

## THE SOLDIER VOTE IN IOWA IN THE ELECTION OF 1888<sup>1</sup>

During the late eighties there were nearly a million and a half survivors of the Union armies who lived and voted principally in the Northern States.<sup>2</sup> These men and their sympathizers constituted an element known in political parlance as "the soldier vote". Debates in Congress, the press, party platforms, and campaign text-books contain evidence that politicians considered this voting element to be an important one, especially during the eighties and early nineties.<sup>3</sup> The presidential election of 1888, coming at about the middle of this period and following close upon a series of events which had brought the soldier element of the country very distinctly before the public, is perhaps the best election that can be selected for the study of the subject. Iowa offers an excellent opportunity for this study, being

<sup>1</sup> This paper was read at the annual meeting of the Mississippi Valley Historical Association at Greencastle, Indiana, April 29, 1920.

<sup>2</sup> An estimate made by the Commissioner of Pensions gives 1,246,089 in 1890.—*House Executive Documents*, 51st Congress, 2nd Session, Vol. 13, pp. 20, 21. The Census of 1890 gives a smaller number, but it did not claim to have complete returns.—*Compendium of the Eleventh Census of the United States*, 1890, Pt. III, pp. 572-586.

<sup>3</sup> For examples of discussions of the soldier vote and of the connection between pensions and politics in Congress, see *Congressional Record*, 48th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 486, 49th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 825, 1797, 1986, 2045. The national party platforms show the greatest interest in this subject during the period from 1884 to 1896, when most of the minor parties have pension planks. Stanwood's *A History of Presidential Elections* (Fourth Edition), pp. 384, 389, 394, 395, 404, 426, 435, 444, 460, 466, 478. For examples of material in campaign text books see *Republican Campaign Text Book for 1884*, pp. 108-126; *The Campaign Text Book of the Democratic Party of the United States for the Presidential Election of 1888*, pp. 268-303.

in a region where soldiers were numerous and where Civil War issues still survived.

More than twenty years after the mustering out of the Union armies the Civil War tradition in Iowa remained very strong. The newspapers of the years 1887 and 1888 kept the memories of the war constantly before their readers; war stories and reminiscences, the incidents of camp life or campaigns, and the activities of prominent veterans all helped to accomplish this result.<sup>4</sup> Washington correspondents and headline writers, in their desire to interest the public, frequently placed emphasis on pensions or other matters of interest to the soldiers. Cleveland's vetoes of private pension bills received much attention. Judging from the amount of newspaper space devoted to it, the death of General John A. Logan, the "soldier senator" from the neighboring State of Illinois, was one of the prominent events of the year. Logan was sincerely mourned not so much because he had been a Senator and an honest man as because he had been a Union general, and because, in Congress and out, he had been the friend of his old comrades of the "late war".<sup>5</sup> The bill to pension Mrs. Logan was followed with interest, and like Cleveland's pension vetoes it became a matter for party controversy.<sup>6</sup>

On Decoration Day the patriotic people turned out to honor the soldier dead. Those who watched the parade saw of course the band, the fire department, perhaps a militia company or two, and the other incidentals. But above all they saw the old soldiers themselves, not only the ones who

<sup>4</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, December 1, 1887, May 31, 1888, June 14, 1888; *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, January 28, March 11, 1887; *Fayette County Union*, January 1, March 1, June 7, 14, July 12, 1887.

<sup>5</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, January 13, 1887; *Fayette County Union*, January 1, 1887; *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 1, 2, 4, 1887.

<sup>6</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 6, 7, 13, 19, February 2, 18, March 4, 1887.

were able to march, but also the "disabled soldiers in carriages", many with crutches or empty sleeves. To many of those who had lived through the depression and bitterness of the war, these men, even the ones who had fallen into evil ways, must have seemed to be the very personification of patriotism and sacrifice, to whom a grateful people owed more than mere verbal appreciation. Those who heard the speeches, or read them in the next issue of the local paper, were reminded of the danger to the country in 1861 and of the heroic services of the soldiers. Sometimes they heard condemnations of the government which allowed some of its defenders to die in the poor house, and gave only a little to the men to whom it owed everything.<sup>7</sup>

Meetings of old soldiers' organizations kept up not only the class consciousness of the veterans themselves but also a consciousness on the part of the public that the class existed. During 1887 and 1888 papers reported reunions of at least eight organizations of Iowa soldiers besides the Grand Army of the Republic.<sup>8</sup> Upwards of forty thousand sur-

<sup>7</sup> Most of the newspapers give long and detailed accounts of the Memorial Day exercises. See editorials in the *Clinton Weekly Herald*, May 19, 1887; *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 1, 1887. State Senator Woolson, in a Memorial Day speech at Oskaloosa, said that the soldiers were the nation's preferred creditors, and that justice required the use of the surplus to keep them out of the poorhouse.—*The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 2, 1887. About half of Commander Fegan's speech at Clinton was on the duty of the country to pay more pensions.—*Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 7, 1888. See also *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), May 31, 1887.

<sup>8</sup> The following organizations are noted: Crocker's Iowa Brigade, *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 9, 1887; Northwest Iowa Soldiers and Sailors, *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, September 14, 1888, October 12, 1888; Iowa Ex-Prisoners of War Association, *Clinton Weekly Herald*, February 24, 1887; First Iowa Veterans, *Clinton Weekly Herald*, July 28, 1887; Twentieth Iowa Infantry, *Clinton Weekly Herald*, October 11, 1888; Seventh Iowa Cavalry, *Clinton Weekly Herald*, August 4, 9, 1887; Eastern Iowa Veteran Association, *Clinton Weekly Herald*, August 9, September 6, 1888; Ninth Iowa Infantry and Third Iowa Battery Veteran Volunteers, *The Cedar Falls Gazette*, October 5, 1888.

vivors of the Union armies lived in Iowa in the late eighties.<sup>9</sup> They were about one-tenth as numerous as the voters in the presidential election of 1884, and more numerous than the Republican majority over the opposition in most of the State elections since the war.<sup>10</sup> In 1888 more than twenty thousand Iowans received military pensions from the United States government.<sup>11</sup> Nearly eighteen thousand of the veterans were members in good standing of the Department of Iowa, Grand Army of the Republic.<sup>12</sup> The Sons of Veterans and the Woman's Relief Corps fostered the preservation of the same sentiments.

The Grand Army of the Republic was by far the greatest of the old soldiers' organizations. The publicity given to its part in Memorial Day exercises and to its State and national encampments and other activities kept it well advertised. It played an important part in the social life of the community.<sup>13</sup> The *Grand Army Advocate*, published in Des Moines, gave it a means of expression. The order exerted a powerful influence toward keeping the old issues alive. One of its objects was to preserve the memories of the war. Its loyalty, said an article quoted in an Iowa paper, "was proven on a hundred battlefields, and is the great leading principle which the Grand Army not only ad-

<sup>9</sup> There were 39,862 in 1887, according to a list prepared by the Adjutant General of the State.—*The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 26, 1887; *Fayette County Union*, February 15, 1887. As this list was compiled from information collected by the assessors, who had difficulty in getting the information, it was no doubt as incomplete as the census of 1890.

<sup>10</sup> The figures for the elections for State officers prior to 1884 are given in Fairall's *Manual of Iowa Politics*, Vol. I.

<sup>11</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, October 4, 1888.

<sup>12</sup> *Journal of the Proceedings of the Fourteenth Annual Encampment, Department of Iowa, Grand Army of the Republic*, p. 18.

<sup>13</sup> For examples of accounts of social activities of the Grand Army of the Republic, "soldier sociables", etc., see *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 2, 7, 1887; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, February 24, June 9, 1887; *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, March 11, 18, 25, 1887.

heres to, but which it will force all others to adhere to, as it did in 1861. It is an organization of minute men which the country can call upon at any time and the members of which are drilled and tried in the only method which has ever proved effectual in dealing with traitors to the flag."<sup>14</sup> This sentiment of loyalty to the flag in the Civil War generation had a distinctly sectional and sometimes a partisan turn. When embodied in a compact organization which was backed by a powerful public sentiment, it was a thing for politicians to conjure with.

The Grand Army claimed to be a thoroughly non-political organization. It had strict rules against the use of the order or of its insignia for partisan purposes.<sup>15</sup> Many of its ablest leaders endeavored earnestly to keep it out of party politics and they had usually succeeded in keeping it within the bounds of non-partisan propriety so far as official action was concerned.<sup>16</sup> But the very nature and composition of the order made it inevitable that it should have political importance. Composed of ex-Union soldiers, it was distinctly sectional. In Iowa, a strong Republican State, its membership was overwhelmingly Republican. As an organization to protect the interests of the old soldiers, it was interested in pension and bounty legislation. Its membership included many men who were prominent in public life and whose political advancement was assisted by the votes of their comrades. When sectional or Civil War issues played an important part in elections, and when pen-

<sup>14</sup> Article on the Grand Army of the Republic in the *Chicago Inter Ocean*, quoted in the *Clinton Weekly Herald*, September 2, 1886.— Compare remarks of Judge Advocate Given in the *Journal of the Twelfth Annual Encampment, Department of Iowa, Grand Army of the Republic*, pp. 102, 103.

<sup>15</sup> Beath's *History of the Grand Army of the Republic*, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> Beath's *History of the Grand Army of the Republic*, pp. 101, 120, 147, 242; *Journal of the Twelfth Annual Encampment, Department of Iowa, Grand Army of the Republic*, p. 42; *The Des Moines Leader*, April 23, 24, 1887.

sions became a party question, it was inevitable that the Grand Army of the Republic should be directly or indirectly a powerful political influence.

Several events of the year 1887 showed the reaction of the Grand Army to the type of political questions in which it was especially interested. The offense which President Cleveland had given by his vetoes of private pension bills was intensified by his veto of the "dependent bill". This bill proposed to pension all honorably discharged soldiers who were disabled and dependent upon others for support, regardless of whether the disability was due to military service.<sup>17</sup> The veto was the subject of hot controversy. On the one hand there was the strong sentiment that a debt of gratitude<sup>18</sup> was due to the soldiers, that they had a special claim upon the treasury,<sup>19</sup> and that no Union veteran ought to be allowed to go to the poor house.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand was the belief that the pension system was extravagant, that it was permeated by fraud, and that its extension was due not so much to the needs of deserving soldiers as to the activity of politicians who had an eye for the soldier vote and to the work of the Washington pension attorneys.<sup>21</sup> Many believed with Cleveland that the country had done its duty by the soldiers when it pensioned those who had received injuries in the war, and that anything beyond this savored of class legislation. Leading Republican news-

<sup>17</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), February 3, 1887; *Fayette County Union*, February 8, 22, 1887.

<sup>18</sup> *Congressional Record*, 49th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 1792, 4460, 4504, 6024.

<sup>19</sup> Hart's *National Ideals Historically Traced*, p. 281; editorials in *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 2, 1887; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, February 24, 1887; *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, February 18, 1887.

<sup>20</sup> *Congressional Record*, 49th Congress, 2nd Session, p. 739; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, September 27, 1888; *Harper's Weekly*, January 29, February 12, 19, 1887; *The Nation*, February 17, 1887.

<sup>21</sup> *The Des Moines Leader*, February 10, 11, 18, 19, 22, 1887.

papers in most parts of the country supported the veto.<sup>22</sup> But in Iowa editors divided along party lines. The Republican papers, which claimed to represent the majority, bitterly attacked Cleveland as a soldier hater and a Southern sympathizer.<sup>23</sup> Cleveland had furnished ammunition for the latter charge by signing the bill granting service pensions to survivors of the Mexican War, a large number of whom were Southerners.

Democratic papers supported the President or remained silent. *The Des Moines Leader* thought that the President had "acted the part of a patriot." "He knows", it continued, "the kind regard in which all soldiers are now held by non-soldier citizens of all parties. . . . The feeling of respect for the soldier — indeed of absolute awe — grows with time, instead of diminishing. . . . But while this fact is ever constant in the mind of every citizen, it does not at this time justify anything which tends to weaken the country as a whole, and the soldiers along with it, or beget fraud."<sup>24</sup> This was from what the Republican *Iowa State Register* had called the "chief Copperhead paper of Iowa."<sup>25</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that the *Register* ran such headlines as "The Devil in Print" and "Democracy Shows its Cloven Foot" when it quoted the *Chicago Times*. The latter paper, in commenting upon Cleveland's "righteous veto of the pauper pensions iniquity", thanked

<sup>22</sup> *The Des Moines Leader*, February 18, 19, 22, 1887, quotes a number of Republican and independent newspapers which support the veto.

<sup>23</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), February 13, 15, 17, 18, 22, 1887; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, February 17, 1887; *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, February 18, 1887. If any of the Republican papers of the State had supported the veto, Democratic papers such as *The Des Moines Leader* would hardly have failed to comment upon the fact.

<sup>24</sup> *The Des Moines Leader*, February 16, 1887.

<sup>25</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), February 26, 1887.

God that "the claim agents, the demagogues, the dead beats . . . and deserters and coffee coolers and bounty jumpers, composing our great standing army of volunteer mendicants have been defeated!"<sup>26</sup>

In April, 1887, the Department of Iowa, Grand Army of the Republic, held its annual encampment at Dubuque. The report of the committee on resolutions discussed the claims of the soldiers in some detail: the soldiers were not ready to apologize for having saved the nation; they would never yield the claim that the men of the Union armies were "superior in every claim of remembrance and gratitude upon the Government to those who fought to destroy the Union"; the nation could not be too generous with its saviors, and the United States could afford to be generous; and no soldier should be in the poor house. The report expressed disapprobation of Cleveland's veto of the dependent bill and regret that in vetoes of private bills the President could treat the distress of the veterans with levity. The resolutions voted by the encampment thanked the Senators and Representatives who had stood by the soldiers, and added "That whereas there is marked differences of opinion as to the rights of Union veterans before the country, we believe (other things being equal) preference should be given to them by the people in selecting representatives to the National legislature."<sup>27</sup> At the informal "campfire meeting", speeches were made denouncing Cleveland and

<sup>26</sup> *Chicago Times*, February 26, quoted in *The Iowa State Register*, March 9, 1887. The *Dubuque Herald* asserted that the better class of soldiers, "not the professional ones", were opposed to the dependent bill. *The State Register* admitted that although the *Herald* was Democratic, it had hitherto been a fair and liberal paper, but it now attacked the *Herald* for approving the veto in order "to be loyal to the administration of President Cleveland at whatever cost"; and it defied it to point out any reputable soldiers who were opposed to the bill.—*The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), February 16, 1887.

<sup>27</sup> *Journal of the Thirteenth Annual Encampment, Department of Iowa, Grand Army of the Republic*, pp. 99-102.



General Braxton Bragg, who had led the supporters of the veto in the House of Representatives.<sup>28</sup>

General J. M. Tuttle, who was elected Department Commander,<sup>29</sup> soon created a furor by his vigorous expression of opinion in regard to certain arrangements which were made for the National Encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic at St. Louis. A committee which had been appointed to make arrangements for the meeting was composed, according to the statement made by General Tuttle, of eight Grand Army men, five "ex-rebels", and five civilians, the majority of the whole being Democrats.<sup>30</sup> A sub-committee invited President Cleveland to come to St. Louis at the time of the encampment. It was suspected that this was a political move to make it appear that the Grand Army endorsed the President. When Tuttle heard of the invitation he insisted that the Grand Army of the Republic had not invited Cleveland. He later said that a Republican President, or any other man prominent in politics would not have been invited if he was not a member of the order. This was in line with the avowed policy of the Grand Army of the Republic to avoid any official action of a partisan nature. But Tuttle's animus against Cleveland was clear and his language was quite picturesque. If the invitation was accepted, he said not more than half the posts would be there, and if they did come they would snub or insult Cleveland.<sup>31</sup> It was also said that the Iowa general complained

<sup>28</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, April 28, 1887; *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, April 29, 1887.

<sup>29</sup> Tuttle had been recommended for this position as one of the three or four greatest soldiers of Iowa by *The Iowa State Register*, March 22, 1887. For opposing views of Tuttle as an exponent of the "bloody shirt", see *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), May 24, 1887, and *Iowa City Post*, August 8, 1888.

<sup>30</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 5, 1887.

<sup>31</sup> *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, quoted in *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 5, 1887.

of the large number of Democrats who had joined the Grand Army of the Republic to boom Cleveland.<sup>32</sup>

“The rebel press of the South”, said the *Clinton Weekly Herald*, “is vigorously abusing Gen. Tuttle . . . for expressing his mind in unmistakable terms about the political scheme to have President Cleveland in St. Louis. . . . Let the rebel press howl. Gen. Tuttle talks just right.”<sup>33</sup> All the Grand Army posts of Des Moines united in endorsing Tuttle’s action in resolutions which concluded: “That if Grover Cleveland and his friends must insist upon using the prestige of the Grand Army of the Republic to obtain an audience, that he send a substitute; and, if possible, the person who represented him in the army during the war. While we respect the office he fills we must still be allowed to say that we have no kind feelings of its present soldier-hating occupant.”<sup>34</sup> Grand Army posts and other soldier organizations throughout the State passed similar resolutions in support of Tuttle’s action.<sup>35</sup> Cleveland declined the invitation.<sup>36</sup>

The protest against Cleveland’s pension vetoes might be interpreted as due to purely selfish class interest of the survivors of the war, to a desire to receive financial benefits from a copiously filled treasury, which led them to convince both themselves and others that their services had not yet

<sup>32</sup> *Fayette County Union*, July 26, 1887.

<sup>33</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 16, 1887. *The Iowa State Register*, describing the resentment of the soldiers at the officiousness of the Democratic politicians who had issued the invitation, said that the veterans proposed “to resist it and not be put in the spaniel-like attitude of kissing the hand of the Copperhead who has smitten them and their dead and living comrades with the most brutal language in the public papers ever written by a President of the United States”.—*The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 4, 1887.

<sup>34</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 16, 1887.

<sup>35</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 11, 1887; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 16, July 14, 1887.

<sup>36</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, July 14, 1887.

been properly appreciated or remunerated. That there was a powerful force behind these attacks in addition to any motive of self-interest was shown by the sudden resurgence of the war spirit and of war prejudices at an act of President Cleveland which involved no financial interest whatever.

Shortly after the St. Louis episode, Cleveland issued an order for the return to the Southern States of a number of captured Confederate battle-flags which were in the possession of the War Department.<sup>37</sup> When the order was known, all the smouldering sectionalism in the North blazed out. In the words of Senator James F. Wilson of Iowa, Cleveland, in issuing "that unlawful and unpatriotic order", had "touched the wrong note on his partisan keyboard, and started Hail Columbia instead of Dixie, as he intended."<sup>38</sup> It was editorially suggested that it was time to send the war debt back to the South, and that the next thing would be to "humbly beg pardon of the South for capturing those flags."<sup>39</sup> Governor William Larrabee, according to the report, was prepared to use all legal means to resist the order.<sup>40</sup> At a Grand Army reception in Brooklyn, General Lucius Fairchild, Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Army of the Republic, uttered the terrible malediction "May God palsy the hand that wrote the order, may God palsy the brain that conceived it, and may God palsy the tongue that dictated it."<sup>41</sup> *The Iowa State Register* expressed the opinion that in this "wonderfully thrilling appeal to the nation in the name of the Union soldiers,"<sup>42</sup> Fairchild

<sup>37</sup> Richardson's *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. VIII, p. 578.

<sup>38</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, August 25, 1887.

<sup>39</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 23, 1887.

<sup>40</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 17, 1887.

<sup>41</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 23, 1887.

<sup>42</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 16, 1887.

“came up to a great occasion with all the greatness demanded.”<sup>43</sup>

When the Grand Army National Encampment met in the formerly “rebel” city of St. Louis, some surprise was expressed in Iowa that there were no distressing or exciting incidents arising from the Tuttle and Confederate flag episodes. A resolution to censure Cleveland was voted down. Commander-in-Chief Fairchild quoted that part of the Grand Army of the Republic constitution which forbade the use of the organization for partisan purposes, and said that so far as he knew this rule had been observed. He discussed the pension question at great length, endorsing the dependent bill as a present necessity, though intimating that he might not be ultimately averse to a general service pension.<sup>44</sup>

In its three round battle with Cleveland, the Grand Army of the Republic had appeared as the principal organ for expressing the will of the soldiers. If the Republican press in a strongly Republican State was a fair indication of public sentiment, the greater part of the people of Iowa endorsed the demands of the veterans and believed in giving

<sup>43</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), June 17, 1887.

Senator Sherman said: “If the president thinks this is a trifling matter he will be greatly mistaken. The sentiment of patriotism is stronger than party ties.”—*Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 23, 1887. Senator Evarts described the return of the flags as “rank treason”.—*Clinton Weekly Herald*, July 7, 1887. The *Dennison Review* insisted that the Union soldiers had not “shown proper self-appreciation,” and that they were too tolerant of encouragement to the rebel South. “This is not a matter of getting office or pensions—it is far above and beyond that. It is an insistence that the memory of the dead shall not be defiled”. It concluded that the Grand Army of the Republic ought to resent these insults.—Quoted in *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, July 22, 1887. Cleveland rescinded the order on the ground that action by Congress was necessary before it could be legally executed.—Richardson’s *Messages and Papers of the Presidents*, Vol. VIII, p. 579. The flags were returned without protest in 1905.—Rhodes’s *History of the United States from Hayes to McKinley*, p. 304.

<sup>44</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, October 6, 1887.

them what they wanted. In this sense appeals to the soldier vote were appeals to all that part of public opinion which thought and felt in terms of the Civil War. Public sentiment approved or acquiesced in the efforts of interested parties to get more pensions or civil service positions for the soldiers, and it voted them into office.

The Iowa Department of the Grand Army of the Republic had resolved that soldiers should be preferred in elections to office. This idea was widespread among other citizens than the soldiers. The death of Logan focussed public attention upon the soldier delegation in the Senate of the United States, where ex-Confederates far outnumbered the Union veterans.<sup>45</sup> It was said to be the duty of Iowa which had sent eighty thousand soldiers into the field, to elect a successor to Senator Wilson who would represent them. This led some who professed to be perfectly satisfied with Wilson except for the fact that he had no military record, to suggest candidates with military records who could represent the blue in the Senate chamber.<sup>46</sup> That a military

<sup>45</sup> The *St. Louis Republican* spoke of the irreparable loss which the Republican party in the West had suffered by the death of Logan, claiming that no other Republican could influence this region as he did. "Senator Sherman, of Ohio, is the ablest of the Western republicans, . . . but he has no war record as Logan had to attract the ex-soldiers. . . . Logan's death leaves a vacancy in the Grand Army of the Republic, in the still mightier host of union veterans scattered over the land, which Sherman and Farwell and Windom and all the other statesmen and politicians of the party cannot fill."—Quoted in *The Des Moines Leader*, January 29, 1887. The *Leader* complained that the Republicans, who claimed to love the soldiers, had difficulty in finding soldiers "capable of taking proper care of the interests of corporations", and that they therefore elected civilians.—*The Des Moines Leader*, January 15, 1887. On the "Southern brigadiers" in the Senate, see editorials in *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 27, 28, 1887.

<sup>46</sup> Briggs's *William Peters Hepburn*, p. 140; *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 8, 12, 21, 23, March 3, 1887; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, January 20, 1887. *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, which favored Wilson, insisted that the "soldier for Senator" boom was not engineered by the soldiers at all, but that the veterans were satisfied with Wilson's record.—*The Spirit Lake Beacon*, February 18, 1887.

record was a reason why a candidate should receive votes was taken for granted. A strong point in favor of the Republican State ticket in 1886 was that all the candidates were soldiers except one, and he was only seven years old when the war began.<sup>47</sup> The soldiers, it was claimed, ought to vote for Professor H. W. Sawyer for State Superintendent because "he wore the blue with honor, and was almost mortally wounded" in 1863.<sup>48</sup>

With this sort of feeling prevalent, it was to be expected that soldiers would be found holding elective offices out of all proportion to their numbers. The *Iowa City Post*, a Democratic paper, during the few months preceding the election of 1888 published a series of brief biographies of prominent political leaders most of whom were running for office. Of thirty men described, fourteen had been Union soldiers, one had fought in the Confederate army, and fifteen were without military records. The Republicans showed a higher proportion of military records than the Democrats.<sup>49</sup> Of twelve "possible presidents" whose chances at the Republican National Convention of 1888 were discussed by the *Clinton Weekly Herald*, half the number had been soldiers.<sup>50</sup> In the Twenty-second General Assembly, twenty-one of the fifty State Senators and thirty-five of the one hundred State Representatives had military records.<sup>51</sup> In the Iowa delegation to Congress, the soldiers

<sup>47</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, September 2, 1886.

<sup>48</sup> *Fayette County Union*, November 1, 1887. An apparently common attitude in regard to a military record as a qualification for office is reflected in the editorial paragraph: "The views of Gen. Bate, United States Senator-elect from Tennessee, on public questions are not generally known, but it is remembered that he had three horses shot under him at Chickamauga."—*Clinton Weekly Herald*, February 3, 1887. See also *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, August 31, 1888; *The Fort Dodge Messenger*, August 30, 1888.

<sup>49</sup> *Iowa City Post*, July, August, September, October, 1888, *passim*.

<sup>50</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, March 8, 1888.

<sup>51</sup> *Iowa Official Register*, 1888, pp. 60-67.

fared better. The Congressional directories, beginning with the 47th Congress which was elected in 1880 and ending with the 50th Congress which was elected in 1886, showed only one Iowa delegation to the House of Representatives in which the soldiers were not a majority. Of the twenty-eight individuals whose names appear in these delegations, only thirteen had military records, but the tenure of the soldiers was more permanent; they accumulated until in the 50th Congress eight of the eleven were Union veterans.

As it was held to be the duty of the voters to elect soldiers to office, so it was considered to be the duty of the administration to appoint them to civil service positions. In this respect each party claimed to have outdone the other, and produced statistics to support its claim.<sup>52</sup> Preference for veterans was a prominent phase of the civil service question as it appeared in the party discussion in Iowa.

War issues and the veterans were prominent in the party conventions of 1888. When the Democratic National Convention met at St. Louis, correspondents of the Republican Iowa newspapers looked for and claimed to have discovered signs of disloyalty. There was only one Union soldiers' organization in the parade. It was reported that when the band played "Dixie", it was enthusiastically applauded by the convention; that when it played "America", there was no response except from the gallery; but that when it played "God Save the Queen", it was encored.<sup>53</sup> Both of the candidates were "civilians". "No soldier need apply was

<sup>52</sup> For the Republican side of the argument see: *Clinton Weekly Herald*, July 28, September 29, 1887, May 31, October 18, 1888; *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), January 7, February 26, April 2, 1887; *The Cedar Falls Gazette*, October 19, 1888; *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, February 24, August 17, 1888. For the Democratic side see: *Fayette County Union*, September 13, 1887; *Iowa City Post*, October 24, 1888; *Cedar Rapids Standard*, October 18, 1888.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 14, 1888.

substantially the notice served upon Black, Vilas and Stevenson at St. Louis," said the *Clinton Weekly Herald*.<sup>54</sup> The pension resolution merely endorsed the party's record. "While carefully guarding the interests of the tax-payers and conforming strictly to the principles of justice and equity," it said, the Democratic party "has paid out more for pensions and bounties . . . than was ever paid before during an equal period."<sup>55</sup>

The Republican National Convention voted to give two hundred tickets to the Grand Army of the Republic. Half of the leading candidates for the Presidency were soldiers.<sup>56</sup> The pension plank of the platform declared that the gratitude of the loyal people should make it impossible that any Union veteran should "become an inmate of an almshouse, or dependent upon private charity;" that "in the presence of an overflowing treasury, it would be a public scandal to do less for those whose valorous services preserved the Government." It denounced Cleveland's pension vetoes and the action of the Democratic House of Representatives which refused to consider pension legislation.<sup>57</sup> A newspaper condensation of the platform paraphrased this plank in the sentence: "We believe that nothing is too good for the soldiers who risked their lives to save our country".<sup>58</sup>

The Iowa State platforms were similar to the national platforms in their appeal to the soldiers.<sup>59</sup> At the Republican State Convention the temporary chairman, General Tuttle, delivered a speech which was described as relating chiefly to "pensions and protection." He advocated the

<sup>54</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 14, 1888.

<sup>55</sup> Stanwood's *A History of Presidential Elections* (Fourth Edition), p. 435.

<sup>56</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 21, 28, 1888.

<sup>57</sup> Stanwood's *A History of Presidential Elections* (Fourth Edition), pp. 444, 445.

<sup>58</sup> *New York Press* quoted in *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, July 27, 1888.

<sup>59</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, May 10, August 30, 1888.



reduction of the surplus by payment of pensions to all honorably discharged soldiers.<sup>60</sup> This speech and the platforms showed a respect in which the Republicans had their opponents at a disadvantage. If the protectionist Republicans spent money for pensions, they would reduce the surplus without reducing the tariff, and at the same time gain soldier votes. The Democratic tariff reformers wanted to reduce the surplus by revising the tariff downward. As the party of economy, the Democracy must be more parsimonious in pension expenditures. It was hard to satisfy both soldiers and free traders.

In the canvass for votes which followed the conventions both parties claimed to be friends of the soldiers, favoring pensions and veteran preference in the civil service.<sup>61</sup>

The presidential candidates afforded opportunity for odious comparisons. The Cleveland of the campaign was composed of two distinct personalities. Viewed through Democratic glasses there was the conscientious and firm statesman who desired to do full justice to the veterans, but who detested fraud and who believed that the pension roll

<sup>60</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, August 23, 30, 1888.

<sup>61</sup> Republican papers printed statements of the votes on important pension bills which had been before Congress, from the Arrears Act of 1879 to the dependent bill of 1887, to show that the Republican party was responsible for all the important pension laws, and that the Democrats were responsible for the failure of bills that had not passed.—*Clinton Weekly Herald*, September 6, 1888; *The Cedar Falls Gazette*, October 5, November 2, 1888. It was claimed that on the eve of the election, Democratic pension claimants were being promised that their claims would be taken care of if they would vote the Democratic ticket.—*The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), November 2, 1888. Democratic papers claimed that although the Republicans said more about their love of the soldiers, Democrats did more for them.—*The Des Moines Leader*, January 21, February 1, May 25, 1887; *Fayette County Union*, May 31, July 12, 26, August 2, 9, 30, 1887. Efforts were made to prove that nearly all the Union soldiers during the war were Republicans.—*Clinton Weekly Herald*, December 8, 1887. It was also claimed that they were not all Republicans by any means.—*The Des Moines Leader*, November 3, 1888; *The Fort Dodge Messenger*, September 20, 1888.

should be "The Republic's roll of honor". He was the soldier's true friend, and although he had vetoed many undeserving claims, he had signed more pension bills than any Republican President.<sup>62</sup> Republicans depicted Cleveland as a sort of ogre who heartlessly vetoed bills for the relief of needy veterans and their helpless dependents, occasionally mocking their misery by cruel sarcasm.<sup>63</sup> He favored rebels at the expense of patriots.<sup>64</sup> Instead of going to the front during the war, he had hired a substitute, whom he later allowed, with base ingratitude, to die in a poor house.<sup>65</sup> Soldiers and other patriots should have a poor opinion of a President who failed to pay his respects to the tomb of Lincoln when he made a tour of the West, and who went fishing on Decoration Day.<sup>66</sup>

Republican papers described a scene at the national encampment of the Grand Army of the Republic which showed how the soldiers reciprocated Cleveland's alleged hostility. A dispatch was received from the President declining an invitation to be present. Some one wanted to know if he had sent a substitute. A motion was made to refer the telegram to the Committee on Pensions. A comrade inquired who had invited him. The Commander-in-Chief and the other officers did not know. This pleasant announcement

<sup>62</sup> Article by Jos. W. Kay in *Grand Army Review*, quoted in *Iowa City Post*, October 24, 1888. See also *Iowa City Post*, July 25, September 19, 1888; *Fayette County Union*, January 18, 1887.

<sup>63</sup> *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, June 15, August 3, 1888; *The Fort Dodge Messenger*, August 16, October 18, 1888; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, September 20, 1888.

<sup>64</sup> *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, August 17, 1888; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, October 18, 1888. See note 56.

<sup>65</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, July 14, August 4, 1887, September 20, October 25, 1888; *The Anamosa Eureka*, October 11, 1888.

<sup>66</sup> *The Anamosa Eureka*, October 20, 1887; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 23, October 20, 1887.

was followed by shouts and applause such as had "not been heard in a Grand Army meeting for some years".<sup>67</sup>

In pleasing contrast to the Republican version of Cleveland was General Benjamin Harrison, "the typical volunteer soldier of America".<sup>68</sup> In his letter accepting the nomination he stated that he was "heartily in sympathy with the declaration of the convention upon the subject of pensions," and that he favored veteran preference in appointments.<sup>69</sup> He was constantly called upon by delegations of soldiers who assured him of their support.<sup>70</sup> In his speech to the delegates of the National Association of Ex-Prisoners of War his sympathetic allusions to their sufferings caused many of his hearers to weep.<sup>71</sup> General Sherman said that "every man who fought for the preservation of their government" ought to vote for Harrison and Morton.<sup>72</sup> The Democrats had not the materials with which to construct a second Harrison whose malignity toward the soldiers would offset that of the second Cleveland.

In Iowa, as elsewhere, the tariff was clearly the principal issue in the election of 1888. The persistent harping upon the soldiers, the Southern election frauds, the "Confederate

<sup>67</sup> *The Fort Dodge Messenger*, September 27, 1888; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, September 20, 1888.

<sup>68</sup> *The Fort Dodge Messenger*, July 5, 1888; compare *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, June 29, 1888.

<sup>69</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, September 13, 1888.

<sup>70</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, July 5, August 30, September 20, 27, October 4, 11, 25, 1888.

<sup>71</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, September 20, 1888.

<sup>72</sup> *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, July 6, 1888; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, June 28, 1888. In a statement of the reasons why the Republican should win, the first item was that there was no soldier on the Democratic ticket; other reasons were that Thurman was a Copperhead and Harrison was a soldier.—*Albany Journal* quoted in *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, July 20, 1888. "A soldier of the Union army is to lead the republican party against a Copperhead. Rally 'round the flag boys!"—*The Fort Dodge Messenger*, July 5, 1888.

brigadiers" or other old issues can be explained partly by the absence of clear cut new lines of party division. The dominating interest in the tariff became clearer as the election approached, forcing other questions back to a position of less importance. But the soldiers were by no means forgotten on the eve of the election. Editors who had devoted their main efforts toward the education of the public to an appreciation of protective tariffs or the necessity of reducing them, took pains to remember the veterans when their ballots were about to be cast.<sup>73</sup> The *Clinton Weekly Herald* printed a letter purporting to have been written by a savior of the country who explained that the failure to do justice to the veterans was due to Southern rebels in Congress, abetted by an Executive opposed to pension legislation. "Comrades," he urged, "let every soldier be at the polls Tuesday and vote for his own interests, and the work will be done."<sup>74</sup>

The work was done to his satisfaction. Harrison carried Iowa with a majority over Cleveland of more than 30,000.<sup>75</sup> Ten of the eleven Representatives elected were Republicans. Eight of the Republicans were soldiers.<sup>76</sup>

When the results of the voting were known, editors discussed the meaning of the Republican victory. To *The Iowa State Register* it meant three things: (1) a rebuke to free trade; (2) a rebuke "to the unpatriotic course of the administration toward union soldiers and their dependent wives and children. No man who insults the defenders of the union as Mr. Cleveland has wantonly done, can ever be pres-

<sup>73</sup> *The Iowa State Register* (Des Moines), November 2, 3, 1888; *The Cedar Falls Gazette*, November 2, 1888; *The Des Moines Leader*, November 4, 1888.

<sup>74</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, November 1, 1888.

<sup>75</sup> *The Iowa Official Register*, 1889, p. 192.

<sup>76</sup> *Congressional Directory*, 51st Congress, 1st Session, pp. 39-42; *Clinton Weekly Herald*, November 15, 1888.

ident a second time;" (3) a protest against prostitution of public service for partisan purposes.<sup>77</sup> Since discussions of the civil service in Iowa had emphasized Cleveland's removal of Union soldiers to make room for ex-Confederates, the third point like the second related to the soldier question. "No more vetoes of deserving soldiers' pensions, after next March",<sup>78</sup> and "Free Trade, Pension Vetoes and Humbug Reform Did the Business"; were the comments of other papers.<sup>79</sup>

A vigorous appeal had been made in the election both to the soldiers' emotions and to their interests. The survival of the Civil War tradition twenty-three years after the conclusion of the military operations shows the near relationship of the history of the soldier vote on its sentimental side to the history of the "bloody shirt". The material interests of the veterans were affected both by pensions and like legislation and by appointments to office. The latter makes the soldier question overlap the civil service issue.

It is impossible to determine with accuracy in a given election which way the soldiers voted; it is equally impossible to tell how many of them voted as they did because they were soldiers, or because they heeded the demonstrations by which either party offered to prove itself the veteran's best friend. Even if these things could be tabulated, it would by no means tell the whole story. In addition to the soldier vote proper, there was the sympathetic vote composed of those who believed that the veterans deserved special favors of the government and the public. This class may have been much more numerous than the soldiers themselves. The blandishments of the politician were intended to attract both.

<sup>77</sup> Quoted in *The Fort Dodge Messenger*, November 15, 1888.

<sup>78</sup> *Clinton Weekly Herald*, November 15, 1888.

<sup>79</sup> *The Spirit Lake Beacon*, November 9, 1888.

In the absence of more exact statistical information, there are several rather clear indications of the strength of the soldier vote in the larger sense of the term. Editors, whose business was to interest and influence the public, and platform writers and political speakers, whose business was to know what could attract votes, clearly attached great importance to it. The large proportion of soldiers among those nominated or elected to office shows the extent to which the estimates of editors and politicians were correct. The Republicans were able to offer the greater inducements to the soldiers and their sympathizers. They won the election by a majority only three-fourths as great as the number of soldiers in the State. It is probably no exaggeration to say that the soldier question in its various phases was more important in determining the result of the election of 1888 in Iowa than any other issue except the tariff.

DONALD L. McMURRY

THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA  
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