to serve in that capacity. The elevation of this hearty, lusty, colorful frontier immigrant, known for his love of rough-and-tumble debate, his partisan faith in the Republican party, and his frankness and good fellowship toward all, symbolized the unrest of the rebellious rank-and-file Republican members of the House who had long chafed under the autocratic control of Thomas B. ("Czar") Reed, recently retired from political life.

Henderson's rise to high office was probably due to circumstances as much as ability. Residing in Dubuque, the Democratic core of an otherwise Republican congressional district in Iowa, Henderson had already served sixteen continuous years as a Representative. First elected to Congress in 1882, he had been assigned to the Banking and Currency Committee, but in 1885, during the Forty-ninth Congress, he had been placed on the important Appropriations Committee. Following an unsuccessful attempt by Henderson to secure the Speaker's office in 1888, he was appointed by the victor, Thomas B. Reed, as chairman of the Militia Committee in addition to his place on the Appropriations Committee. This was no small favor at a time before the construction of the House Office Building, since only committee chairmen had offices.

Although hard-pressed by his Democratic opponent in the election of 1890, Henderson survived the congressional upheaval that saw many of his more prominent colleagues fall by the wayside over the issue of the McKinley Tariff. His victory margin was a slender 198 votes.¹ One result of this

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¹ Paul S. Peirce, "Congressional Districting in Iowa," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 1:354n (July, 1903). Among those colleagues defeated were William

election was the emergence of Henderson as one of the Republican House leaders in the Democratic-controlled Fifty-second Congress during Cleveland's second administration. Upon the return of the Republicans to congressional power in 1894, Henderson expected to be promoted to the chairmanship of the Appropriations Committee, of which he was the ranking member, but Reed wanted Joseph Cannon instead, and Henderson was given the important Judiciary Committee and a place on the powerful Rules Committee, both of which he held until his election as Speaker.

David Bremner Henderson was born in Old Deer, Aberdeenshire, Scotland, March 14, 1840. Six years later his family migrated to the United States, settling on a farm near Rockford, Illinois, where they resided for three years before moving to a large tract of government land near Clermont in Fayette County, Iowa, since known as "Henderson's Prairie."²

When the Civil War broke out in 1861, Henderson terminated his third-year studies at Upper Iowa University at Fayette and helped to raise Company C, 12th Iowa Infantry, composed of University students and young Fayette County residents. Accepting the rank of first lieutenant, he was in command of the company at the battle of Fort Donelson, where he was struck in the jaw by a bullet as he led his men over the enemy breastworks.³

Upon his release from the hospital, Henderson was assigned as adjutant of the Union Brigade, a unit formed of remnants of the 8th, 12th, and 14th Iowa after the battle of Shiloh. As such, Henderson took part in the battle of Corinth on October 3-4, 1862, where a musket ball shattered his left ankle, necessitating the amputation of his foot. The wound never healed properly, and four subsequent operations were necessary to prevent the spread of disease emanating from the wound. Undoubtedly the constant pain was one of the factors in Colonel Henderson's waning strength during the late years of his life.

Discharged from the army in 1863, Henderson was appointed as com-
McKinley of Ohio; Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois, who succeeded Henderson as Speaker; and six of the eleven Iowa Republican Congressmen.

² Dubuque *Daily Times*, Feb. 26, 27, Mar. 4, 1906; Des Moines *Register and Leader*, Feb. 26, 1906.

³ Louis B. Schmidt, "David Bremner Henderson," *Dictionary of American Biography*, 8:526. This article indicates that the wound was on the neck, whereas obituaries in the Dubuque *Daily Times* and the Des Moines *Register and Leader* state it was a jaw wound.

missioner of the board of enrollment for the Third Iowa District through the efforts of William B. Allison, then a Representative in Congress from Dubuque. This appointment came at the suggestion of old-time friends, Elias H. Williams of Elkader and William Larrabee of Clermont, later state supreme court justice and governor of Iowa, respectively. As commissioner, Henderson prepared, organized, and conducted the first Civil War draft in his district in 1864.

But Henderson, even with an injured leg, was still the warrior and not the type to ask others to do what he would not. During the summer of 1864 he was active in organizing the 46th Iowa Infantry, a one-hundred-days unit of older men and recovered wounded — those not capable of combat but fully qualified for guard duty. Despite his earlier wounds and his artificial foot, Henderson was appointed colonel of the regiment by Governor Samuel J. Kirkwood, and he commanded the unit until the end of the war.⁴ Henderson held his colonelcy for only a few short months, at the youthful age of twenty-four, but this title remained with him throughout his life, proving a valuable asset to his political career. It was a significant heritage from the war, for few politicians were successful in the postwar period without a military record, North or South.

Terminating his service career in 1865, Henderson turned to the study of law in the office of the distinguished firm of Bissell and Shiras of Dubuque. In November, 1865, the bond with Allison was strengthened when Allison aided Henderson in obtaining an appointment as collector of internal revenue for the Northern Iowa District. Resigning this position in 1869 to become a member of the law firm of Shiras, Van Duzee and Henderson, he soon accepted a second political appointment as Assistant United States District Attorney, serving two years in this capacity. Henderson then returned to his private law practice, in which he was active until his election to Congress in 1882. Weak in the fundamentals of law, Henderson's prowess was as a pleader before the jury, where his ability to comprehend and analyze the motives of men, combined with his vigor as a debater, compensated for other deficiencies.

Very little is known of Colonel Henderson's political activities in the years between 1871, when he returned to the practice of law, and 1882, when he was first elected to Congress. He was undoubtedly in close con-

⁴ A. A. Stuart, *Iowa Colonels and Regiments* (Des Moines, 1865), 652.

tact with local and state Republican political affairs, since his good friend Allison was elected to the United States Senate in 1872. In 1875 Henderson wrote to Allison in regard to the forthcoming senatorial election, and it is evident that he was more than a casual observer in the campaign.⁵ Henderson's political activities must have been fairly widespread, since in his own first election campaign he was lauded as an experienced political leader and campaign manager.⁶

At the 1880 Republican national convention, Henderson supported James G. Blaine for the presidential nomination. The excellent convention speech he gave for Blaine is said to have virtually assured him of the Third District nomination for Congress in 1882. But the convention was split between the factions supporting Blaine and those supporting U. S. Grant for a third term. The result was the compromise ticket of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur. Two years later, the resulting intraparty dispute was still raging and had centered about the position of secretary of the Republican national congressional campaign committee. At President Arthur's personal request, Henderson accepted this position after once rejecting it, hoping to bring to a close the factional difficulties. The main function of his position seems to have been the collection of money to carry on the national congressional campaigns.⁷

Elected to Congress in 1882, Henderson served twenty consecutive years in the House and was eleven times nominated by his party for the congressional seat. Although he was seriously threatened only in the election of 1890, Henderson was nevertheless not entirely popular in his own party. As early as 1892 there was some intraparty opposition to him, and this opposition grew stronger as his years of service increased. Throughout his long career in the House, Henderson favored a high protective tariff and promoted pensions for soldiers, widows, and orphans. He did great service in sponsoring the Railway Safety Bill with Senator Allison, a measure prepared by Iowa's L. S. Coffin, a Webster County farmer, and he fathered the first important bankruptcy bill passed by Congress. Although opposed to

⁵ Henderson to Allison, Dec. 23, 1875, in Leland L. Sage, "Weaver in Allison's Way," *Annals of Iowa* (third series), 31:503 (January, 1953).

⁶ Cedar Falls *Gazette*, May 12, 1882.

⁷ Henderson's selection met with the unanimous approval of both factions. During the campaign his political opponents nicknamed him "two-percent" because it was alleged he had assessed certain federal employees that percentage of their salaries.

prohibition, and with a legendary reputation as a heavy tippler, Henderson crusaded against intemperance. As a former soldier, he always viewed American foreign affairs from the military standpoint, but he was opposed to war and to any policy that would lead to American imperialism. After the Spanish-American War had come, however, Henderson, like many other administration leaders, found it expedient to give his support. It is somewhat ironical that the policy of imperialism, by antagonizing Speaker Reed until he resigned from Congress, gave Henderson, who was also an anti-imperialist, his opportunity to try for the highest federal office his foreign birth would allow him to hold.

The House, controlled by "Czar" Reed, was becoming restive under his rule. Although he was re-elected by his constituents in 1898, there were rumors that he would resign. An extra session of Congress, in the fall of 1898, did nothing to abate the ill-feeling against his domineering attitude and his opposition to administration policies. Finally, on April 19, 1899, it was authoritatively announced that Reed would enter a New York law practice, although his formal resignation did not take place until September 4, 1899.⁸

Henderson was in Atlantic City at the time of the announcement, serving as chairman of the Republican caucus committee preparing monetary legislation for the next Congress. He wrote Allison, on April 20: "It looks this morning as though Reed would go out. If so I shall make the fight for Speaker and want all your wisdom and energy to help me."⁹

Senator Allison gave Henderson the support he asked for. Meanwhile, Senator Thomas C. Platt of New York was reported to have given a dinner at which he announced that he would deliver the speakership to James Sherman of his state. This provoked Allison, who, with the assistance of Senator John H. Gear of Iowa, and the strong Iowa delegation in the House, began work for Henderson.

Before committing himself publicly, Henderson went to President McKinley, his former House colleague, and asked the President if he intended to use his extensive influence to determine the race. On being assured of a "hands-off" policy, Henderson undertook the campaign, although he did

⁸ William A. Robinson, *Thomas Brackett Reed, Parliamentarian* (New York, 1930), Chap. XVII.

⁹ Henderson to Allison, Apr. 20, 1899, Box 33, *William Boyd Allison Papers* (State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines, Iowa).

not formally announce his candidacy until April 27, when he released a statement from his Atlantic City headquarters. The announcement, he said, was based upon continued "rumors" of Reed's retirement and the Speaker's silence regarding them. The members of the Iowa delegation and many other Representatives had already guaranteed their support and were even then preparing for a meeting in Des Moines to plan the campaign, which Henderson could not personally manage for a time, since his duties on the caucus committee would take another week or so.¹⁰

Senator Allison, anticipating the need of support, wrote Henderson that he would "look after" Senators John C. Spooner of Wisconsin and Nelson W. Aldrich of Rhode Island. Henderson also personally contacted Aldrich, announcing: "I am in the field for the speakership and want Rhode Island. I know that your two members have nothing against me and are my friends in a general sense. Can you not make them go for me in this great contest?"¹¹

There were many rival candidates for the speakership. Joseph G. Cannon, prominent Illinois Representative and chairman of the Appropriations Committee, announced his candidacy on April 21. So did his home-state rival, Albert J. Hopkins. A rumored conference of Illinois Republican Congressmen to decide upon the man the delegation would support did not materialize. Despite predictions that Hopkins would withdraw, he did not, and apparently he gained partial control of the large Illinois delegation. At this turn of events, Cannon made it plain he would support a rival out-of-state candidate.¹²

In New York, Representatives James S. Sherman and Sereno E. Payne both announced they were in the running; Charles Henry Grosvenor of Ohio and John Dalzell of Pennsylvania were also possible candidates. Grosvenor, however, was at a disadvantage, as he seemed to be in favor of repeal of the civil service law. Besides, Ohio had the presidency and could not expect the speakership as well. Dalzell did not seem a serious candidate in view of the fact that Pennsylvania had named the House clerk, and

¹⁰ George R. Brown, *The Leadership of Congress* (Indianapolis, 1912), 111; *New York Times*, Apr. 28, 1899.

¹¹ Henderson to Allison, Apr. 29, 1899, Box 33, *Allison Papers*; Henderson to Aldrich, May 5, 1899, quoted in Nathaniel W. Stephenson, *Nelson W. Aldrich* (New York, 1930), 449.

¹² *New York Times*, Apr. 22, 23, 28, 1899; Arthur W. Dunn, *From Harrison to Harding, 1888-1921* (New York, 1922), 310-11.

it was doubtful the state would be willing to forego the immense patronage of that office.¹³

There was some talk, particularly in eastern papers, of a sectional struggle, largely involving Sherman or Payne of New York and Cannon or Hopkins of Illinois. A number of newspapers had come out for Henderson. One reported that the real struggle would be between Henderson and Hopkins, two Midwesterners, rather than between the East and West, because "western men and opinions pre-dominate in Republican councils today." Experience, personal popularity, and party standing would be the decisive factors. Henderson held an advantage because he was liked by the rank-and-file party members and was personally popular in Congress.¹⁴

Any candidate, to be successful in the caucus, needed 93 votes, since the Republicans held 184 seats in the House. The eastern states controlled 71 votes; the West, 88 without Ohio's 15; and the South, 10. The East needed the western vote; the West needed some eastern votes unless Ohio supported the western candidate. An eastern man, with all the eastern votes plus Ohio, would still lack seven votes. Any split of New York's votes would probably destroy an easterner's chances. Thus Payne's candidacy could cause Sherman's loss by splitting New York.¹⁵

Patronage played its accustomed role in the campaign. In the Fifty-fourth Congress, Representative William A. Stone of Pennsylvania had managed Reed's campaign for Speaker, promising every office before the election. Henderson did not want an East-West struggle, since this would force an eastern concentration to maintain the eastern combination in order to continue to control the patronage. An intrasectional struggle between Henderson and Hopkins, combined with the struggle for control of the coveted committee chairmanships, might have elected Sherman, who was willing to make promises in return for support. But Payne hurt Sherman's chances by remaining in the campaign. Meanwhile, Dalzell asserted that he was still unpledged and free. A small break in the western bloc occurred when Charles Curtis of Kansas backed Sherman, probably in hopes of the Indian Affairs Committee chairmanship, but his stand was repudiated by the other members of his delegation.¹⁶

¹³ *New York Times*, Apr. 23, 1899; Brown, *The Leadership of Congress*, 111.

¹⁴ *Dubuque Times*, Apr. 25, 28, 1899; *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1899.

¹⁵ *New York Times*, Apr. 26, 1899.

¹⁶ "The Speakership Contest," *New York Times*, May 4, 5, 1899.

Naturally, all committee chairmen in the House desired to retain their positions. The death of Nelson Dingley had elevated Payne to the chairmanship of the Ways and Means Committee, which he would want to retain if he lost the speakership. By April 28 the *New York Times* reported that Payne would withdraw from the race in order to insure Sherman's candidacy, yet retain the Ways and Means chairmanship. Albert Hopkins was also expected to withdraw if Joseph Cannon persisted. Cannon, it was believed, would prove the most difficult candidate, since he had the advantage of experience combined with an admitted integrity, fairness, and the general confidence of the House. James Sherman, with Sereno Payne out of the way, would also be a strong candidate. He had previous knowledge of Reed's plans and might have made some conditional promises of appointments. So now the contest seemed to be between Sherman, Cannon, and Henderson, with Grosvenor a possibility if a decision on one of the others could not be reached. The logical candidate was one who was close to Reed but who had not developed any antagonisms.¹⁷

By early May the work of the Atlantic City conference was completed. It was generally believed that the monetary measures it was prepared to offer would be comparatively simple and were bound to increase Chairman Henderson's prestige.¹⁸ Free from committee responsibilities, Henderson plunged into the campaign, writing every Republican member of the House for support except those of New York and Illinois. William Alden Smith of Michigan was to be Sherman's western leader. To forestall this move, Henderson requested Senator Allison to contact Senator James McMillan of Michigan and have him persuade his colleague to support Henderson. In this Allison failed; Smith later supported Hopkins, who had not withdrawn as predicted. Henderson also wrote Senator Julius C. Burrows of Michigan, himself a former candidate for Speaker in 1888. In his efforts to prevent an eastern alliance, Henderson asked Allison to contact Senator Matthew Quay of Pennsylvania; he also urged Allison to see persons who had influence with the Oregon delegation. In another letter he suggested that Allison write to Vice President Garret A. Hobart.¹⁹

The Iowa delegation, meeting in Des Moines in mid-May to map out a

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, Apr. 28, 1899; *Dubuque Times*, Apr. 28, 1899.

¹⁸ *Dubuque Times*, May 2, 1899.

¹⁹ Henderson to Allison, May 4, 5, 1899, Box 333, *Allison Papers*.

campaign for Henderson, claimed that their man had the support of delegates from every state except New York and Illinois, and in those states he was apparently second choice. This held significance, because Congressmen are usually noncommittal so far in advance of any action.²⁰ By May 21 the *New York Times* saw a possible Henderson victory. The struggle seemed to have settled down to an East versus West fight, with the eastern minority hopelessly divided and the westerners unequally split between Hopkins and Henderson. The latter controlled the largest segment of western support, joined with some eastern elements. Hopkins' boom seemed to be fading away, as was Sherman's. Payne still campaigned, but he was fighting for the Ways and Means Committee chairmanship and admitted that under certain conditions Henderson could win.²¹

Hopkins made a last desperate bid for the office, pleading that his election would keep the pivotal state of Illinois in line for the presidential election of 1900. He insinuated that he could unite the badly split Republican party, and unity would be needed, since they had a House majority of only thirteen. Cannon, he claimed, was now supporting him, working for his candidacy as if it were his own. This certainly was not true, and Hopkins' argument that Illinois must be kept in line for the 1900 presidential election was quickly refuted when it was pointed out that New York was also a pivotal state and held thirty-six electoral votes as compared with Illinois's twenty-four.²²

The drift of sentiment now moved increasingly toward Henderson, although the other candidates remained active. Sherman expressed confidence, claiming the vote of twelve states, and Payne was still in the running. John Dalzell continued to work quietly for his own election, despite the fact that Pennsylvania had now put forward Harry Bingham, once described by Iowa's Senator John H. Gear as the most dangerous candidate.²³

Some eastern papers ridiculed the Henderson movement. The *New York Sun* summed up Henderson's qualifications: when angry, he had a "temper that sometimes sputtered like the devil's frying pan." He possessed intense partisanship, combined with sixteen years of experience in the House, one longer than Hopkins and two less than Reed. He had been chairman of the

²⁰ *Dubuque Times*, May 23, 1899.

²¹ *New York Times*, May 21, 1899.

²² *Dubuque Times*, May 2, 1899; *New York Times*, May 17, 24, 1899.

²³ *Dubuque Times*, May 24, 1899; *New York Times*, May 25, 1899.

Judiciary and a member of the Rules Committee. There was some western opposition to Henderson, and anti-Henderson pamphlets had been circulated. The *Sun's* further charge that the Colonel lacked sympathy with the expansionist policy of the American people, having opposed the Cuban liberation war as late as March, 1898, was correct.²⁴ Henderson did not want war. He had supported it only when it became a reality in spite of his opposition. He was among those who helped pass the McKinley request for a fifty million dollar appropriation bill for American preparedness, but he believed that those who preserved the peace had the interests of their country at heart more than those who wanted war.

Several friends sent Henderson copies of the *Sun's* charges. To one he replied that his record proved that he had supported the President on the war issue. To another he commented: "I cannot make party platforms. I am not the Republican party. I cannot alone shape its policies nor would I express opinions on all questions in advance of thorough knowledge of facts as they may exist when we have to legislate."²⁵

A definite and decisive moment came on Friday, May 27, 1899, when the Wisconsin Republican delegation met at Milwaukee and promised all of their ten votes to Henderson. Hopkins had believed the vote would be six to four in his favor, and that this would force Henderson to withdraw his name from the race after a complimentary vote of his state delegation. Now it meant Hopkins would probably be the one to withdraw, giving Henderson a clear field in the Midwest. The Wisconsin victory had been engineered by Joseph Babcock, a Wisconsin Representative; by State Senator Stout of Menomonie; and by James A. Tawney of Minnesota. With this victory Tawney confidently predicted that another key Midwestern state, Michigan, would follow. Babcock, who, as it later became known, acted as Henderson's national manager, thought that Henderson's election was now assured. He claimed 65 votes from the upper Mississippi Valley and central western states, leaving only 28 to pick up.²⁶

Hopkins, following the Wisconsin loss, made several indiscreet remarks in a Chicago speech, in a vain but futile effort to undo the damage. He noted the sectional character of the race, vying for the support of the di-

²⁴ Dubuque *Times*, May 26, 1899.

²⁵ Henderson to Allison, May 28, 1899; Henderson to F. W. Bicknell, Esq., May 29, 1899, Box 333, *Allison Papers*.

²⁶ Dubuque *Times*, May 30, 1899.

verse political elements with promises of more liberality in conducting the Speaker's duties than Reed had used. Since Sherman, Dalzell, Henderson, Moody, and Payne had all "spelled" Reed in the chair, they would probably follow his methods. Therefore, Hopkins argued that he would be a better prospect because of his promises of liberality. These remarks probably won Hopkins a few friends but must have turned the Reed supporters away from him, no doubt helping Henderson, who was fairly close to Reed in some respects.²⁷

The Ohio Republican delegation met a few days later, with twelve of the fifteen members present; the three other members having agreed to accept the majority decision. An informal vote went nine to three in favor of Henderson, and the formal vote eleven to one, with Seth W. Brown casting the single opposing vote, because he did not want to be pledged so far in advance. This meant that Grosvenor, himself a potential candidate, had supported Henderson. The Ohio move encouraged others, and now Minnesota seemed ready to fall in line. Several eastern delegates also announced their support.²⁸

By June 5 the contest was over, whether or not some of the candidates would admit it. Henderson notified Allison:

Have many more than enough votes you my old friend will be glad to know. . . . I do not know what Mr. Sherman will do today, but with a solid army moving up from the west and with him surrounded in the east, I do not see how he can afford to remain in the field. I have thirty-seven more than enough to nominate now, with new ones coming in constantly and with Michigan to hear from tomorrow.²⁹

With Henderson's election assured, eastern support solidified behind him. There had been some claims that the struggle had been of a sectional character, but this did not seem a logical explanation, since one-half of the 102 votes pledged for Henderson were from east of Illinois, with a fair share from New England. Sectionalism, if it existed, was in the East.³⁰ The withdrawal of Sherman and Payne was now anticipated, and the Iowa dele-

²⁷ *Idem*.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, June 6, 1899. F. H. Gillett of the Massachusetts House delegation wrote Henderson indicating that they had agreed to support Henderson after William H. Moody of their own state formally declined.

²⁹ Henderson to Allison, June 6, 1899, Box 333, *Allison Papers*.

³⁰ *Dubuque Times*, June 6, 1899. The distribution of the votes pledged was as

gation abandoned a proposed meeting on June 6, since there was no need for it. Henderson was to be congratulated, particularly since it was reported that no pledges had been made by him.

The period between June and December, 1899, was one of "no contest," because the issue had been settled. On December 1, a Republican party caucus met in Washington to determine the official party nominees for House officers. No difficulty over the prepared slate of House vacancies was expected, and none occurred. This had been taken care of the day the Wisconsin delegation voted for Henderson. Usually an animated affair, the caucus was a cut-and-dried one, since all opposing candidates had been eliminated months before. Grosvenor presided over the meeting, and Payne presented Henderson's name. Hopkins gave the seconding speech, and the nomination was approved by acclamation. While these formalities were being witnessed, Henderson remained in the Speaker's room. After the election of officers, Payne, Hopkins, and Sherman escorted Henderson to the rostrum, where he spoke briefly on the need for economy.³¹

On December 4, 1899, formal action was taken in the House. Henderson was nominated by Grosvenor; his Democratic opponent was James D. Richardson of Tennessee. In the formal voting, Henderson received 177 votes to 153 for Richardson, 2 for Francis G. Newlands, a Nevada silverite, and 4 for John C. Bell, a Colorado Populist.³²

There was naturally much speculation concerning the new Speaker. Henderson was generally considered to be popular in his own district, where many Democrats voted for him. He was of high and incorruptible character, and his long service in Congress had made him familiar with House precedents and practices. His lofty patriotism and personal magnetism enhanced his ability as a leader.³³ Sincerity was the main feature of his character, although in consideration of public questions he was inclined to be emotional rather than philosophical, and some doubted his ability to retain prestige. His foreign birth gave him one definite advantage, since it

follows: Iowa 11, Illinois 14, Wisconsin 10, Minnesota 7, Nebraska 2, Colorado 3, Kentucky 4, South Dakota 2, Wyoming 1, Ohio 14. Probable pledges were: Massachusetts, 8 of 12; New Jersey, 2 of 4; Maine, 2 of 2; Vermont, 1 of 1; Kansas, 5; Connecticut, 1 of 3; Indiana, 3 of 6; Michigan, 5 of 12; New Hampshire, 1 of 1; North Carolina, 1 of 1; Tennessee, 1 of 1; Washington, 1 of 1; West Virginia, 1 of 1.

³¹ *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1899.

³² *Congressional Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 5.

³³ "Czar Reed's Speaker Presumptive," *Review of Reviews*, 20:19 (July, 1899).

made him ineligible for the presidency. This enabled him to devote his full time to the speakership without fear of the political consequences. He was expected to show firmness and efficiency in carrying out administration policy, despite a strong tendency toward independence.³⁴

It has been said that the work of the first session of the Fifty-sixth Congress followed close to the line of least resistance.³⁵ This was probably true, but it must be remembered that the period was one of indecision, when many of the strong leaders were unhappily faced with the specter of expansionism. If they hesitated as they struggled with the problems before them, it was only natural; if they sometimes fumbled and erred in their decisions, it should be understandable.

One positive piece of work resulted in the Gold Standard Act of 1900, which lasted unamended until March 4, 1933. This Act, the climax of a long struggle, was the result of the work of the Atlantic City caucus committee of which Henderson had been chairman. It provided that the gold dollar "should be the standard monetary unit of value and that all other forms of money should be maintained at a parity value with this standard,"³⁶ which was the general policy in practice after 1879. After thirty years of monetary discussion, which included the greenback and the silver agitation, a sound money bill had been approved. The recommendations of the Atlantic City committee had certainly increased Henderson's prestige, and the bill, which passed unamended, united the Republicans behind this single metallic standard and did much to appease the pro-McKinley, anti-Bryan Gold Democrats.

But if this was a "do-nothing" Congress, Henderson was an apparent success as Speaker. When the session ended, after three and one-half months, both sides of the House rose from their seats and expressed their appreciation of him by joining in the singing of "For He's a Jolly Good Fellow."³⁷

On the horizon the ominous clouds had already begun to gather, however. Early in 1900 the McKinley administration had proposed that the army be

³⁴ "Roberts of Utah and Henderson," *Independent*, 51:356-8 (December, 1899); "The New Speaker," *Current Literature*, 27:114-15 (February, 1900); "Post Speaker Election Advice: A Word to the New Speaker," *Forum*, 28:57 (December, 1899); Henry Loomis Nelson, "The Next Speaker and the Next Session," *Harper's Weekly*, 43:1138 (November, 1899).

³⁵ Stephenson, *Aldrich*, 162.

³⁶ 31 *U. S. Statutes at Large*, Chap. 41.

³⁷ *Cedar Falls Gazette*, July 3, 1900.

removed from Puerto Rico and a civil government be established there. Since this island was extremely poor, the United States would need to support, in some manner, any local government until it could begin to function adequately. This need for additional revenue brought with it the question of the United States tariff relationship to Puerto Rico, as well as to Cuba and the other newly acquired possessions. McKinley took the position that it was "our plain duty . . . to abolish all customs tariffs between the United States and Porto Rico [sic] and give her products free access to our markets."³⁸

During the summer of 1900, Joseph W. Babcock of Wisconsin threatened to rebel against the House leadership unless the existing tariff rates were reduced. Babcock had become increasingly alarmed by business mergers, and in the summer of 1900 he wanted to bring up in the fall session of Congress the entire trust question and its relationship to the tariff. Henderson certainly did not support this move, but despite these verbal warnings he retained his faith in Babcock, promoting him to the Ways and Means Committee in the final session of the Fifty-sixth Congress. Babcock, however, was not appeased by the appointment and continued his efforts toward trust regulation and tariff reduction. During the next three congressional sessions, he introduced a number of resolutions to remove the tariff duties on iron, steel, and coal, but he failed to find sufficient support for any of them.³⁹

It has already been noted that Henderson had originally been an anti-expansionist. The possession of Hawaii was not, in his thinking, reason for annexing the Philippines or Puerto Rico. But the war was over, and the problem was to establish a realistic policy for a *fait accompli*. We should not, however, retain permanent control of these areas, said Henderson. We must answer the questions: "What should we do with the islands?" "How shall we treat them?" Henderson had always supported the "historical" Republican high protection policy and could see no reason that it should not still apply. He felt his first duty was to the United States, his second to the newly acquired possessions.

³⁸ "Government for the Islands," *Independent*, 51:3322 (December, 1899).

³⁹ Compiled from research paper prepared by the writer on "Joseph W. Babcock" at Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls, in 1956. Babcock was never a Progressive in the La Follette sense, completely breaking with the latter in 1902. He continued to act as chairman of the Republican congressional campaign committee until 1906. He was defeated by a Progressive supported by the Democrats in the 1907 congressional election.

To secure the revenue needed to operate a government in Puerto Rico, it was proposed that a tariff be applied to that area at the rate of 15 per cent to the dollar of the Dingley tariff rates. Immediately there was a storm of protest. Henderson, who supported the proposition, was particularly stung by the storm. In a much discussed letter to a constituent, which found its way into print, Henderson explained his attitude. Large quantities of tobacco and sugar had been bought up in Puerto Rico by the trusts and syndicates. They wanted to enter these goods without paying the duty that they would now have to pay. It would mean a profit of hundreds of thousands of dollars if they did not pay taxes. The syndicates were fighting the bill without an organized lobby, but they were fighting actively. The codfish and the flour interests were two other groups trying to get into Puerto Rico without paying the duty. That was the real reason for "free trade" demands. The tax was to be used to pay the expense of civil government, which a poor Puerto Rico could not pay. The United States should not have to pay it; the people of Puerto Rico should, but they must have local government first. In one and one-half or two years they could have one running, but a source of dollars was needed in the meantime. The main question, as Henderson understood it, was "should we follow the advice of the syndicates and trusts and tax this island's limited production, or do as we propose, put this trifling duty upon the exports and imports of the Puerto Ricans and give every dollar of it back to them to run their government?" The tax would be felt only by the syndicates, trusts, and interests doing the buying and shipping there, or it would fall lightly upon the consumers, while a direct tax upon the Puerto Rican inhabitants would be brutal and inhuman. The bill was to expire in two years and was not a permanent duty on Puerto Rico but a temporary expedient for her own interests. The individual Representative, declared Henderson, should always ask himself, "What is my duty?" This, he concluded, is what he had done in trying to map out a plan for the present needs of Puerto Rico.⁴⁰

In a later letter to a Minnesota friend, which was also published, Henderson scored the Senate and the opponents of the Puerto Rico bill, charging that those fighting the measure really were interested in the future of free trade with ten million Philippine savages. What the tariff men were fighting

⁴⁰ Henderson to Ed Knott, U. S. Marshal of Northern Iowa District, as published in the Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Mar. 30, 1900.

for was the power of Congress to rule the so-called colonies outside the Constitution. It was important, Henderson believed, "to have established that we can treat our new possessions in such cases as may seem best to the Government, consulting its interests and the interests of the possession that we are bound to take care of."⁴¹

In the Senate, however, the emphasis of the bill, under Senator Joseph B. Foraker of Ohio, was changed from tariff to government. The House had opposed considering this question, and could not be depended upon to sustain the amendments if submitted. Henderson and the managers of the bill in the House decided to avoid debate by forcing through a motion to concur with the Senate amendments. In this they succeeded, and the so-called Foraker Act for the government of Puerto Rico, which included the 15 per cent tariff provision, passed the House on April 11, 1900.⁴²

Meanwhile, in Henderson's home state, a Conservative-Progressive struggle was developing that would soon have national effect. Albert Baird Cummins, ultimately three times Governor of Iowa and for many years a United States Senator, was one of the leaders of the Progressive movement.⁴³ This struggle in Iowa took root in the tariff issue, and it was there that many of the early battles of the Progressive campaign were fought.

On August 7, 1901, the Republicans held their Iowa state convention at Cedar Rapids, where they adopted a tariff and trust resolution that at first gained little notice. But this "Iowa Idea" soon attracted continued recognition, as its full significance became realized. It read, in part:

We favor such changes in the tariff from time to time as become advisable through the progress of our industries and their changing relations to the commerce of the world. We indorse the policy of reciprocity as the natural complement of protection and urge its development as necessary to the realization of our highest commercial possibilities.

That we assert the sovereignty of the people over all corporations and aggregations of capital and the right residing in the people to enforce such regulations, restrictions, or prohibitions upon corporate management as will protect the individual and society from abuse of the power which great combinations of capital

⁴¹ *New York Times*, Apr. 1, 1900. Addressee not identified.

⁴² *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 4028-4033, 4071; 31 *U. S. Statutes at Large*, Chap. 191.

⁴³ *Dictionary of American Biography*, 4:597-9.

yield. We favor such amendments of the interstate commerce act as will more fully carry out its prohibition of discrimination in rate making and any modifications of the tariff schedules that may be required to prevent their affording a shelter to monopoly.⁴⁴

Certainly David B. Henderson could not fully accept the spirit of this program. But there were prominent Iowans who could and did, including Jonathan P. Dolliver, who had replaced John H. Gear in the Senate. In January, 1902, in a speech of acceptance before the Republican caucus that nominated him to the Senate, Dolliver declared that the purpose of the protective tariff was to protect American industry. "But we are not blind to the fact that in many lines of industry tariff rates which in 1897 were reasonable have already become unnecessary and in many cases absurd."⁴⁵

Partly because of Henderson's tariff stand and partly for more personal reasons, a campaign to discredit the Speaker was getting under way. It was a systematic, organized effort inspired by large special interests that had hoped to profit from questionable legislation that the Speaker had blocked. Henderson, who had been re-elected as Speaker of the Fifty-seventh Congress on December 2, 1901, had proved to be a real leader in the House, but many felt that his decisions were too arbitrary. He had never been in sympathy with a major tariff reduction, and he used his position to prevent its serious consideration, even when some of his close friends were advocating it.⁴⁶

Locally the efforts took the form of a letter to Henderson from A. J. Edwards of Waterloo on January 16, 1902. It included a petition, signed by many leading men in his district, asking for a revision of the tariff, especially reduction or removal of all duties on goods manufactured in this country but sold at a lower price in foreign countries. In reply, Henderson acknowledged the petition, agreed that some revision in certain parts of the tariff schedule could be justly made, but claimed there was the danger that it would bring up the question of the whole tariff program, which was undesirable at this time. Henderson agreed with President Theodore Roosevelt, who had said that any questioning of the tariff system as a whole would threaten the continuity and stability of the country's entire economic

⁴⁴ George E. Roberts, "The Origin and History of the Iowa Idea," *IOWA JOURNAL OF HISTORY AND POLITICS*, 2:69-70 (January, 1904).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁶ *Cedar Falls Gazette*, July 11, 1902.

and business structure. Reciprocal trade agreements would be more beneficial than tariff revision. Henderson's personal opinion was that the reduction of taxes was a more important question. Continued talk of tariff reduction would check business and encourage jobbers to suspend large purchases. In turn, this would force manufacturers to reduce business and then to cut payrolls; this would mean less purchasing power, and recession would result.⁴⁷

The Edwards letter was a part of the anti-Henderson campaign that had been maturing for some time. The local centers of it seemed to be in Black Hawk and Hardin counties. One newspaper claimed that Henderson had opposed his constituents' wishes since 1896 on all of the major issues — currency, the Spanish-American War, Puerto Rican tariff, the bankruptcy bill, and tariff revision. Some of the charges held truth, but Henderson's real record seems to have been considerably better than was being pictured. On the currency question he had supported the Gold Standard Act of 1900. Approved without amendments, it had effectually harmonized conflicting party interests. With McKinley and other administration leaders, Henderson had tried to prevent a war with Spain, but when it could not be avoided he had wholeheartedly supported it and had brought in the House rule that permitted war to be declared. The Puerto Rican tariff had been vindicated by results: the revenue from customs had been appropriated by Congress to tide the Puerto Rican government over during the period required for organization and initiation of its own revenues. It is true that Henderson had been responsible for the bankruptcy bill that many of his constituents opposed, but the measure had started with citizens' petitions within his own district. No opposition to it developed until the bill had been favorably reported by the House. Some of the original petitioners, who had undergone a change of mind, should not have expected Henderson, who was chairman of the Judiciary Committee that was behind the bill, to abandon it. Henderson had, in fact, gone out of his way to find out the opinions of his constituents on the matter before beginning action.⁴⁸

One of the accusations against Henderson was that he had lost many former friends and supporters since becoming Speaker and that much bad

⁴⁷ Henderson to A. J. Edwards, Esq., Waterloo, Iowa, as published in the *Dubuque Times*, Feb. 7, 1902.

⁴⁸ Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Mar. 25, 1902; "The Speaker's Record," *Dubuque Times*, Feb. 18, 1902, as taken from the *Waterloo Courier*.

feeling toward him was evident within his own district. J. T. Hancock, former Republican state central committee chairman, admitted to Allison that he believed it would only be a matter of time before Henderson would fail for renomination "unless he pursued different tactics." Two or three men in the western part of Henderson's district were grooming themselves to enter the race, and Henderson needed to realize the seriousness of the danger. A few days later Hancock again warned Allison of the surprisingly strong sentiment against the Speaker because of his stand against Cuba and Puerto Rico. But Henderson was in no immediate danger, although steps needed to be taken to head off the anti-Henderson sentiment, a large part of which Hancock believed had resulted from ignorance of the real situation. In standing against the will of his constituents, the Speaker had shown strength and courage, but he needed to be more diplomatic and not cause such bitter feelings.⁴⁹

Taking note of the general criticism, Henderson defended his position on Cuba. In a letter to a constituent, he stated that those who argued for a 50 per cent reduction of tariff rates were members of the American sugar trust. They were those who had money invested in railroads, plantations, and cheap land. They were members of a syndicate formed to make fortunes out of sugar. Despite "lies" sent out by the press, Henderson had stood with the President and the Ways and Means Committee in trying to devise a plan that would encourage Cuba yet not injure Iowa, his first duty being to see that his own state's farming interests were not hurt.⁵⁰ The beet sugar industry in California, Colorado, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Michigan opposed tariff reduction, because for the first time in the history of the country the farmer had a direct interest in protection. Iowa and the entire Midwest could benefit from this tariff by growing beets if they wished. In mid-March, 1902, Henderson and the administration forces won a decisive victory for reciprocity when they defeated the beet sugar forces on that question in a bitter struggle in the House.⁵¹

But Henderson received very few favorable comments for his action. In a newspaper interview he had put forth two hypothetical questions regard-

⁴⁹ J. T. Hancock to Allison, Feb. 20, 26, 1902, Box 347, *Allison Papers*. Charges were enumerated in a clipping from the *Chicago Tribune*.

⁵⁰ Henderson to J. H. Funk, Iowa Falls, Iowa, Feb. 20, 1902, in *Dubuque Times*, Feb. 21, 1902.

⁵¹ *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 1 Sess., 2639-62.

ing the problem. He had said that the Cuban question had two parts. One, "Is it the duty of the Congress to do something in aid of Cuba?" If the answer was yes, the next question was, "How much can we do for Cuba without injuring our own people and our interests at home?" This was the real issue involved in the dispute, and the questions had been correctly taken as statements of opinion. Henderson would have gladly helped Cuba, but not at the expense of his country.⁵²

In April, 1902, Governor Albert Baird Cummins made a speech in Minneapolis, during which he elaborated his own views on tariff regulation, commenting: "The consumer is better entitled to competition than the producer is to protection where the producer is a monopoly."⁵³ This statement in general terms expressed the philosophy of the Progressive faction. Henderson could not accept this definition of the value of the protective tariff, because it implied that trusts did result from tariff. The Progressives of the Iowa Republican party knew this, and in mid-March they openly declared their revolt when they announced that O. B. Courtright, a lawyer, judge, and state senator, would contest Henderson's congressional seat.⁵⁴

The pro-Henderson Cedar Falls *Gazette* immediately replied that Courtright was a hard worker and a good lawyer but that he lacked legislative experience, whereas Henderson had a national reputation. The Speaker had always faithfully represented his constituents despite adverse criticism and misrepresentation by many newspapers in his district. He had always stood with the President, and his present relations with that office could not have been more cordial. But the opposition continued, despite the firm denials that Henderson and the Republican leaders, especially those on the Ways and Means Committee, were opposed to Roosevelt's plan for aid to Cuba.⁵⁵

To face the new opposition, a meeting of the delegates of the Third District nominating convention was called for May 1 rather than in the middle or late summer as was the usual case. Courtright, who had been a reluctant candidate when he agreed to announce his candidacy, withdrew his name from consideration, giving as his reason the early convention date.

⁵² Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Mar. 14, 1902.

⁵³ Roberts, "Origin and History of the Iowa Idea," 74.

⁵⁴ Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Mar. 14, 1902.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, Apr. 1, 1902; also Julian W. Richards, "Speaker Henderson's Critics," *Independent*, 54:667-9 (March 20, 1902).

His friends had obviously hoped to campaign several months for him while Henderson remained in Washington. Defenders of Henderson maintained that the early convention date made no real difference as a later one would only have increased Henderson's margin. One friend stated that diminishing support within Black Hawk County had forced Courtright out of the race. The real reason for the opposition in the first place, said some, was that Henderson had not made the "right" postal appointments and would not stand on the platform regarding the tariff. Still another thought that Courtright was only advertising for the future, since there was no real chance for him as long as Henderson held office.⁵⁶

When the convention met in Waterloo on May 1, Henderson was re-nominated by acclamation without opposition. The expected reverberations never materialized, although the discontent remained latent and in a position to erupt at any time with disastrous political consequences. Senator Allison did not attend the convention, and it was just as well, since his presence might have given rise to the idea that Henderson's case was "critical," which was not true and not a desirable thing to suggest.⁵⁷

But in Iowa the political picture was anything but bright for Henderson. Governor Albert Baird Cummins appointed Robert Santee of Cedar Falls, one of the leaders of the insurgency against Henderson, as state oil inspector. This political plum had been filled by supporters of Allison and Henderson for many years,⁵⁸ and its loss was a clear indication of a shift in political power.

Throughout the summer of 1902 the Conservative-Progressive battle in Iowa raged, while the nation watched with speculative interest. Words of

⁵⁶ Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Apr. 8, 11, 1902; Dubuque *Times*, Apr. 22, 1902. Courtright's resignation letter was carried on Apr. 18, 1902, in the *Waterloo Courier*.

⁵⁷ Dubuque *Weekly Times*, May 2, 1902; John H. Leavitt to Allison, May 3, 1902, Box 82, *Allison Papers*.

⁵⁸ In February, 1901, J. T. Hancock wrote Henderson and Allison that Governor Leslie M. Shaw would enter, for Senate confirmation, the name of D. C. Huntoon, a former member of the Republican state central committee, for coal-oil inspector for the Dubuque District, if Allison and Henderson approved. Henderson's comment to Allison was: "It is impossible for me to desert Udall [the incumbent]." Allison replied, "I am committed to Udall." This was sufficient to deter Huntoon, who wrote Henderson in September that he would try for the Secretary of State office if Henderson, Allison, and Hancock approved. Senator Dolliver had already promised his support. Hancock to Henderson, Feb. 6, 1900; Hancock to Allison, Feb. 6, 1900; Henderson to Allison, Feb. 8, 1900; Allison to Henderson, Feb. 10, 1900; Henderson to Allison, Feb. 11, 1900, Box 187, *Allison Papers*.

warning flashed between Republicans as the state convention neared. Allison, in writing to Richard P. Clarkson, owner of the influential Des Moines *Register and Leader*, stressed that the Republican platform must contain a plain and clear statement on the tariff because of the "interest taken in our speaker."⁵⁹ But when the convention did meet, no agreement upon revising the tariff and trust sections of the platform could be reached, so the platform of 1901 was readopted without change.

About September 14, 1902, Henderson met with his county managers and again defined his tariff-trust position. He reiterated his acceptance of the Iowa Republican platform, acknowledging the need for stringent regulation of the trusts, but denied the truth of the intimation of the tariff revision plank that the tariff was a "shelter" to trusts. Monopolies, he asserted, had been forming for decades, combining with other interests, and were not easy to deal with. Some people had the idea that they grew out of the protective tariff and that by destroying the tariff they would destroy the combinations of capital.⁶⁰

In early July a lengthy national campaign speaking tour, during which Henderson would stump for Representatives in doubtful districts, had been announced. Now, on September 16, 1902, it was revealed that his Iowa speeches would be presented at an earlier date than first anticipated, because he had so many national speeches to give in close districts.⁶¹

On this same day President Theodore Roosevelt was holding his now famous Oyster Bay Conference. Senators Mark Hanna, Henry Cabot Lodge, Nelson W. Aldrich, William B. Allison, and John C. Spooner were in attendance.⁶² One might well ask, "Where was Speaker Henderson?" "Why was he not invited?" Had his influence diminished to the point where his presence was not considered necessary? Or would his presence be detrimental to the discussion, in view of his determined opposition to change?

Whatever the answer, it was during this conference that Henderson exploded his political bombshell. On the evening of September 16 he sudden-

⁵⁹ Allison to R. P. Clarkson, July 15, 1902, *R. P. Clarkson Scrapbook*, as quoted in Leland L. Sage, *William Boyd Allison: A Study in Practical Politics* (Iowa City, 1956), 286.

⁶⁰ *New York Times*, Sept. 14, 1902; *Cedar Falls Gazette*, Sept. 16, 1902.

⁶¹ *Cedar Falls Gazette*, July 11, Sept. 16, 1902.

⁶² *New York Times*, Sept. 16, 1902.

ly announced his retirement. In a telegram to Allison he gave his reasons: "Being satisfied that I am not in harmony with many of our party who believe that free trade in whole or in part [is the] remedy [for] the trust evil I have withdrawn from the congressional race."⁶³ The following day, having received a wire from Allison, Henderson elaborated upon his remarks:

I appreciate, Senator, your telegram, but you do not appreciate conditions here. I feel a growing repugnance and conviction against the doctrine that free trade medicine will cure the trusts, and cannot permit myself to be a candidate when I know that there is a growing sentiment of that kind in my District among the Republicans. The District will not be lost to the party. Boies is a weak candidate, and will surely be beaten by his Republican opponent. At my age, and holding my position, I ought to be exempt from the dirty mud slinging of Waterloo Republicans, and have no disposition to longer submit to it, and all because I made a faithful and good soldier postmaster, and turned down a young fellow who owned a petty newspaper. They are charging me at Waterloo with being a drunkard. They have set a prohibition candidate to work charging me with authorizing saloon keeping in the House restaurant, peddling the charge industriously through my district, and although I have given a \$150,000 public building to Waterloo there doesn't seem to be force or power enough there to secure for me the support of even one of the Republican papers. Am even denounced by my county chairman for proposing to leave my state to help in the National campaign. My District has suddenly come to the conclusion that I am a millionaire [sic] and everybody is bleeding me. I cannot and will not submit to these annoyances in addition to the grave question which I first referred to. There is no way to reconsider. My declination has gone out and the woods are full of new candidates. I wanted you the last few days very much, but you had gone when I returned from Waterloo.

Take pains to explain fully to the National committee, as I am wiring you about things that I cannot wire to any one else. A telegram from the President, and a long one from the National committee, strongly endorsed by Senators Aldrich, Spooner and Lodge, together with your telegram, disturb me not a little, but it is too late to reconsider, and I believe I could satisfy any of them if I could sit down with them alone that I am justified in

⁶³ Henderson to Allison at Oyster Bay, Sept. 16, 1902, Box 346, *Allison Papers*. See also, Sage, *Allison*, 285-8.

my course. I could spend all my time straightening out Republicans on the Patterson matter, the Sindlinger appointment, trusts and tariffs, and I have neither the time nor the strength for such work. Can fight Democrats and Populists, but not the other class.⁶⁴

In a letter to C. E. Albrook, chairman of the notification committee, Henderson apologized for not having officially replied to the notification message:

Reported conditions in the public mind in my district upon public policies induced me to make this delay.

Since my return to the district I have made a careful study as to the sentiment in the district and State, and I believe there is no little sentiment, and a growing sentiment, among Republicans, that I do not truly represent their views on the tariff question. Believing this condition to exist and knowing I do not agree with many of my people that trusts, to which I am and have been opposed, can be cured or the people benefited by free trade, in whole or in part, I must decline to accept the nomination so generously and enthusiastically made.

I have devoted twenty years of the best years of my life to the service of my people and my country, and I have fought for what I believe to be best for the farmer, the laborer, and the business interests of my district and state.⁶⁵

Almost as an afterthought, it seemed, he added that he would later explain why the people should continue to vote Republican.

The decision had not been easy. Henderson admitted he had been thinking of it for two weeks and had told some of his friends on Monday. Immediately before making the announcement, he had spent several hours with Chairman Glasser of the congressional committee and other friends,

⁶⁴ Henderson to Allison, Sept. 17, 1902, *Allison Papers*. Horace Boies, governor of Iowa from 1890 to 1894, was the Democratic candidate for Congress in the Third District.

⁶⁵ Henderson to C. E. Albrook, in *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1902. It is a misconception to believe that Henderson had not previously accepted the Republican nomination. On May 1, 1902, he had telegraphed from Washington to the delegates to the Third District convention: "The known action and primary election caucus and convention of the Third Iowa District warrants me in assuming that I will be nominated today at Waterloo and I cannot withhold my expressions of gratitude to the generous Republicans of our district who have eleven times trusted me and honored me by unanimous nomination. Such devotion strengthens hands and heart and the work in behalf of the people of my district, my state, and my country. Please convey my thanks and heartfelt greeting to the people whom we represent."

before sending Lee McNeely, his private secretary, to the Dubuque newspapers with the story.⁶⁶

Why had Henderson taken his drastic step? Were there other reasons beside those he had given Allison? There were many speculative answers, but no one seemed really to know. Mrs. Henderson was particularly happy over the resignation, for she had never enjoyed public life. It is also known that on the day of the announcement Henderson had told some of his friends that he had been troubled with insomnia and that his health would break down if he were forced to campaign. Throughout his public career he had been under great pressure, and he constantly suffered from the loss of his left foot, a wound that had never healed. One Senator remarked that for many years physical pain had undermined Henderson's nervous system. The demands upon his vitality and powers of resistance had made him impulsive and morbid at times and had "destroyed the fine balance of control nature endowed him with. . . . Gentlemen, remember that David B. Henderson was a hero of the war, and that for two generations he had carried with him a hell of pain. Be charitable." He had his faults, yes, but he was generous, big-hearted, and had legions of warm friends. Another observer, writing later, remarked that Henderson had lacked stability through the late sessions of Congress and was suffering from an impaired mind. Certainly Judge Oliver P. Shiras added substance to such rumors when he announced that Henderson's reason for retirement stemmed from his old army wound.⁶⁷

Some thought that the resignation was a move to expose Republican dissension regarding the tariff. It was suggested that the Speaker wanted not only to get out of his race for Congress but out of the general campaign as well. The first evidence of a split had come in February on the war revenue bill. Prior to that time Babcock and other Representatives advocating tariff revision had not been taken seriously, but when the bill came up the strong support of the Middle West and the Northwest for revision was evident. The House machine resorted to introducing the bill with a rule prohibiting amendments, and the Democrats refused to debate the bill after Richardson, the Democratic floor leader, was unable to get Babcock's cooperation in opposing it. But when Cuban reciprocity came up for debate,

⁶⁶ Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Sept. 19, 1902.

⁶⁷ Dubuque *Daily Times*, Feb. 26, 1902; Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Sept. 19, 1902; Hubert B. Fuller, *The Speakers of the House* (Boston, 1909), 248.

an amendment to put hides on the free list was defeated by only sixteen votes. All other attempted amendments to the act were then arbitrarily ruled out of order by Speaker Henderson. The plan, as concocted by Henderson, Secretary of the Treasury Leslie M. Shaw (of Denison, Iowa), and Representative Grosvenor of Ohio, was to argue that the Republicans had revised the tariff in part and that it would be necessary to revise it again at a later time but not during the present session. In his Waterloo speech, shortly before his resignation, Henderson had claimed to stand on the Iowa platform just as Secretary Shaw did, but this was not a satisfactory answer for his supporters. The very night of Henderson's resignation, it was reported that some Black Hawk County Republicans were meeting to plan support for the Democratic nominee, Horace Boies, rather than for Colonel Henderson.⁶⁸

There was even speculation that Henderson may have been forced off the ticket by a request for his declination, but there is no evidence to support this thesis. He may have been asked to make tariff revision speeches, which he would not do, and having found his position intolerable, and being completely out of touch with his state, just as Reed had found himself out of touch with the nation a few years earlier, he had resigned.⁶⁹

Undoubtedly Henderson was nettled by local opposition, and he disliked the criticism of his moral life, as was evident in his telegram to Allison. A contest for the speakership may also have awaited him when he returned to Congress. A possible rival had been suggested earlier, but this danger had probably passed. Some assumed that Henderson was angry because he had not been invited to the Oyster Bay conference to confer on the tariff in which he was so vitally interested, and the fact that he chose the first day of this meeting to announce his resignation probably had some significance. Others believed Henderson realized that he lacked the strong personality to control the popular branch of Congress, because the Reed rules, necessary to operate the House effectively, demanded a firm hand.⁷⁰

A few unhappy Republicans felt that Henderson had taken the cowardly way out because he feared defeat. Strong resentment was reported because he did not speak in the canvass as planned, and there was a decided feeling

⁶⁸ *New York Times*, Sept. 17, 1902.

⁶⁹ *Idem*.

⁷⁰ "Comment," *Harper's Weekly*, 46:1354 (September, 1902).

that he should have campaigned and then resigned as Reed had done.⁷¹ But it must be remembered that Henderson had not resigned his seat in Congress and that he was to remain Speaker for at least one more session. He had merely declined to be a candidate for re-election, which meant that, unlike Reed, he would continue to serve out his term. Certainly if the object of his resignation had been to bring the tariff issue to a head, no better time could have been chosen to announce his withdrawal.

Grenville M. Dodge, another ex-Iowan who had been a Civil War general, an Iowa Congressman, and a nationally known railroad builder, wrote to Henderson from New York, where he was making his home:

There is one thing certain, people, especially here in the East, give you credit for having laid down a great future in support of a principle as they make a vast difference here between your position and the Iowa platform. I admit I cannot see much difference between your position and that of Allison, or that of any of the others who have explained it, but whether there is a difference or not, people in the East generally assume there is, and praise you for the position that you take though they would have preferred to have you stick and fight it out.⁷²

Whatever else the resignation might have meant, it was a definite victory for the Cummins machine in the fight to gain control of Iowa politics and promote tariff reform. Secretary of the Treasury Leslie M. Shaw, a member of the Henderson faction of the Republican party, was now in the minority. Try as he could, Shaw was unable to reconcile Henderson's statements, following his resignation, with the party platform.⁷³

There were other results. Henderson had created trouble within the Republican party that could have defeated it if the Democrats had been strong enough to take advantage of their opportunity. The Speaker had taken himself out of public life after exposing the troubles agitating his party and had forced the leaders into a defense of the tariff, when evasion had been the intention.⁷⁴ When the resignation was announced there was fear among Republicans that it would adversely affect the election, but the

⁷¹ Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Sept. 19, 1902; "How Mr. Henderson's Withdrawal is Viewed," *New York Times*, Sept. 18, 1902.

⁷² Dodge to Henderson, Oct. 16, 1902, *Grenville M. Dodge Papers* (State Dept. of History and Archives, Des Moines, Iowa), quoted in Stephenson, *Aldrich*, 454.

⁷³ *New York Times*, Sept. 18, 1902.

⁷⁴ "Editorial," *Harper's Weekly*, 46:1399-1400 (October, 1902).

results were not disastrous. In Henderson's Iowa district the original delegates reconvened and selected another candidate to represent the party: Judge Benjamin P. Birdsall of Wright County.⁷⁵ Birdsall won by a generous margin in the general election, probably vindicating the assumption that Henderson could have been re-elected without difficulty. Nor did the Republicans suffer in the national election, as some had feared. They retained control of both houses of Congress, and it was to be some time before they lost this dominance. Henderson's surprising withdrawal apparently had had little harmful effect, but it had helped to focus attention more clearly upon an important national problem and intraparty conflict.

In December, 1902, Henderson returned to Washington for his last session of Congress. He remained interested and active in legislation, but his approach was undoubtedly more partisan than previously. Why not, since he firmly believed in Republicanism and had nothing to gain now by following the middle way?

Throughout January and February of this last session, President Roosevelt attempted to bolster the sagging Philippine economy through a reform of the currency and tariff structure. Henderson worked "with the administration" on these measures, helping Joseph G. Cannon to obtain a satisfactory currency measure through the House in March, 1903.⁷⁶ But tariff reduction was another matter. In February, Henderson expressed his views regarding the tariff in reply to an Iowan's petition:

I have strongly favored reciprocity, where the trades or swaps could be effected for the good of our own people, and strongly urged Senate action in the last session of Congress if it were possible, assuming a very general feeling in the Senate for the treaties if they did not work a great disadvantage to the interests of this country. A trade is always a good thing if we get as good as the other fellow, or better, and that is the question before the Senate and Executive.

The trouble about all of these matters is that, while you lay down doctriner [sic] you do not tell us what to do. Like the speech of our governor [Cummins] yesterday in Detroit — full of criticism reflecting on the President and the Congress in general terms, yet not specifying a single thing to be done. Remember . . .

⁷⁵ Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Sept. 26, 1902.

⁷⁶ Roosevelt to Elihu Root, Feb. 16, 1903, in E. E. Morison (ed.), *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* (4 vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1951), 3:428.

it is very easy to criticize, and to tear down, but it is quite another thing to build wisely.

It will give me great pleasure to lay your communication before Senators Allison and Dolliver, as it is in the Senate where these Reciprocity problems will have to be solved.⁷⁷

Henderson was the conscientious servant to the end.

The task of evaluating Henderson's service as Speaker is doubly difficult, because he followed Reed's strong personality. Too, senatorial power was at its peak, somewhat overshadowing the lower house. It was claimed that the Henderson speakership suffered because of his unpopularity with newspapermen. In the beginning, Henderson's management of the House had been unpretentious, systematic, and effective. There was no wrangling and no vicious debate on bills as there had been under Reed. Henderson was fair to the Democratic leaders, and they made no attempt to harass the House as they had previously. Under Reed, the Speaker concentrated the enormous powers he had been gradually assuming and became a tremendously influential force in legislation. Many considered the speakership second only to the presidency, and none held a higher opinion of the office than did Colonel Henderson.⁷⁸

The Constitution of the United States does not define the Speaker's powers. It says only, "The House of Representatives shall choose their Speaker." In practice, he is a Representative, but the other officers of the House are not, and presumably the Speaker need not be.⁷⁹ The powers of the Speaker had been consolidated by Reed, but they had been building up for over a hundred years. In the first Congress, the Speaker had no power, but in that session only 143 bills were introduced. One hundred years later 14,032 bills originated in one session, and the number continued to increase. To meet this increase, new methods of handling bills were devised. The result was the committee system, where the prospective bill is reviewed by a small number of Representatives. Soon the House became partially dependent upon the committee recommendations, thus giving the commit-

⁷⁷ Henderson to Nath. French, Davenport, Iowa, Feb. 2, 1903, Box 347, *Allison Papers*.

⁷⁸ O. O. Stealey, *Twenty Years in the Press Gallery* (New York, 1906), 304-309. Stealey maintained that the Henderson regime was obscure because the newspapermen felt that he did not cooperate with them in making news items available.

⁷⁹ Ewing Cockrell, "The Place and the Man: The Speaker of the House of Representatives," *Arena*, 22:653-66 (December, 1899).

tees great control over legislation. Since the Speaker controlled the committees through appointment, he, in effect, controlled legislation. The ratio of effective control by this method seemed to be in direct proportion to the number of bills introduced. By the time Henderson assumed the speakership the system was so well developed that he was forced to perpetuate it despite personal inclinations to the contrary.

A Speaker has three functions. He is the presiding member of the House, he is the titular head of his party in the House, and he is the Representative of his district. In the latter capacity Henderson was not particularly active during his speakership. He considered it his duty to promote national interests rather than to function as a super-Representative for his own district. In the Fifty-sixth Congress he introduced only fifteen resolutions, thirteen of which were for pension and relief claims. Of these, only six passed. In the following session, eleven of the twenty-two resolutions he introduced were enacted. During these same sessions he relinquished the chair to vote on fourteen occasions, and he answered "present" twice for the purpose of making a quorum. Three of his votes involved Puerto Rican trade or revenue.⁸⁰

Even the opposition agreed at first that Henderson was a success as a presiding officer. He was conservative and tried to cut expenses. He was a loyal party man who knew extreme partisanship at times. Yet he was a popular Speaker, especially in the first three and one-half months, when his rulings were highly satisfactory to both sides. He was firm and determined in asserting his rights and in enforcing rules, although he showed tact and avoided giving offense where Reed had been inconsiderate of his fellows members' feelings. Henderson tried to be impartial and, with considerable success, to develop a judicial temper,⁸¹ but he was always an active partisan. As the first session under his rule ended, the House expressed its appreciation in the form of a resolution that commended his "impartial and dignified manner."⁸²

Henderson's task was difficult because he had to control a rebellious House yet avoid any appearance of trying to follow Reed's autocratic ways. Colonel Henderson's solution was the middle path — the Doctrine of the

⁸⁰ Chang-wei Chiu, *The Speaker of the House of Representatives Since 1896* (New York, 1928), 42.

⁸¹ Cedar Falls *Gazette*, Mar. 27, 1900.

⁸² *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 2 Sess., 3605.

Mean. He was successful at first, but signs of dissatisfaction became increasingly evident, until, at the end of the Fifty-seventh Congress, Payne, the Republican floor leader, offered the customary resolution of thanks, knowing that the Democratic minority leader would not. Apologetically, Payne explained his action: "It is not the first time, Mr. Speaker [Cannon was in the chair], that this resolution has been offered by a member of the majority party. . . . There are numerous cases, Mr. Speaker, in which the resolution has met with opposition, in which there have been votes in opposition, and in which a member in sympathy politically with the majority has offered this resolution." Concluding his speech, Payne then demanded the previous question, cutting off debate and forcing the direct vote of the House upon the resolution. Whereupon Charles F. Cochran, a Democrat from Missouri, demanded the yeas and nays, thus expressing the ill-will and resentment of some of the members on his side of the House, but not enough members supported the demand to force a roll-call vote, since only seventeen members arose.⁸³

When he assumed the speakership, Henderson had been determined not to play the "Czar" or to follow Reed. Yet he desired to restore the prestige of the House without modifying its organization or permitting undesirable legislation to pass. To effect this, the committee chairmen were organized into a sort of "cabinet." Any prospective legislation was submitted to Henderson, who examined it and then turned it over to a member of his "cabinet" other than the committee sponsor. Sometimes it was also referred to others. This resulted in serious consideration of the bill several times before it became an issue before the House. Usually the "cabinet" met each morning before the regular House session.⁸⁴

According to House rules, members desiring recognition rose and addressed the chair. Under Speaker Reed, the chair had been surrounded by members during the "morning hour," all yelling "Mr. Speaker" in hopes of catching his attention. Reed would calmly survey the clamor, then proceed to recognize in turn members from first one side and then the other, all according to a previously agreed upon procedure. Henderson saw no reason to continue this practice and notified the members that under his administration they should remain seated. They would be recognized in

⁸³ Chiu, *Speaker of the House*, 293, 294; *Cong. Record*, 57 Cong., 2 Sess., 3071.

⁸⁴ Stealey, *Twenty Years in the Press Gallery*, 304-309.

turn, recognition depending upon a previously granted schedule after due consideration and approval. This was exactly Reed's practice with the fictional element of spontaneity removed, but nevertheless it caused much resentment. Actually, it probably accelerated legislation.⁸⁵

Certain Henderson rulings lend credence to charges of "Czardom." Under Reed, the custom of inquiring, "For what purpose does the gentleman rise?" developed. Prior to its adoption a Speaker would sometimes mistakenly recognize a member wanting to introduce undesirable resolutions. The new method of inquiring prevented these mistakes. In the Fifty-sixth Congress, in answer to the query, one William Sulzer explained that he favored a resolution expressing sympathy for the Boers, a feeling Henderson did not share. Henderson denied recognition, replying, "The chair must recognize members upon matters which the chair thinks should be considered."⁸⁶ On another occasion he strenuously defended himself from the chair after a newspaper had accused him of threatening a fellow member with coercion. One important ruling by Henderson is still in effect. When confronted with the question, "What is a quorum?" Henderson decided that it consisted of a majority of the "members-elect, sworn, and living, who have not resigned or been expelled."⁸⁷

Henderson was undoubtedly not as successful as Reed had been. One reason was his high conception of the Speaker's office. After his election there was a feeling that he had "changed," that he was suffering from vanity. Henderson realized these charges and tried to explain that he no longer had the time nor the right to discuss embarrassing legislative questions which he had enjoyed doing as chairman of the Judiciary Committee. Newspaper correspondents who needed a "story" could not accept this, since their interest was news, and they grew increasingly resentful and skeptical of his attitude. This dislike probably contributed greatly to the obscurity that surrounded Henderson's activities as Speaker.⁸⁸

But we should not condemn Henderson for the unhappy ending of his service as Speaker. He was not as strong a man as Reed, and he became a

⁸⁵ *Idem.*

⁸⁶ *Cong. Record*, 56 Cong., 1 Sess., 2876, 2877, 5227; Chiu, *Speaker of the House*, 45.

⁸⁷ Champ Clark, *My Quarter Century of American Politics* (2 vols., New York, 1920), 1:198-200.

⁸⁸ Stealey, *Twenty Years in the Press Gallery*, 304-309.

victim of the very rules of the House he had helped to formulate. Henderson was a highly emotional and blindly partisan figure, but his good friends were numbered on both sides of the House. When he assumed office there was an air of rebellion around the Speaker because of the stringency of the "Reed rules," but the necessity of protecting the slim Republican majority required, as John Dalzell pointed out, the continued use of them.⁸⁹ Even William P. Hepburn, later to be one of the leaders in the 1909 rebellion against Speaker Cannon, did not blame Henderson, because he realized that the Speaker's tyranny stemmed from necessity rather than desire. In other words, David B. Henderson, as Speaker, was a "Czar" in the Reed sense. The difference was that under Henderson this was circumstantial rather than deliberate, and it was not a situation that he enjoyed.

The story of Colonel Henderson's life in the years following his retirement can be briefly told. For a while it was rumored that he would be offered a diplomatic post or a lucrative position with the Panamanian Canal Commission, but neither materialized, and his health would not have permitted him to accept had one been available. Instead, he entered a law firm in New York, but remained there only a short time. In 1904 he returned to Dubuque.⁹⁰

Henderson's health had declined rapidly after his retirement. He suffered from paresis, a form of insanity marked by progressive degeneration of the brain resulting in paralysis and mental impairment. The rapidity with which he sank caused speculation that he had understood the extent of his illness earlier and had retired, realizing the possible consequences if he continued in office. By September, 1905, his condition was very bad. Richard P. Clarkson wrote to Joseph G. Cannon, the new Speaker, describing Henderson's condition: "Poor Col Henderson has gone down in darkness and gloom — never to rise again. He is an utter imbecile in all respects — cannot even sign his pension checks." He lasted five months longer, his strength steadily failing until he quietly passed away on February 25, 1906.⁹¹

⁸⁹ *New York Times*, Dec. 3, 1899.

⁹⁰ *Cedar Falls Gazette*, Jan. 16, 1903; "David B. Henderson Answers 'Here' to Last Call," *Des Moines Register and Leader*, Feb. 26, 1906.

⁹¹ *Des Moines Register and Leader*, Feb. 26, 1906; Clarkson to Cannon, Sept. 11, 1905, Box 1, *Joseph G. Cannon Papers* (Illinois State Historical Library, Springfield). This letter was loaned to me by Dr. Leland L. Sage of Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls.

Henderson was buried in Linwood Cemetery after services at St. John's Episcopal Church, with the G. A. R. in charge. George D. Perkins, a longtime friend, newspaperman, and himself a Representative, gave the eulogy, granting the old Colonel as great a praise as could be asked:

He won the admiration of his political opponents, for they learned that they could take him at his word. He fought in the open and not by intrigue. His word was an all sufficient bond. He was scrupulously careful of his political promises; he would not run from them to cover. This was the secret of his great power in the House of Representatives.⁹²

⁹² Comment by George D. Perkins in Henderson's eulogy, as quoted in Edgar R. Harlan, *A Narrative History of the People of Iowa* (5 vols., Chicago, 1931), 2:221.

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