

## Taft in Iowa

When President William Howard Taft visited Iowa in 1909 he was cordially received in Des Moines. Flags and bunting "wafted a silent greeting" to the Chief Executive, while a multitude of jubilant residents of Iowa and the Middle States extended to him a "noisy and enthusiastic" welcome. The *Des Moines Register* regretted the briefness of Taft's stay in this "great state, this progressive state, this unswerving state, this composite state of the whole nation."

On September 17, three days before Taft arrived in Des Moines, the President had spoken at Winona, Minnesota, where he had defended the Payne-Aldrich Tariff Law. Tariff legislation had been the "bone of contention" in the previous session of the Congress. In accordance with a campaign promise, President Taft had urged some amendments for downward revision of tariff rates, but he had not obtained sufficient results to satisfy many of the leading Republicans. Indeed, a group of midwestern Senators — among them Senators Jonathan P. Dolliver and Albert B. Cummins of Iowa — had come to be known as "insurgents" within the Republican ranks, and had led the fight against the Payne-Aldrich bill.

President Taft's bold defense of this measure on the eve of his arrival at Des Moines — the home town of Senator Cummins — presented a political enigma for suave politicians to conjure with. However, when the President came to town, political differences were laid aside, and all local citizens united to make it a gala occasion.

The President's train was scheduled to arrive in Des Moines at 7:00 A.M. on Monday, September 20. Many citizens had planned to arise early to be at the station to greet the city's distinguished guest. Taft's broad smile and jovial disposition had been well advertised in advance. On Saturday, September 18, the *Des Moines Capital* carried on its editorial page this little jingle:

“If you're waking, call me early Monday  
morning, mother dear;  
It's going to be the biggest day of all this  
blessed year.  
The people will be coming in for many a  
long long mile —  
They've read about and want to see that  
famous Bill Taft smile.”

Lafayette Young, editor of the *Des Moines Capital*, joined the President's party at St. Paul, Minnesota, and accompanied Taft to Des Moines. When the President's train arrived at the capital, it was met by a committee of distinguished Iowans, including Harry H. Polk, C. A. Rawson, Governor Beryl F. Carroll, Senator Jonathan P. Dolli-

ver, and Senator Albert B. Cummins. From the Union Station the President and his party were taken in automobiles to the home of Senator and Mrs. Cummins, where a breakfast of "crisp waffles and fine beefsteak" was served to more than a score of guests.

Following the breakfast hour the President was taken to a stand south of the Capitol building where he reviewed 5,000 visiting United States army troops, and presented a short speech. In his address the President made no mention of the tariff question, except to say that he had discussed this subject on a former occasion, and chose to confine his remarks to matters of legislation confronting the next Congress. He discussed the question of railway rates — a topic of popular interest in Iowa at that time. Taft spoke, too, of interstate commerce, labor, and law enforcement legislation. These measures, he said, were "in the line of performing the promises of the republican platform. . . ."

At the conclusion of his remarks the President was whisked briskly back to the Union Station where his train was waiting to carry him on west. A brief, unscheduled stop was made at Atlantic, where a crowd of 4,000 cheered Taft's endorsement of the candidacy of Congressman Walter I. Smith. The presidential train then continued to Council Bluffs, stopping there but a few moments before leaving the State.

In the fall of 1911, after occupying the White House for two and a half years, Taft made an extensive 46-day tour of the West and Mid-West, spending two days in Iowa. His position as head of the Republican party was being challenged by the Progressives and the tour was made "with the object of feeling the public pulse."

On the morning of September 28, he was introduced to his first Iowa audience at Council Bluffs, where, it is said, "2,000 citizens rubbed the sand out of their eyes at an early hour and gathered at the Illinois Central depot to greet the President." Governor Beryl F. Carroll, Iowa Congressmen, high-ranking State officials, and a large concourse of prominent citizens were on hand to welcome the President and to escort him across the State.

Leaving Council Bluffs, the presidential special passed through Woodbine, Arion, Denison, Rockwell City, and arrived at Fort Dodge, where it made a brief thirty-minute stop. Introduced to Fort Dodge citizens by Senator William S. Kenyon, the President paid high tribute to the late Senator Dolliver. "I am delighted," he said, "to be in Fort Dodge, the home of J. P. Dolliver. I knew him well and loved him. . . . As a statesman he was moved to the highest principles of integrity and patriotism, and as an orator his equal we seldom see."

From Fort Dodge the President's train moved on to Webster City, Iowa Falls, and Waterloo,

where it arrived at 3:15 P.M. A parade was formed with "two big bands and two companies of militia, twenty-five automobile loads of people, notable in state and national politics, protected by a squad of twenty-five officers," and with a multitude of interested spectators. In introducing the city's distinguished guest, Attorney Benjamin F. Swisher paid high tribute to Taft, personally, when he said: "It is more than President Taft we are to hear today, for behind the president is William H. Taft, the man, conscientious, honest, and courageous." In response, the President paid tribute to Waterloo as a city of business, of manufacturing, and of industries, and then launched forth in one of his major addresses on the subject of "Government and Business." Although a drizzling rain had fallen at intervals throughout the day, the President's reception at Waterloo was spontaneous and genuine.

When the presidential party arrived in Des Moines on the morning of September 29, it was taken directly to the Grant Club where breakfast was served to invited guests, and where the informality and cordiality of the occasion made it one to be long remembered. President Taft, with his ready wit and jovial manner, was the "life of the party." Senator Cummins was one of the first to greet the President in Des Moines and welcome him to the capital city. Again, as in former years, political differences were by-passed while the

President of the United States and the distinguished Senator from Iowa greeted each other cordially.

Taft's principal address in Des Moines was at the Coliseum. The large crowd which had assembled there responded with vigorous applause when Governor Carroll introduced Taft as "The president whose comprehension of public questions is as broad as the need of the land, and whose courage to do right is measured only by the limit of human ability." Taft waxed eloquent as he pleaded the cause of international arbitration as a means toward permanent peace. An arbitration court which had authority and in which the nations of the world would have confidence, he believed, would afford the best guarantee of permanent peace.

Leaving Des Moines, the presidential party moved on to Knoxville and Albia where cheering crowds waited to see and hear the Nation's Chief Executive. At Ottumwa there was a large parade in which the children from the public schools played a conspicuous part. In his address there the President again referred to the tariff question, discussed Canadian reciprocity, and commented upon the function of a presidential veto.

Bloomfield was the last Iowa town which the President visited on his extensive tour. There he was greeted with something in the nature of an old-fashioned torchlight parade. The train ar-

rived at 9:15 P.M. and remained for twenty minutes. "Automobiles conveyed the guests over the famous Waubonsie trail to the public square where the big demonstration took place. Hundreds of people carried torches and shouted long and loud for President Taft." Bloomfield was Governor Carroll's home town. It was only fitting that the President and the Governor should receive a warm welcome there.

From Bloomfield President Taft and his party moved across the State line into Missouri, having been royally entertained for two days in the Hawkeye State.

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