Article Title: Bryan at Baltimore, 1912: Wilson’s Warwick?


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Article Summary: William Jennings Bryan supported New Jersey Governor Woodrow Wilson at the Democratic National Convention in Baltimore in 1912. Bryan feared that unless the Democrats nominated a progressive, former President Theodore Roosevelt, now representing the Progressive or “Bull Moose” party, would win the general election. Bryan’s standing in the interests of the “folks back home” and his transforming the convention from a reactionary into a progressive convention cause him to deserve the title of “Wilson’s Warwick.”

Cataloging Information:


Keywords: Morgan-Ryan-Belmont resolution; “Wilson’s Warwick”; Democratic national convention; Republican national convention; Tammany boss; Anti-Parkerites; Cross of Gold [speech]; Morganization of America

Photographs / Images: Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan on the way to fill a chautauqua engagement in Richmond, Virginia, 1913; Democratic Candidate Woodrow Wilson and William Jennings Bryan with larger group. Taken on steps of Fairview, Bryan’s home, on October 7, 1912, during Wilson’s presidential campaign; Cartoon from the *Lincoln Daily News*, 1912 “In the Baltimore Sunday School—Miss Democracy…”; cartoon from the *Minneapolis Journal*, showing a smiling Bryan, entitled “A Birdseye View of the Baltimore Convention”; President Woodrow Wilson and his Cabinet, 1913
Secretary of State William Jennings Bryan on the way to fill a chautauqua engagement in Richmond, Virginia, 1913.
BRYAN AT BALTIMORE, 1912:
WILSON'S WARWICK?

By Paolo E. Coletta

I

Many delegates believed that William Jennings Bryan attended the Republican national convention held in June, 1912, in Chicago in order to study conditions and so be able to shape things at Baltimore, site of the Democratic national convention. However, he denied that he was a presidential candidate. The fight would come between Champ Clark and Woodrow Wilson, he said, and he would stump for whoever won. He talked with Theodore Roosevelt but declined to discuss his visit, yet he saw that Roosevelt had created a situation which could affect both major parties. If his followers bolted the Republican convention and named him, Roosevelt could wait until after the Democratic convention to decline or accept. If the Democrats also named a "reactionary," Roosevelt could win. "This convention, therefore, may exert a powerful influence on the Baltimore convention," Bryan concluded, and "the Democratic convention should, in its platform, and with its nominations, respond to the demands of the progressives of the nation and thus make a third party unnecessary." Roosevelt's bolt confirmed this conclusion.

About a week before the Democrats met, National Chairman Norman Mack asked the national committeeman from North Carolina, Josephus Daniels, to influence the subcommittee on temporary organization to name New York's choice, Alton B.
Parker, for temporary chairman. When Daniels telephoned Mack’s request to Chicago, Bryan went “up in the air.” The nomination of William Howard Taft, he said, would split the Republican Party. Hence the Democrats would win easily if the country could be made to realize that it had no entangling alliances with the interests. “I don’t care to be the temporary chairman and have no candidate,” he told Daniels. “I don’t care whether a Clark man or a Wilson man is selected, but we ought to have a man the whole country will accept as a real progressive. Parker will not do at all.” He then telegraphed Mack that “it would be suicidal to have a reactionary for chairman when four-fifths of the whole country is radically progressive. I cannot believe that such criminal folly is possible.”

Four days before the meeting in Baltimore Bryan had thus warned of impending struggle against the reactionaries.

Meantime William G. McAdoo, of the New York delegation, went to Chicago to tell Bryan that Wilson was the only dependably progressive candidate and that the bosses would line up behind Clark in order to defeat him. He was much impressed with Wilson, said Bryan, but his delegation was instructed for Clark. However, “after I have complied with my instructions, in good faith, I shall feel free to take such course in the convention as my conscience shall dictate. Moreover. . .if anything should develop to convince me that Clark cannot or ought not to be nominated, I shall support Governor Wilson.”

Clark’s supporters favored Ollie James as the convention keynoter, Wilson’s favored James O’Gorman but would accept Ollie James, and Judson Harmon’s would accept Parker. Tammany’s boss, Charles Murphy, wanted Parker, however, and cut O’Gorman out. Since Clark controlled almost a majority of the national committee, which would name the temporary chairman, the promise of conservative leaders to give the progressives the permanent chairmanship in return for Parker appealed to those who wished to avoid a fight. But Bryan’s threat to oppose Parker made it appear that he would seek the presidential nomination itself if the issue before the convention narrowed down to one of conservatism against progressivism or if
he believed that the Eastern leaders sought to defeat him and rid their party of the influence of his radical following.

Of the total of 726 votes required to nominate, best estimates on convention eve gave Clark 512, Wilson 180, Oscar W. Underwood 84, and Harmon 48. Since Wilson was the second choice in many delegations, however, the result would be decided by the more than 200 uninstructed delegates, including New York's 90. Because he controlled more than 300 votes, Bryan could break the deadlock by throwing his influence to Clark or Wilson or, as many feared, attempt to seize the nomination.

A fight with Bryan might have been avoided by naming as keynoter a man like Senator John Kern. However, Mack, following Murphy's advice, named Parker on Thursday, June 20, by ruling that the eight to eight vote in the Committee on Arrangements constituted a plurality for him. Next day Bryan telegraphed all the progressive presidential aspirants to join him in opposing Parker. Although Parker's name could not be presented until the national committee met on Monday, June 24, it was known that the committee was evenly split, twenty-six conservatives to twenty-six progressives. Only twenty members favored Parker, but so long as the other thirty-two scattered Bryan had little chance. If Parker was approved, Bryan must fight from the convention floor.

Bryan equated the progressivism of the candidates with their opposition to Parker. Clark lost stature with him when he replied to his telegram that the "supreme consideration should be to prevent any discord in the convention." Wilson's manager, William F. McCombs, knew that support for Bryan might lose Wilson the votes of the New York delegation and therefore prepared an evasive reply that Wilson approved. However, when McAdoo, Mrs. Wilson, and his secretary, Joseph Tumulty, deemed Bryan's aid vital to his cause, he replied unequivocally that the Baltimore convention must be progressive in its principles and nominees. Wilson threw the Clark, Harmon, and Murphy forces into great disorder, for now Bryan would not have to fight alone: by joining Wilson he could doom Clark, or Wilson's joining him would give him great strength if he carried the fight against Parker to the floor.

Bryan provided badly needed leadership for the progressive hosts at Baltimore. Parker's victory would be "a disgrace to the party," he said upon arrival. Then he waved reporters aside and
went to his hotel. Within a half hour Senator-elect James K. Vardaman of Mississippi, representing Clark, asked Bryan to run for permanent chairman and promised the support of Parker’s friends. Bryan refused this deal and another offered by emissaries from Murphy, saying that “those who own the ship should furnish the crew.” To those who begged him to become a presidential candidate he said there were “some things” he meant to do that would kill his chances, yet his objection to Parker was evaluated by conservatives as part of his design to put personal ambition above party principles.

Using a proxy, Bryan fought in the meeting of the national committee to win a progressive as temporary chairman so that progressives rather than Wall Street interests would organize and control the convention. Anti-Parkerites on the New York delegation asked Murphy to withdraw Parker. Murphy refused. Parker also declined to withdraw in favor of a man agreeable to both sides, and Clark shunned embroilment in the wrangle. When Vardaman again offered his deal, Bryan refused it, spoke of his effort to obtain harmony, and said that he would accept any progressive Clark or Wilson man. He then called privately and told Parker that he had had no part in the reforms for which the party stood and could not express the thoughts and hopes of the delegates, thereby increasing Parker’s ire. He asked James to run. James consulted Clark’s managers, who objected, for they were supporting Parker. He asked O’Gorman—but he too was tied by his state’s support for Parker. He then embarrassed Kern by asking him to run, for Thomas Taggart had pledged Indiana to Parker and Kern was considered a possible presidential candidate. Kern suggested that Bryan himself contest with Parker. Bryan replied that the rank and file of the party were progressive but that “the convention is just now fixed for the reactionaries,” hence the need to alert the rank and file to what was going on:

"This must be done at the very beginning to give time for the reaction of the folks at home to get to the delegates here and put the fear of the Lord into their hearts. I must make the speech putting them on guard. I cannot make the speech nominating myself. I shall be insulted and mobbed in the making of the speech and this is what I want. It will dramatize the fight that must be made here to prevent reactionary control and arouse the people. Therefore I am going to nominate you, John, and you will have to do whatever you think best."

Refusing to attend the conference called by Mack that afternoon because Murphy and Illinois state boss, Roger
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Sullivan, would be there, Bryan remained at his hotel, perhaps talking with Wilson at Sea Girt by telephone, which he did frequently throughout the convention. He also telegraphed Senator Robert La Follette of Wisconsin to come to Baltimore because "the circus will be good to see."\(^9\) When he learned that the national committee had named Parker, his face never moved a muscle. Calling in newsmen, he said that the fight would be resumed on the morrow, when a progressive would be offered to the delegates against Parker. If he could not find another, he would offer himself. At that moment, based on the votes of the national committee, the delegates should give Parker a majority of 154 votes.

On Tuesday, June 25, when Mack named Parker for temporary chairman, the New York delegation cheered wildly. It sat silently, however, when Bryan walked to the platform amid cries of "Bryan! Bryan! Bryan!" Still the Great Commoner, he was applauded by the galleries and by all the delegates except those of New York, Indiana, and Illinois. Presenting himself as the harmonizer of an "epoch-making convention," he substituted Kern for Parker, but his good words for Kern failed to excite the audience. When he attacked Parker, however, and supported progressive Democracy by saying that "You cannot frighten it with your Ryans nor buy it with your Belmonts," the building shook with resounding cheers. Parker's face, usually florid, was now red as a poppy; August Belmont flushed crimson; and Thomas F. Ryan, in the Virginia delegation, was also somewhat red of face.\(^{10}\)

Kern had not spoken with him since the night before, and Bryan had no idea of what he was going to do when he was recognized. In an appeal for harmony which killed his presidential hopes, Kern withdrew, suggested that Parker do likewise, and then named seven men as possible harmony candidates. Parker refused to accept any of these or to withdraw. Kern asked Murphy to cooperate. Murphy remained silent. Kern appealed to Parker. Again silence. Abandoning his tone of conciliation toward the conservatives, Kern then came to his climax: "If a fight must come between the forces of reaction and those of progress there is but one man to lead the fight, and I withdraw my name and nominate W. J. Bryan."\(^{11}\) Mack and the police were unable to quiet the hubub that followed, but Bryan quelled the crowd and gave his reasons for accepting the
Democratic Candidate Woodrow Wilson and William Jennings Bryan in foreground. Taken on steps of Fairview, Bryan's home, on October 7, 1912, during Wilson's presidential campaign.
challenge to Parker. Conscious as he did so that he was talking to
the whole country as well as to the delegates, he charged Parker
with being a tool of Wall Street and of the predatory interests
which in Baltimore were "more brazenly at work than they were
in Chicago." Parker won nevertheless, by 579 to 508. Whereas
a total of 228 Clark delegates had voted for Parker, only 3 out of
the 16 Nebraska delegates, although bound to Clark, had
supported him. The narrowness of the vote, only 71 out of a
thousand, the fact that Clark, Harmon, and Underwood men
opposed him and Wilson men supported him, and the throngs
that praised him indicated to Bryan that he was still highly
regarded by the progressives. Without money and working alone,
he had nearly overcome the combined forces of the conservatives.
He would not forget that the 90 votes of New York had won
Parker the temporary chairmanship.

Was Bryan plotting his own nomination? Would he bolt to
Roosevelt if he lost? Superficial credence was given the latter
point because he had talked that afternoon with Roosevelt
supporters Francis J. Heney and Charles R. Crane and because it
was rumored that he would confer with La Follette if a
reactionary was named. Others believed that the day's events had
eliminated him as well as Harmon, Marshall, and Underwood
from the contest, leaving only Wilson to face Clark, the latter
now identified by Bryan as tied to conservatives. However, Bryan
knew that those who would not name him temporary chairman
would not select "a hoodoo to the party" as their presidential
candidate. Although defeated by Parker, he still controlled
almost enough votes to veto any move toward a candidate
supported by the Big Three—Murphy, Taggart, and
Sullivan—who still needed 151 additional votes in order to
nominate. Clark's managers knew that delay would weaken their
position, but their plan to spring Clark at the evening session,
which Bryan did not attend, died simply because they found no
opening. Furthermore, he had so aired the conservative-
progressive split in the party that congratulations began to reach
him and telegrams of disapproval to fall upon Parker supporters.
The Montana delegation, which had cast one vote for Parker,
received the following message: "Send us the name of the
------- who voted for Parker. We want to meet him when
he comes home," and citizens of Oklahoma told their delegates
to "Stand by Bryan or don't come home." Following Parker's
speech the committees were appointed and the convention adjourned until the next day. Bryan was slated for resolutions and his fellow Nebraskan, Ignatius J. Dunn, for credentials, but when Bryan learned that an attempt would be made to take some of Wilson's Ohio delegates away from him under the unit rule he had Dunn shifted to Rules, where he would move to abolish the rule.

To Bryan the second day of the convention, June 26, was "a day of triumph for the progressives," for messages praising his stand against Parker reached him and many western and southern delegates received warnings against supporting Clark. That they were not to support for president a tool of Tammany and Wall Street was the burden of an estimated 110,000 telegrams, some signed by many persons, that were showered upon the delegates.

After Bryan declined it, the chairmanship of the Committee on Resolutions went to Kern. It was a gain for him, as was the adoption without opposition of his unprecedented proposition to name the candidates before adopting the platform, for he had assured that any conservative named must stand upon a platform progressive enough to satisfy him and his followers. He had also given ample proof of his belief that principles were more important than men. Finally, the election of James as permanent chairman not only revealed the strength of the progressive element but, as he jubilantly telephoned Wilson, removed James as a leader of the Clark forces.

The rumor that Bryan would object to the seating of Sullivan's contested delegation sparked a battle in the Credentials Committee. Illinois was split between Sullivan and Carter Harrison. Failing in credentials and also on appeal to the floor, Harrison concluded that Wilson men had gotten a promise of support from Sullivan and held Bryan responsible for his victory. Yet perhaps Bryan "deserted" to Sullivan in order to cause him to think that he himself wanted the nomination and thereby to lead him to the support of Wilson.

Dunn moved to abolish the century-old unit rule. Robert L. Henry, Wilson's floor manager, offered the minority report and started an acrimonious debate on the floor over Harmon's control of the Ohio delegation. Parker had defeated Bryan by 71 votes; the unit rule was defeated by 73. Although instructed for Clark, the Nebraska delegates, those from Western states and,
most surprisingly, from Illinois and New York, voted for Wilson.
Wilson now took nineteen of Ohio's forty-eight delegates from
Harmon, and delegates instructed by congressional districts
could vote as directed by the people despite contrary instructions
from their state conventions unless restricted by state law.
Harmon and Underwood were finished, and even Tammany's
support for Clark began to waver. While eastern bosses feared
Bryan most in the character of presidential candidate, they said
they would agree to a "reasonably progressive platform" and
voiced no opposition to Bryan's producing "a Democratic
version of the Ten Commandments," for they felt secure with 487
votes which, they said, could not be influenced by "telegrams
from mother and the cornfield."\textsuperscript{18}

Early on June 27, the third day of the convention, Bryan won
approval in committee for the most progressive platform ever
presented to the nation. Then Chairman James praised the
progressivism of Bryan and talked of tariff reform, the issue most
Democrats believed would be of paramount significance in the
campaign. The only contest over delegates to reach the floor
followed, a dispute between Clark and Wilson forces for South
Dakota. While only ten delegates were involved, the vote was of
great importance because it was the first to demonstrate
Wilson's strength. When they unexpectedly voted for Wilson
rather than Clark, Sullivan and Murphy prevented Clark from
acquiring a majority in the convention and led to speculation
that the nomination now lay between Wilson and Bryan or
between Wilson and Underwood.\textsuperscript{19}

Asked if he meant to bolt, Bryan ridiculed the idea, adding
that he regarded Clark as a progressive, was instructed to vote
for him, and meant to do so. Nevertheless, rumors abounded that
he was preparing some "dynamite." In Chicago he had
mentioned the control the "interests" would have at Baltimore.
On June 26 he had talked with Heney and Crane and with La
Follette, and also expressed to Vardaman his fear that the
convention was controlled by Wall Street. When Vardaman told
him that he was "seeing things," he insisted that the delegates
would bolt to Roosevelt if the Ryans and Belmonts were not
kicked out of the convention. That evening his brother Charles
told him that New York, pledged to Harmon on the first ballot,
planned to switch to Clark on the second, which meant that
Clark's managers had made a deal with Wall Street. Charles
suggested that they get some delegate to introduce a resolution denouncing Murphy, Belmont, and Ryan and their alleged employer, J. P. Morgan, and calling for the immediate expulsion of the three delegates. Opposition by Clark men would prove their alliance with Wall Street. Bryan wrote out the resolution. While he was busy with the platform, Charles found some Wilson supporters who endorsed the resolution but none who would introduce it, and Bryan finally decided to introduce it himself.20

At the beginning of the evening session Bryan hurried to the stage and asked James for unanimous consent to introduce a resolution, a motion which required suspending the rules by a two-thirds vote. James generously granted him recognition. In a voice that reached the crowd outside the Armory, Bryan asked for the immediate consideration of the following:

Resolved. That ... we hereby declare ourselves opposed to the nomination of any candidate for president who is the representative of or under obligation to J. Pierpont Morgan, Thomas F. Ryan, August Belmont, or any other member of the privilege-hunting and favor-seeking class.

Be it further resolved. That we demand the withdrawal from this convention of any delegate or delegates constituting or representing the above-named interest.

While he was cheered by those who believed that this was the most sensational event in his life, even more spectacular than his Cross of Gold speech, he was cursed and even offered personal harm by a mass of delegates. "Beat him up," "Lynch him!" many shouted. Several Virginia delegates resoundingly castigated him. Vance McCormick, a Wilson supporter from Pennsylvania, exclaimed excitedly, "You can't do that. You can't throw a delegation out!" Bryan waved a hand at him and replied, "I don't expect to. But you watch the results from back home."21

Bryan's demand for a roll call on the rules so that his resolution could be considered was a clever move, for he stood to gain whatever the result. If his resolution was adopted, no man under the influence of Wall Street could be named; if it was voted down, "the rebuke from the country would make it impossible for New York to select a candidate," as he put it.22 Murphy and other state bosses realized that it would be better to pass than to block the first part of the resolution, for all must agree that the Democracy was unalterably opposed to the nomination of any candidate who was under obligation to Wall Street, and Murphy turned to Belmont and said, "Now, Auggie, listen and hear yourself vote yourself out of the convention."23
"In the Baltimore Sunday School—Miss Democracy: Now boys, we are prepared to show everybody what little gentlemen we can be." From the Lincoln Daily News, summer, 1912.

However, sensing that opposition to the second part of the resolution might steel the delegates against the first, Bryan withdrew it. New York voted for the now starchless first resolution, and even Virginia gave it 23 1/2 of its 24 votes, whereupon Bryan said that "It is conscience that makes cowards of us all."24

Bryan's action was variously interpreted. Some said he desired to divide the party and obtain the nomination for himself; others, like Louis D. Brandeis, took his resolution as evidence of the Democratic party's determination to "drive the money lenders out of the temple."25 Bryan said that he had "simply turned the faucet and allowed public sentiment to flow in upon the convention," that he deserved no personal credit for the results "except for knowing where the faucet was and the height of the stand-pipe from which the public opinion flowed." He had not eliminated any "Morgan candidate," but a renewed shower of telegrams upon the delegates indicated that the adoption of the first resolution by a vote of 883 to 201 1/2 "eliminated all the reactionaries and narrows the contest down to those about whose progressivism there can be no doubt."26

Bryan avoided the Armory on Thursday night and Friday morning, when nominating speeches were made. The first roll call, on Friday, June 28th, gave 440 1/2 to Clark, 324 to Wilson, 117 1/2 to Underwood, 148 to Harmon (including New York's 90), and 55 scattered votes to others. Bryan's followers had divided their votes between Clark and Wilson, while Murphy stubbornly stuck to Harmon and resisted demands to switch to Wilson in order to head off Bryan, who might be nominated by delegates of the South and West, in keeping with telegrams from those sections demanding continued support for him. The convention then adjourned until afternoon, when balloting would resume.

Bryan was working on the platform when an uproar in the convention aroused his curiosity. On his way to the main hall he learned that Murphy had switched to Clark on the 10th ballot. "I fear this will do Clark more harm than good," he said as he witnessed the demonstration for Clark, during which Clark's young daughter held up an American flag while she was carried about by her father's admirers.27 Senator James Smith of New Jersey happily shouted, "This is the beginning of the end [for Wilson]," for Clark had almost won a majority. Portentously,
however, when Oklahoma was called, William "Alfalfa Bill" Murray replied, "The sovereign state of Oklahoma refuses to be dictated to by Charles Murphy of Tammany Hall, and casts its vote for Woodrow Wilson for president." Two ballots later Clark had 556 votes, a majority of 5. While happy Clark men sang the "Houn' Dawg Song" for more than an hour, Senator William J. Stone, chairman of the Missouri delegation, telegraphed Harmon, Marshall, Wilson, and Underwood to withdraw and make Clark's nomination unanimous because "for seventy years the practice has been established of giving the nomination to the candidate who received the majority." Clark, in the speaker's office in the Capitol, stood poised to send his prepared telegram of acceptance and told George W. Norris that he would be named on the next ballot. But he figured without the other candidates, none of whom would withdraw, and without Bryan, who now took his seat with the Nebraska delegation amid cheers and did not leave it for the rest of the sessions.

Many motions to abandon the two-thirds rule had failed. Bryan favored its abolishment if the unit rule were also scrapped, else large states would have undue influence, and Murphy's switch to Clark determined him to support the rule and to enter the fight "to prevent not Mr. Clark's nomination only but the nomination of any person by the New York delegation," to keep the party free from the influence of Murphy, "who had back of him the influence of the financiers of Wall Street." Although some of his delegation wished to drop Clark as soon as New York went to him, he kept Nebraska steadily for the Missourian, for he may have hoped—or feared—that Murphy might drop Clark and go to Underwood, thereby leaving Clark free to win the nomination at the hands of progressives alone. Meanwhile an agreement between Underwood's and Wilson's managers to stand against Clark prevented Clark from obtaining so large a majority that it probably would have led to his eventual victory, and Bryan's sense of relief and satisfaction was obvious to those about him. He then made the fateful decision to violate his state's instructions for Clark. He knew that he would be criticized, for he had long railed at others who violated instructions, and that he would be charged with seeking to deadlock the convention and to win the nomination for himself. Moreover, it pained him to oppose Clark. Nevertheless, after
the Friday session adjourned he arranged to have himself recognized during roll call.

That night McCombs telephoned Wilson that Clark's nomination was inevitable and that he should drop from the race. Wilson declined the advice. Bryan too called Wilson to tell him that he had a single chance left—to state strongly that he would not accept the nomination at the hands of New York. Wilson had decided to follow Bryan's advice when Mrs. Wilson interposed, saying that Bryan's plan would make his nomination impossible. Wilson thereupon told McCombs to use his judgment about Bryan's plan but to tell Bryan that he would not accept the nomination if it could not be secured without the aid of New York. McCombs never gave Bryan the message.32

During the first three ballots on Saturday afternoon Bryan kept his delegation in the Clark column. Although a poll of it taken on the 13th ballot favored Wilson over Clark by 12 to 4, Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock told Bryan that he would ask the presiding officer to poll it. "If you are going to poll the delegation," Bryan warned, "I shall go to the platform and explain my vote."33 When the roll call on the fourteenth ballot reached Nebraska he jumped up and, as he had arranged, was recognized. When cheers and cat-calls interrupted him, he moved up to the platform. Delegates and visitors stood up in order not to miss a word as he proceeded. He would withhold his vote from Clark, he said, as long as New York's vote was recorded for him. Moreover, he would "not be a party to the nomination of any man...who will not, when elected, be absolutely free to carry out the anti-Morgan-Ryan-Belmont resolution, and make his administration reflect the wishes and the hopes of those who believe in a government of the people, by the people, and for the people."34 For two hours he faced the tumult he had created. Curses poured upon him and personal threats were again made, but he remained safe behind a bodyguard of the forty men in the Texas delegation, which favored Wilson. Would he support the nominee? he was often asked. He "expected" to do so, he replied, but he also expected the convention to name a man who was not supported by the "interests." The Nebraska delegation had voted 13 for Clark on the thirteenth ballot. On the fourteenth it voted 12 for Wilson and 4 for Clark. Wilson men cheered, Clark men booed; each side overlooked the fact that, rather than endorsing Wilson,
Bryan had merely voted against Clark because he was backed by the "interests" and that he would vote against Wilson if he accepted similar support.\textsuperscript{35}

Evaluations of Bryan's motives in dropping Clark varied. McCombs, William Randolph Hearst, and Henry Watterson led the charge that he sought a deadlock between Clark and Wilson so that he would become the nominee, while the \textit{New York Times} suggested that he would bolt to Roosevelt if Wall Street controlled the Democratic nomination.\textsuperscript{36} In contrast were those who believed that he was fighting the people's battle and urged, as the \textit{New York World} did, that there be "No Compromise with Ryan and Murphy!" or, as Samuel Ochs conceded, that it was time to work "shoulder to shoulder" with the "detested" Bryan.\textsuperscript{37} The only figure at Baltimore who stood out in relief, he had in each of his three appearances fought the forces of special privilege. No one had exerted a stronger influence upon the people of the country, who by their telegrams practically forced the delegates to vote against Clark. On the eighteenth ballot Clark lost the majority he had won on the tenth; on the 25th, although still holding New York's 90 votes, he had 469, whereas Wilson approached 400. At the end of an exhausting week and twenty-six ballots Clark had 463 1/2, Wilson 407 1/2, Underwood 112 1/2, Harmon 29, Marshall 30, Foss 43, and Bryan 1.

After conferring with his managers and Hearst, an enraged Clark left Washington for Baltimore at 10:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 29, to demand proof from Bryan of his "false and infamous" charges that he was a tool of Tammany and of Wall Street. Such a dramatic move might stem the waning tide, and he rehearsed the speech of acceptance he meant to deliver after he was nominated. But A. Mitchell Palmer guessed his intentions and successfully moved adjournment to 11 a.m. on Monday. However, at about midnight Clark went to the top floor of the Emerson Hotel, his Baltimore headquarters, where his Nebraska manager, Arthur Mullen, had called a meeting. At between 1 and 2 o'clock a visibly agitated Mullen shouted: "Champ Clark...is here to kill Bill Bryan!" Clark in a very calm manner said that he had a loaded gun in his pocket and proposed to shoot Bryan after challenging him with the things he had said and done. "He was not resentful from the standpoint of what had been done to him personally—but rather that he would be doing
President Woodrow Wilson and his Cabinet, 1913: (From left around table) President Wilson; William G. McAdoo, secretary of treasury; James C. McReynolds, attorney general; Josephus Daniels, secretary of the navy; David F. Houston, secretary of agriculture; William B. Wilson, secretary of labor; William C. Redfield, secretary of commerce; Franklin K. Lane, secretary of interior; Albert S. Burleson, postmaster-general; Lindley M. Garrison, secretary of war; William J. Bryan, secretary of state.
the country a service by ridding it of a dangerous man. But after talking the matter over and over, he was prevailed upon to give up the mission and return to Washington," said an eye witness.38

Meantime, according to McCombs, Bryan called him to his rooms, poked a finger into his chest, and said, "McCombs, you know that Wilson cannot be nominated. I know that Clark cannot be nominated. You must turn your forces to a progressive Democrat like me." Stating that he would stick by Wilson to the end, McCombs concluded that he had "secured the true Bryan position,. . .namely,—to create an equal Wilson and Clark strength, break through the middle and get the nomination." Since both Bryans, Charles M. Rosser, and McComb's own secretary deny the veracity of his story, his account must be dismissed as the fabrication of a fevered imagination.39

On Sunday, June 30, Bryan publicly criticized Clark's inaction rather than action. He had taken a neutral stand on the fight over the keynoter and permitted his managers to cooperate with the "reactionaries." Even if he had not authorized his managers to act the way they did, Bryan knew of no instance in which he had rebuked them. Thus ended a friendship of twenty years.

All sides held strategy meetings that afternoon. Clark's managers, believing that Bryan wanted the nomination, agreed with Clark that Wilson's vote must not be permitted to sag lest Bryan obtain his opportunity. Wilson's managers concluded that Murphy would drop Clark for Underwood once he realized that Clark could not be named but that he refused to go to Wilson and end the deadlock because of Bryan's attacks upon him. Taggart would not help Clark because Hearst was supporting him and told Murphy that he would rather vote for Bryan than for the Missourian. Many attempts to make deals fell through, and a move to end the deadlock by naming A. M. Palmer died aborning. But the situation really rested with Bryan, for on the morning of June 30 he was short only 34 of the 366 votes needed to prevent the nomination of anyone who represented the Morganization of America. However, he believed the time had come to end the deadlock and weighed alternatives: Harmon and Underwood had no chance; Wilson or Clark could withdraw; if the convention would not accept Clark or Wilson, it should consider such men as Kern, James, O'Gorman, Charles A. Culberson, or Senator Isidor Rayner of Maryland, but under no
circumstances should New York be allowed to dictate the nomination. Finally, he could run himself. He did not seek the nomination, but his naming of these lightweights naturally increased the suspicion that he did. Yet his suggestions were clearly part of his strategy to let his foes know that he would bolt or run himself and thereby force concentration upon Wilson.40

The deadlock was finally broken on the second ballot taken on Monday, July 1, when Taggart switched Indiana’s 29 votes from Marshall to Wilson in return for support for Marshall as vice president. By the end of the day Wilson had more votes than Clark but not yet a majority, and his managers intensified their efforts to win over Illinois and Ohio. Excitement flamed when Clark left Washington for Baltimore and it was believed he would try to address the convention. Stone conceded defeat and told him to throw his strength to a progressive who could be named and that Bryan had made his nomination impossible and was now trying to “kill off” Wilson. He may have talked with Sullivan outside the Armory but he did not, as many friends urged, go into the convention to challenge Bryan. Excitement flamed again when John B. Stanchfield of New York, in explaining his vote, accused Bryan of seeking the nomination and suggested that since he would not support the nominee the “selfish, money-grabbing, favor-seeking, office-chasing, publicity-hunting marplot of Nebraska” be expelled from the convention. When a banner containing his words praising Clark in 1910 was held before him by the Missouri delegation, Bryan asked James to recognize him on a question of personal privilege. James embarrassed him by declining to do so.41

It has been asserted that Bryan sought George Harvey out and asked him if New York would vote for Wilson. When Harvey said no, Bryan retorted that “it might.” When Sullivan, in the presence of Mack and Murphy, asked Harvey the same question, Harvey replied that their voting for Wilson would be wasted, for “He will never recognize you in any way.” Sullivan seemed stunned, and Murphy conceded that “That settles it for me.” Believing that Bryan wanted the nomination, Harvey led Murphy and Sullivan to keep their votes for Wilson lest they give Bryan a pretext for opposing him. After the thirtieth ballot, this story continues, Bryan sent brother Charles to fetch Harvey and urged that the convention be adjourned for thirty days lest Sullivan’s impending swing to Wilson result in his nomination and the
death of his own ambition. He could not move for adjournment without compromising himself, but the followers of Clark or Underwood could, and he would support the motion and the motion would be carried. Rather than taking Bryan's cue, Harvey got Alabama to switch from Underwood to Wilson and began the landslide to Wilson.42 Several facts contradict this story: Harvey was not supporting Wilson, with whom he had broken a year earlier; C. W. Bryan disclaimed that a Bryan-Harvey talk occurred; Rosser indicated that a two-minute interview did occur—on June 23, not June 30; and Bryan told William Allen White that "I never had any thought of being nominated... and felt it my duty to pursue a course that would have destroyed my chance had I had any."43

It was not until Tuesday, July 2, that Sullivan dropped Clark for Wilson and started the bandwagon that carried Wilson to victory on the forty-sixth ballot.

Contemporary opinion divided on Bryan's motives and accomplishments at Baltimore. Clark averred that he had lost the nomination "solely through the vile and malicious slanders of Colonel William Jennings Bryan." Mrs. Clark added that under the cover of "false friendship" Bryan had been Champ's foe. Mullen and Watterson charged that Bryan had "betrayed" Clark and sought to deadlock the convention and win the nomination for himself, and Hearst painted him as sitting silently and unprotestingly as the bosses voted for Wilson.44 To those who favored Wilson, however, Bryan was the "hero of the convention," the one who had routed "predatory patriots" like Ryan, Murphy, and Belmont.45

In his syndicated column Bryan expressed sorrow for the defeat of the still "universally beloved" Clark and ever afterwards deplored the bitter resentment Clark felt against him.46 Wilson's turning point, he added, was his coming out strongly against Parker for keynoter. The paramount issue was whether the convention would side with the reactionaries, thereby giving hope to Roosevelt's party, or with the progressives, thereby making the third party unnecessary. The adoption of the Morgan-Ryan-Belmont resolution had demonstrated that the convention was progressive. Thus Bryan's campaign of two years had borne fruit. "I decided some two years ago that I did not fit into the conditions as we then saw them, and I was not willing to assume the responsibility of advocating any particular
progressive, partly because I preferred to trust to the wisdom of
the multitude and partly because I felt that a great deal would
depend upon the action of the Republican convention."

In completing Bryan's memoirs, Mrs. Bryan sought to settle
for all time the "oft-repeated accusation that Mr. Bryan was
trying to get the nomination for himself at Baltimore." Aware
that many of his correspondents urged him to seek the
nomination, she had pressed him to do so. He replied that he had
had the nomination three times and that another man would be
better for the party. When Taft and Roosevelt threatened to split
the Republican party, she spurred him on, but he said, "This
may be the year for a Democrat to win. The other boys have been
making their plans. I would not step in now." When the
convention was deadlocked and he waited for the people from
home to force their delegations into line, she approached him for
the last time. He replied that "There is only one condition under
which I could take this nomination and that would be if the
deadlock becomes so fixed that no one is able to break it, and
they turn to me as one upon whom the different factions can
unite. This condition is not probable."  

Bryan's correspondence indicates that various delegates
switched from Clark to Wilson when Clark failed to oppose
Parker; that Bryan's "unprecedented heroism" forced into the
open "the fight between progressives and bi-partisan machines
like Tammany"; that it was obvious that he was not a candidate
because he knew that Parker would defeat him for temporary
chairman; and that by arousing the people back home to spur
the progressives against the reactionaries he had been of
tremendous help to Wilson. Moreover, by denying himself a
nomination which amounted to election, he had made himself
the "First Citizen" of the country.  

Most of those who wrote to Wilson indicated that Bryan was justified in assuming that an
agreement existed between Clark and Murphy and that Clark
rather than Wilson would have been named had it not been for
Bryan's intervention.  

In the half-century following the Baltimore convention,
evaluations of Bryan's influence therein have run the gamut from
placing him on the periphery of events after the taking of the
10th ballot to his having "forced" Wilson's nomination. Most
writers credit Bryan with Wilson's victory, and their judgment
appears to be sound.  

He had helped to elect many delegates.
His public catechizing of the aspirants before the convention met awakened the people to his objective of winning a progressive candidate. He alone had served notice upon the national committee that its selection of a conservative keynoter would be contested. His opposition killed off Harmon. He resisted all demands that he himself run or to favor Wilson over Clark. He risked losing Clark’s friendship by battling the evil forces he believed lurked behind Clark, while Wilson’s support for him against Parker on the temporary chairmanship, suggestion of James as permanent chairman, and refusal to accept deals with conditions attached to them made Wilson progressively more attractive. But this does not mean that other occurrences and influences, such as the change in the unit rule but not in the two-thirds rule and arrangements made by Wilson’s managers with Taggart and Sullivan, should be denied.52

The passing of Bryan’s motion to adopt the platform before naming the candidates helped insure that only a progressive would be named. At this suggestion a friend moved to abandon the unit rule, thereby freeing Wilson men from instructed delegations. Sullivan and Murphy, not Bryan, were originally responsible for Clark’s inability to win a majority by voting for Wilson in the contested South Dakota case, but Brother Charles’s suspicion that Clark had made a deal with Murphy led him to sponsor the Morgan-Ryan-Belmont resolution, thereby blazoning his opposition to bossism across the country. Murphy’s switching to Clark on the tenth ballot caught him off guard, but he voted for Clark on the eleventh, twelfth, and thirteenth ballots. Hence not Bryan but Underwood’s supporters prevented Clark from achieving the necessary two-thirds vote. His dropping of Clark on the fourteenth ballot influenced many delegates. However, if he considered Ryan, Sullivan, and Taggart to be as reprehensible as Murphy, the question remains why he made no objection when Sullivan swung to Wilson and started the trend that included New York in its sweep and led to Wilson’s nomination. He never offered an explanation. Fortunately for Wilson, his strategy and that of Wilson’s managers was the same—to prevent the merging of the anti-Wilson forces. Having won his point that only a progressive be named; having always mentioned Wilson and Clark as equally acceptable; knowing of how Wilson had rejected the support of the Harvey-Watterson-Ryan combine and defeated the bosses in
New Jersey; trusting that Wilson would be beholden to no man, boss or not, while Clark had compromised on the tariff, failed to assume leadership of the progressive forces, and appeared to be dominated by bosses with Wall Street connections; influential with western and southern delegates but powerless to affect the actions of the eastern men; and conscious that the astute trading so necessary in conventions had been undertaken by Wilson's managers without Wilson's knowledge and consent—Bryan remained happy in knowing that he had been vitally instrumental, even if by indirection, in setting the stage for the nomination of Wilson. A specialist in conventions, he had used parliamentary tactics with consummate skill. By hectoring the conservatives and insisting that all moves be made in the open he stimulated the people to speak. The resulting cascade of telegrams demanded Wilson; this incident, Bryan believed, "at last crushed the opposition to Wilson and compelled his nomination." Bryan's standing for the interests of the "folks back home" and his transforming the Baltimore convention from a reactionary into a progressive convention cause him to deserve the title of "Wilson's Warwick."

NOTES

1. Christian Science Monitor (Boston), June 17, 1912.
15. Bryan received 1,182 telegrams from 31,331 people in 46 states, and each delegate an average of 100. Ibid., 169-170, and Tale of Two Conventions, 152.
25. Louis D. Brandeis to Norman Hapgood, July 3, 1912, cited in Alpheus Mason,
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27. Interview with Mrs. Genevieve Clark Thomson, Berryville, Virginia, September 2, 1965; Official Proceedings, 196-198. For the correlation between the vote for Bryan as temporary chairman and the first ballot, see Paul T. David, Ralph M. Goodman, and Richard C. Bain, The Politics of National Party Conventions (Washington, D.C., 1960), 426n. Four men held all but 60 votes and anyone holding 363 votes or more could deadlock the convention. Clark alone had this power. However, to win the nomination, one of the big four must be supported by all of the others. Bain, Convention Decisions, 188.


29. Stone to Wilson, Wilson to Stone, telegrams, June 29, 1912, Woodrow Wilson Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress; New York Journal, World, June 29, 1912; Woolley, "Politics Is Hell," Ch. 3. Since 1868 not more than 5 ballots had been needed to name a candidate in a Democratic national convention, and Martin Van Buren in 1844 was the only candidate as yet to have won a majority in a convention and then failed to secure the necessary two thirds vote.


33. McComb's secretary, Maurice Lyons, believed that Wilson's message to Bryan caused Bryan to switch from Clark to Wilson. Lyons to Bryan, December 27, 1921, Bryan Papers; Lyons, McCombs, 92-93. However, since Bryan never saw the message from Wilson it is evident that he must already have made up his mind.

34. Bryan, Memoirs, 183, and Tale of Two Conventions, 193-197.


38. Clark's movements are discussed in Louisville Courier-Journal, New York Times, World, July 1, 1912; Commoner, July 5, 1912; Champ Clark, My Quarter Century of American Politics (2 vols.; New York, 1921), II, 427-428. The eye witness, J. R. Kelly, told his tale to the author in an interview in Omaha, Nebraska, June 23, 1952, then furnished a written version. "There is no one now living," he added, "that I know that I can refer you to for verification or additional information except former United States Senator Bennett Clark of Missouri, son of Champ Clark." The author then wrote to Bennett Clark, who perhaps naturally stated that the account was false, as did his sister, Mrs. Genevieve Clark Thomson. Bennett Clark to the author, September 8, 1953; interview with Mrs. Genevieve Clark Thomson, September 2, 1965. Mrs. Thomson stated that her father had not had a drink for fifteen years before the Baltimore convention. However, William Ritchie told the author that Clark was drunk when he left Baltimore. Interview with William Ritchie, Omaha, Nebraska, August 8, 1952.
39. C. W. Bryan to Bryan, September 17, 1921, Maurice Lyons to Bryan, September 15, 1921, Bryan to Lyons, September 21, 1921, Bryan Papers; Lyons, McCombs, Making Woodrow Wilson President, 161-163; Rosser, Crusading Commoner, 139-147.


42. Willis F. Johnson, George Harvey: A "Passionate Patriot." (Boston, 1929), 211-213; William Allen White, Woodrow Wilson: The Man, the Times and his Task (Boston, 1924), 260-261.

43. Bryan to White, March 25, 1925, Bryan Papers; Rosser, Crusading Commoner, 147.

44. Louisville Courier-Journal, July 3, 4, 1912; New York Journal, Times, July 3, 1912; Commoner, August 2, 1912; Clark, Quarter Century, II, 392; Arthur Mullen, Western Democrat (New York, 1940), chapter I of Book III. See also Alfred Henry Lewis, "Progress of Politics," Cosmopolitan, 53 (September 1912), 560-562.

45. New York World, July 3, 4, 1912; editorial, The Independent, 73 (July 4, 1912), 50; editorial, Collier's, 49 (July 13, 1912), 5-6. See also "Effect of Woodrow Wilson's Nomination," Literary Digest, 45 (July 13, 1912), 44-46.


47. New York Times, July 3, 1912; Commoner, July 12, 1912; Bryan, Tale of Two Conventions, 206-207.


49. Among many others see John F. Bible to Bryan, July 5, 1912, Jno. R. Sutherland to Bryan, July 5, 1912, Trumbull White to Bryan, July 5, 1912, E. Watkins to Bryan, July 6, 1912, Rudolph Spreckles to Bryan, July 6, 1912, Louis F. Post to Bryan, July 5, 1912, Bryan Papers; Vance McCormick to George Fort Milton, November 2, 1929, Commager Papers.


