



## The Indefatigable Mr. Bryan in 1908

(Article begins on page 2 below.)

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Article Summary: In 1908 Bryan gave as many as fifteen speeches a day. The "perpetual-motion candidate" campaigned in only three regions of the country, however, and had no outstanding vote-catching issue.

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## THE INDEFATIGABLE MR. BRYAN IN 1908

BY EDGAR A. HORNIG

STUDENTS of American political history and especially those intrigued by the career of William Jennings Bryan will find a detailed narration of the Democratic presidential candidate's 1908 stumping activities both interesting and revealing. The Nebraskan electioneered in such a whirlwind fashion, rushing from place to place during the weeks of September and October, that the engine on his special train, it has been facetiously observed, suffered a physical collapse a few days before the ballots were cast. Concentrating his campaign in the North Central, Middle Atlantic, and Northern Great Plains sections of the nation for logical and significant reasons, Bryan was everywhere, including "enemy territory"—or the East, greeted by surprisingly large and enthusiastic crowds. Though the campaign featured no outstanding vote-catching issue, Bryan gave the question of the guaranty of bank deposits far more emphasis than is commonly realized. He also attempted to capitalize on his superior oratorical powers. Campaign observers always gave his platform effectiveness a far higher rating than that of his opponent, William Howard Taft.

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Though Bryan's quest for the presidency in 1908 was supplemented by the electioneering of such Democrats as Norman Mack, Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, John W. Kern, Democratic vice-presidential nominee, and Samuel Gompers, President of the American Federation of Labor, the real burden of the campaign was borne by the presidential aspirant himself. His struggle officially got under way August 12 in Lincoln, Nebraska, when the candidate received formal notification of his nomination from Congressman H. D. Clayton of Alabama, Chairman of the Notification Committee. Later the same day Bryan received an impressive ovation as he rode through the decorated streets of Lincoln to the Statehouse, where the ceremonies took place. A determined effort had been made to keep the proceedings nonpartisan, an arrangement which Democratic leaders later regretted, since it cooled the ardor of the crowd. An amusing incident occurred when the burning rays of a tropical-like sun compelled Bryan, while delivering his speech of acceptance, to ask the indulgence of the audience in putting on his hat. Chairman Mack, close at hand and ever ready for emergencies, quickly came to Bryan's rescue with an umbrella with which he shaded the speaker's pate until the remarks were concluded.<sup>1</sup>

Bryan's acceptance speech consisted of about 5,300 words, as against approximately 15,000 employed by Taft on the occasion of the G.O.P. notification ceremonies. One reason for the comparative brevity of the address lay in the Nebraskan's decision to emphasize only what in his judgment was to be the paramount issue of the campaign, leaving to future speeches the discussion of other leading questions. According to Bryan, the major issue of 1908 was, "Shall the People Rule?" and he managed to repeat this question—or some variation of it—seven times during the course of his remarks. The orator of the Platte also bitterly assailed the Republican Party by holding it "responsible for all the abuses which now exist in the federal government. . . ." He then developed the point by remind-

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<sup>1</sup> *The New York Times*, Aug. 13, 1908, 2:2.

ing his audience that the Republican party was compelled to accept responsibility for the evils which beset the nation since it had controlled the federal government for the past twelve years.

In addition to including the two constructive proposals of publicity for campaign contributions and an amendment to the Constitution providing for the popular election of United States Senators, the nominee pointed out in the address that the G.O.P. had failed to include either of these reforms in its 1908 platform. Bryan concluded by describing the Democratic Party as the defender of honest wealth and the party of reformation, not revolution, and pledging himself, if elected, to an administration "which will do justice to all."<sup>2</sup>

Press reaction to Bryan's speech of acceptance was generally favorable. *The Nation*, which was anti-Bryan, said it had the strong points of good oratory, brevity, an able style, and an effective attack upon the weaknesses of the G.O.P. and Taft, but assailed the address because of its failure to explain the candidate's former advocacy of free silver and government ownership of railroads.<sup>3</sup> The editors of the pro-Roosevelt *Outlook* magazine voiced a popularly-shared opinion when they said, "In his speech of acceptance . . . Mr. Bryan showed to great advantage as a political debater." The same editors, comparing the address to Taft's acceptance remarks, observed, "Mr. Taft's speech has the qualities of a judge's opinion, Mr. Bryan's has those of an advocate's argument."<sup>4</sup>

Bryan was the first of the major 1908 presidential aspirants to take the field. In early August Chairman Mack announced that the Democratic candidate would make several extensive campaign tours which would cover most of the United States.<sup>5</sup> On August 20 Bryan began his first trip, which lasted seven days and found him speaking at many points in Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas. For

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Aug. 13, 1908, 4:1-4.

<sup>3</sup> *The Nation*, Aug. 20, 1908, pp. 151-152.

<sup>4</sup> *The Outlook*, Aug. 22, 1908, p. 867.

<sup>5</sup> *The New York Times*, Aug. 6, 1908, 2:3.

example, at Des Moines, Iowa, on August 21 he delivered an address on the tariff problem, and four days later he discussed the trust question at Indianapolis, while participating in the notification ceremonies of Democratic vice-presidential candidate Kern. August 26 saw Bryan at Salem, Illinois, where he claimed to be the legitimate heir of the Roosevelt progressive policies and again stressed the question, "Shall the People Rule?" The following day he called for legislation guaranteeing bank deposits at a rally in Topeka, Kansas.

On August 30 the tireless Mr. Bryan began his second trip, which carried him into Minnesota and the Dakotas. At the Minnesota state fair in St. Paul on the last day of the month the Nebraskan spoke on the subject of Republican extravagance. On the first day of September in Grand Forks, North Dakota, Bryan said that he stood squarely on his party's platform and insisted that Taft, by way of contrast, had been busy amending the Republican platform ever since the G.O.P. convention in Chicago. The candidate also briefly discussed trusts, labor, and the guaranteeing of bank deposits. As at other points in North Dakota, the demonstration for Bryan at Grand Forks was enthusiastic. As he moved through the streets, his carriage was flanked on either side by large representations from the labor and farm classes of the city and surrounding country.<sup>6</sup>

On September 6 Bryan began a third and longer tour, covering the vast area from Rhode Island to Colorado. Labor Day, September 7, found "The Great Commoner" bidding for the labor vote as he spoke on various aspects of the labor question to large crowds of workingmen in the Chicago area.

After electioneering at many points in the state of Illinois, Indiana, West Virginia, and Maryland, Bryan finally invaded the area of eastern Pennsylvania and New Jersey. Talking in Philadelphia on the morning of September 15, where the crowds were reported to be both large and enthusiastic, the campaigner said the East was no longer

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 2, 1908, 4:3.

"the enemy's country" because people had come to know him much better by 1908 than they had in 1896.<sup>7</sup> During the afternoon of the same day, Bryan spoke to an estimated audience of twenty thousand at Washington Park in Camden, New Jersey, where the crowd, which had come from all over South Jersey, cheered for ten minutes before the candidate was able to begin his speech.<sup>8</sup> In the evening the inexhaustible Bryan spoke in Trenton, New Jersey, to nearly four thousand who packed Taylor's Opera House, while as many more clamored outside in vain endeavors to gain admission. Reporters noted that young voters predominated in the audience, and that such oldtime Democrats as Judge G. D. Vroom, Henry Kelsey, and B. F. Lee were all absent.<sup>9</sup>

The following day, September 16, Bryan addressed an audience of more than four thousand at the New York State Democratic Convention in Rochester. Before he delivered his speech there was a procession up the streets which had the flavor of an oldtime political parade and featured the Continentals, a Democratic marching club of Rochester dressed in old Continental uniforms. Bryan's speech, entitled *Mr. Taft and His Scares*, included a discussion of the tariff, trust, labor, and guaranty of bank deposits questions.<sup>10</sup> On September 17 Bryan appeared in Harrington, Delaware, 550 miles from Rochester. The last sixty-five miles of this distance were traveled in a special train which covered the distance in sixty-one minutes. In Harrington, where more than ten thousand cheering people awaited Bryan's arrival, the efforts of the crowd to get near the candidate were so frenzied that several women fainted in the confusion.<sup>11</sup>

On September 18 the presidential aspirant faced his first big New York City audience of the campaign. The four thousand people who jammed into Carnegie Hall cheered enthusiastically when he took the stage and then "listened steadily and with warm appreciation to a well-

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1908, 4:2.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 16, 1908, 4:4.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 17, 1908, 2:5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 18, 1908, 1:5.

considered speech" which lasted almost two hours. Most of the remarks were devoted to an assault upon the record of the Republican Party.<sup>12</sup>

After speaking in Rhode Island, western New York, and Michigan, Bryan entered the Ohio country, where on September 23 the ubiquitous campaigner made twelve speeches to enormous crowds. At Columbus five thousand gathered around Bryan's train at the railroad station, and later, when he spoke at Memorial Hall, eight thousand partisans cheered him with the "wildest enthusiasm." His concluding speech of the day was made to an outdoor, overflow crowd of twenty thousand.<sup>13</sup> The following day Bryan talked first at Dayton and then in Cincinnati "before two of the largest audiences he has ever faced." His train, gaily decorated with flags and bunting, made the run between Dayton and Cincinnati at the rate of sixty-eight miles an hour.<sup>14</sup> The next day, September 25, Bryan moved over to Terre Haute, Indiana, where he received a hearty welcome and addressed two large audiences. While talking about the trusts, tariff, and publicity for campaign contributions, the candidate injected a new feature when he conducted an imaginary cross-examination of Taft on these issues. The novelty of this method "created no little amusement in the crowd."<sup>15</sup>

Upon leaving Indiana, Bryan moved farther west to the area of Wisconsin, Illinois, and Iowa. On September 30 the Nebraskan, traversing the southern portion of Iowa, concluded his extensive, exhausting speaking tour of about three weeks by delivering fifteen speeches during the day "to immense crowds that manifested the greatest interest in what he had to say." A correspondent for *The New York Times* said, "No greater demonstrations have been accorded Mr. Bryan any where than in Iowa from the moment he entered the state until he left it."<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 19, 1908, 1:7.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 24, 1908, 2:3.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 25, 1908, 2:5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, Sept. 26, 1908, 3:4.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 1, 1908, 2:4.



Bryan accepting the nomination for the presidency, 1908

(Photo courtesy the Winston Company)





Bryan adherents sported these buttons and badges in 1908

Bryan completed his strenuous tour of almost four weeks when he arrived in Lincoln, Nebraska, on the first day of October at 4:00 A.M. Here he crossed paths with his Republican opponent, William Howard Taft, who was spending the night in the state capital. Democratic headquarters announced that Bryan, though in splendid health, would rest at his Fairview home for about one week. This press release also stated that he would spend the last week of the campaign in the East and would not tour the Pacific Coast states.<sup>17</sup>

On October 6 Bryan resumed his stumping activities when he delivered fifteen speeches, largely on the subjects of the tariff and the Panic of 1907, in the region of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and again attracted large throngs.<sup>18</sup> October 7 saw the two major candidates for the presidency meeting in Chicago at the annual banquet of the Chicago Associations of Commerce. Bryan, who had been in Chicago all day, arrived first and was greeted by loud cheers. For a number of minutes the people in the crowded banquet hall anxiously awaited the arrival of Taft and the impending meeting of the two presidential aspirants. Finally, an ear-splitting shout gave warning of the Ohioan's appearance. With all eyes turned in his direction, Taft's huge frame "moved like a ship amongst a swarm of tugs" up the aisle toward the two tables. The dramatic moment was soon over, as Bryan, with hand extended, asked the Republican if he had had a good day. The mutual display of friendliness stirred the crowd to renewed cheering. The speeches of the two prominent guests were nonpartisan in nature.<sup>19</sup> One eastern newspaper editorialized that such a meeting as had occurred in Chicago was without precedent, and that the obvious cordiality of the event was made possible by the fact that the campaign of 1908 was not close enough to arouse a high degree of partisanship.<sup>20</sup>

Bryan spent the next two days electioneering in Illinois. Most of October 8 was spent in Chicago, where the

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 2, 1908, 3:2.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 7, 1908, 3:2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 8, 1908, 1:1.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 9, 1908, 8:1.

candidate lashed out at President Theodore Roosevelt's active role in the contest. The Nebraskan contended that the office of the President belonged to all the people and its occupant should not use the position to further the ambitions of one political party and its presidential candidate. Bryan objected, therefore, to Roosevelt's working on behalf of Taft's candidacy by writing open letters of a partisan nature to the press, publicly endorsing Taft and his record, urging prominent members of his administration to stump for Taft, and personally advising Taft regarding campaign matters. On October 9 Bryan discussed the subject of the Panic of 1907 at Knox College in Galesburg.

October 10 was a strenuous day even by the standards of the three-time Democratic candidate. Stumping in Missouri, Bryan broke all his speech-making records for the 1908 campaign by delivering twenty-four addresses before immense, cheering crowds at points that included Monroe City, Stoutsville, Paris, Holliday, Madison, Moberly, Higbee, and St. Joseph. In addition to urging his listeners to spread enthusiasm over the entire Democratic ticket, the Nebraskan expressed his views on the trust issue, calling for a stronger antitrust legislation and effective enforcement.<sup>21</sup> At Glasgow, as Bryan was talking to a big crowd surrounding his railroad car, someone started a panic with an outcry that a train was coming. Men, women, and children stampeded to get off the tracks, with the result that several people were trampled, a few women fainted, and three elderly spectators were badly injured. The speaker, noting that the train which the crowd thought was coming had been flagged, implored the people to be calm and thus contained the confusion. Soon the listeners again surged around Bryan's car, and he talked a few minutes longer.<sup>22</sup>

October 11 found Bryan taking a well-deserved rest at Fairview, as he prepared for a swing through his home state and Colorado. On October 13, the first of three days spent stumping Nebraska, Bryan addressed big crowds at every location, including some Republican strongholds, and

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 11, 1908, 3:3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 11, 1908, 1:3.

delivered twenty-one speeches ranging from five to sixty minutes. At Wahoo he charged Taft with tailoring his statements regarding the guaranty of bank deposits issue to suit different parts of the nation, and at Oakland Bryan claimed that he was an originator of policies, Taft an imitator.<sup>23</sup> During the second day of his Nebraska tour, Bryan made twenty-two speeches from ten minutes to one hour in length. On this, "the most enthusiastic day of the trip," Bryan spoke out on behalf of the Democratic stand on bank deposits' guaranty, depressions, and the significance of Roosevelt's interference in the campaign.<sup>24</sup>

Two days later, October 16, the traveling candidate was the guest of Denver, Colorado for several hours. In spite of fitful rainfall, great crowds lined the streets through which he rode to the auditorium. All along the march Bryan was received "with enthusiastic acclaim," and more than forty marching clubs from all parts of Colorado participated in the procession. The glow of red fire and other pyrotechnics contributed to the brilliance of the electrical effects especially arranged for the event. Three times Bryan halted along the route to address large gatherings. One feature of the parade was an effigy of an elephant lying dead from shafts of Democratic assaults. Each spear was labeled with a Democratic argument, as, for example, "tariff revision." In his speech at the auditorium Bryan emphasized the issues of publicity for campaign expenditures and the direct election of United States Senators.<sup>25</sup>

Illinois won Bryan's attention on October 19. The candidate repeatedly charged that the G.O.P. was preparing to purchase the election in the sixteen speeches he made that day, as he traveled toward Chicago from the southern part of the state. A "monster demonstration" was accorded him at Joliet, and at Bloomington he met his running mate of 1900, Adlai E. Stevenson, (grandfather of the Democratic presidential candidate of 1952 and 1956) who in 1908

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 14, 1908, 2:2.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 15, 1908, 2:6.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 17, 1908, 2:2.

was the Democratic candidate for governor. In the evening thousands met the great orator at Union Station in Chicago, and a big procession of fifty automobiles swept him to Pilson Park to address another huge throng.<sup>26</sup>

Indiana was the scene of Bryan's activities on October 20. Starting at Hammond at 7:30 A.M., the Nebraskan delivered sixteen speeches to large crowds, which supplied robust cheers and demonstrations. The themes employed were those having to do with labor, guaranty of bank deposits, publicity for campaign contributions, and the Panic of 1907.<sup>27</sup> The following day Bryan crossed over into neighboring Ohio, where he was again greeted by "monster crowds and lusty cheering." Inspired by the fact that he was campaigning in the home state of his political enemy, the candidate of the Democracy spoke with a vigor that those who had been constantly with him could not help but notice.<sup>28</sup>

On October 22, Bryan, campaigning in West Virginia, was "enthusiastically received everywhere." Speaking before miners in coal districts, the candidate devoted much attention to the labor question, defended Samuel Gompers of the American Federation of Labor, hitting at the coercion of labor by employers in regard to elections. To farmers Bryan said the G.O.P. had no policy which could bring them relief. When many women waved their aprons at a rousing reception at Thurmond, Bryan said, "If I don't go in on a tidal wave this time, I surely will on an apron wave."<sup>29</sup>

Invading the East once again, Bryan spent October 23 making a "whirlwind tour of the state of New Jersey," delivering sixteen speeches. The labor question was the candidate's main theme, but he also made merry with Roosevelt because of his "butting into" the campaign. Bryan quipped that his voice had held out so well because he had no ragged arguments to pass through his throat. At White

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 20, 1908, 3:3.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 21, 1908, 3:4.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 22, 1908, 4:2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 23, 1908, 2:4.

House, New Jersey, he said, "I am here at last. It has been rather a long journey, but happily ended." Immense crowds heard him at Trenton, Phillipsburg, Somerville, Elizabethport, Perth Amboy, and New Brunswick, but the climax of the day came at Newark, where twelve thousand greeted him at the station and an overflow crowd of eight thousand at the auditorium forced him to give an extra address.<sup>30</sup>

Bryan devoted the days of October 24 through 29 to New York in a determined effort to capture the big electoral vote of that state. The fact that these six precious days late in the contest were devoted entirely to the Empire State underscores the vital place New York occupied in Democratic strategy. October 24 was spent stumping the southern counties of the state, where Bryan spoke to enormous crowds at such points as Port Jervis, Binghamton, Elmira, Owego, and Waverly. On October 26 he climaxed a strenuous day with a major address before thirteen thousand, "all that the great Madison Square Garden would hold." The reception accorded Bryan at the Garden "was tremendous," and his lengthy speech "was listened to throughout with great attention and every point he made was cheered again and again." Bryan's remarks included comment upon almost every plank in his party's platform, in addition to another attack upon Roosevelt for his active role in the campaign.<sup>31</sup>

The following day the perpetual-motion candidate made a number of addresses in New York City at ten different meetings. The climax of the day was a speech in Brooklyn, where twenty thousand tried to gain admission to a hall built for five thousand. On this occasion the cheering was so prolonged that Bryan finally shouted, "Don't take up my time! I only have a few minutes and I cannot spare the time that you are taking in applause." In his address he touched upon the trusts, direct election of Senators, the tariff, guaranty of bank deposits, and Roosevelt's campaign activity.<sup>32</sup> During the day of October 28, Bryan talked in

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 24, 1908, 1:1.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1908, 1:7.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 28, 1908, 1:7.

various Hudson River localities such as Troy, Schenectady, and Hudson. In the evening at Albany, ex-Senator David B. Hill, emerging from political retirement to preside at a mass meeting for the Nebraskan, declared that he heartily endorsed Bryan's election and thought he was right on all the issues of the campaign. "I am for him," Hill declared, "because I sincerely believe he will be President himself. . . He will not be led around with a string like a great caged bear." Bryan's speech, devoted largely to the publicity and labor issues, was "cheered to the echo."<sup>33</sup>

October 29, Bryan's final day in New York, saw him stressing the issues of publicity and the direct election of Senators in the central part of the state in such cities as Cohoes, Utica, Rome, and Syracuse. At the last-mentioned city Bryan spoke to four large gatherings and was accompanied by conservative Democrat Judge Alton Parker. During the day, he was initiated into the Order of Mystique Krewe of Kanoenoe, a Syracuse boosters' club, and was invested with the Indian name of "Heap Big Talk Papoose of the Platte."<sup>34</sup>

The last four days of the campaign were divided between Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kansas, and Nebraska. October 30 was spent in Ohio making ten speeches to demonstrative crowds in such cities as Toledo, Bowling Green, Fremont, and Cleveland, where a monster demonstration, replete with a dozen marching clubs, torches, bands, and wild cheering was accorded the Nebraskan. Throughout the day Bryan stressed the claim that John D. Rockefeller's and Andrew Carnegie's support of Taft was proof of an alliance between the G.O.P. and the trusts.<sup>35</sup> All of the next day, October 31, was spent in Indiana delivering twenty-four speeches to "crowds of mammoth proportions and unlimited cheering," which at various localities fairly mobbed Bryan. Stops included Richmond, where Bryan received a list of 802 Republicans pledged to support him, in addition to Muncie, Winchester, and Anderson.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 29, 1908, 3:2.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 30, 1908, 3:1.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 31, 1908, 4:2.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1908, 6:1.

While in Indiana on the last day of October, Bryan released to the press a simple, concise, and well-written statement entitled *Appeal to the Public*.<sup>37</sup> This pronouncement represented a brief summary of the Democracy's stand with regard to the major issues; something in the nature of a condensed, eleventh-hour platform. The document also included a pointed discussion of some factors in the campaign, as, for example, a condemnation of Roosevelt's active role. Obviously, Bryan, believing in the justice and correctness of his party's position, was making one additional effort to win a victory on election day.

Bryan fully intended to spend the evening of October 31 addressing four mass meetings in Chicago, Illinois, but the breakdown of his special train ruined the plan.<sup>38</sup> The mechanical collapse of the train, occurring as it did so late in the strenuous campaign, tempts one to conclude that, though the burning pace was not too much for Bryan, it was for the engine. When the candidate finally arrived in Chicago at 12:30 A.M., November 1, the audiences, which had been held until midnight, had already been dismissed.

November 2, the day before the election, was devoted to stumping Kansas. Speeches were made at Leavenworth, Everest, Hiawatha, Sabetha, Seneca, and Axtell to audiences that "were perhaps greater than ever before during his campaigns." At Kansas City Bryan discussed the labor issues and denounced the Republican Party for its alleged trust leanings. In all of his addresses in Kansas the candidate of the Democracy attempted to exploit the efforts of President Roosevelt to deny the support of Rockefeller and the trusts.<sup>39</sup>

During the evening of November 2, a big partisan demonstration in Lincoln, Nebraska, welcomed Bryan home upon the completion of his long, exhausting campaign. For one-half hour the candidate addressed a crowd of six thousand at an open-air meeting before the Lincoln Hotel. Upon

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 1, 1908, 6:2.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 2, 1908, 2:1.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, Nov. 3, 1908, 2:2.



arriving in the capital of Nebraska, Bryan issued to the press his last statement of the campaign in which he said, "Our fight is won, and we await the verdict with confidence." Bryan also maintained that Taft was being supported by officeholders, trust magnates, most of the leading newspapers, and an enormous, tainted campaign fund. The Democracy's aspirant claimed, by way of contrast, that he had the backing of the "awakened conscience of the country and the sentiment in favor of popular government," laboring men, "depositors whose savings are jeopardized," and consumers who have been exploited by the "beneficiaries of high tariff." Concluding, Bryan said, "Surely the hour has come for a return of the government to the hands of the people. Let the people rule."<sup>40</sup>

The preceding discussion clearly establishes the fact that Bryan's stumping activities were greeted by large and enthusiastic crowds. A comprehensive study of the presidential election of 1908 indicates, however, that Republican candidate Taft was also received by large throngs at his campaign rallies. For example, on August 21 Taft addressed four thousand responsive Virginians at Hot Springs. During the last week of September and the early days of October the Ohioan electioneered in the Northern Great Plains and North Central areas where the crowds were everywhere ample and enthusiastic. Late in October the G.O.P. standard bearer greeted a giant rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City where thirteen thousand voices welcomed the candidate with a roar that could be heard for blocks. The last five days of the campaign saw Taft addressing large gatherings in such New York cities as Syracuse, Buffalo, and Rochester in addition to a mammoth meeting in Cleveland, Ohio.<sup>41</sup>

An analysis of Bryan's 1908 stumping activities reveals that he devoted approximately sixty days to what could be considered active campaigning and that almost all of his efforts took place in the Middle Atlantic, North Cen-

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Edgar A. Hornig, "The Presidential Election of 1908" (Doctoral dissertation, Stanford University, 1954), pp. 203-210.

tral, and Northern Great Plains areas. In the section consisting of New York, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Delaware, Pennsylvania, and Maryland the Democratic candidate spent an approximate total of sixteen days, of which about ten were given to New York and two to New Jersey. Thus one again notes the serious attempt made by Bryan to carry the Empire State with its large electoral vote. The North Central region, consisting of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, and Michigan, was the scene of approximately thirty days of speech making of which Illinois got about eleven, Indiana six and a half, and Ohio three and a half. In the adjacent area of Nebraska, Kansas, Colorado, North and South Dakota, Bryan spent in the neighborhood of twelve days, of which about five and a half were devoted to Nebraska and three to Kansas. Bryan also spent a total of about two full days in the border state of West Virginia. Obviously, the candidate allotted almost twice as many campaign days to the North Central area as to any other section. Significantly, he ignored New England, the Deep South, the West Coast, and the Rocky Mountain area, except Colorado. New England and the West Coast were predominantly Republican; the Deep South was safely Democratic; and the Rocky Mountain section had a relatively small electoral vote.

Bryan could be sure of the 120 electoral votes of the Deep South, consisting of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. In addition, he could logically consider as very probable the 13 votes of Kentucky plus the 7 of the then new state of Oklahoma for a total of 140. Hence he needed another 102 electoral votes to capture the 242 necessary for a majority in the Electoral College, which consisted of 483 votes in 1908. A study of Bryan's campaign tours makes it obvious that he hoped to win almost all of the necessary 102 electoral votes in the Middle Atlantic, North Central, and Northern Great Plains regions, especially the North Central area. A combination of New York (39 electoral votes), Illinois (27), Indiana (15), Missouri (18), and Nebraska (8), all states upon

which Bryan concentrated, represented one possibility which would have yielded 107 electoral votes and victory, when added to the "sure" 140 votes of the South. When the votes were tallied, however, Bryan could claim only Nebraska of these five vital states.

Certainly an analysis of Bryan's 1908 quest for votes leaves no doubt that he waged a strenuous, energy-demanding campaign. One political commentator referred to the efforts of Taft and Bryan as the "greatest athletic contest in the annals of electioneering."<sup>42</sup> The editors of *The Spectator* of London thought, not without justification, that the physical demands which the campaign imposed upon both candidates detracted from the quality of their remarks.<sup>43</sup> It should, of course, be remembered that in Bryan's case traveling and making speeches had by 1908 become almost characteristic of his way of living. One writer estimated in 1908 that since 1896, exclusive of his third presidential campaign, Bryan had traveled 500,000 miles, made 10,000 speeches, used 50,000,000 words, not all different, eaten 1,700 meals at railroad lunch counters, and slept 1,789 nights in sleeping cars.<sup>44</sup>

The campaign of 1908 provided, of course, another extraordinary opportunity for Bryan to exercise his renowned oratorical skills. The editors of the pro-Taft *Outlook* magazine concluded in late October that the Nebraskan had "retained his power to sway audiences."<sup>45</sup> Upon completion of the campaign, a political columnist for *The American Review of Reviews* expressed the opinion that Bryan had exhibited "even more than his old-time skill and attractiveness as a debater."<sup>46</sup> When Taft's platform effectiveness was compared to that of Bryan, as, for example, in the case of the acceptance speeches of the two candidates, the Nebraskan always received the higher rating.<sup>47</sup> Hence, one might

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<sup>42</sup> *The Living Age*, Nov. 28, 1908, p. 566.

<sup>43</sup> *The Spectator* (London), Oct. 31, 1908, p. 658.

<sup>44</sup> G. Fitch, "Traveling for the Presidency," *Collier's*, XLII (1908), 13.

<sup>45</sup> *The Outlook*, Oct. 24, 1908, p. 359.

<sup>46</sup> Anonymous, "Bryan's Splendid Fight," *The American Review of Reviews*, XXXVIII (1908), 517.

<sup>47</sup> See also *The Living Age*, Nov. 28, 1908, p. 566.

logically conclude that at least the campaign factor of oratory worked to Bryan's advantage in 1908.

The absence of a vote-catching issue represented a factor which limited the effectiveness of Bryan's third campaign. The daily newspaper accounts of Bryan's speaking tours of 1908 reveal that he usually discussed several issues in a single address, and that if he emphasized a certain theme one day he was apt to dwell upon a different one the following day. He talked about the tariff, the trusts, labor issues, Roosevelt's active role in the campaign, the Roosevelt policies, Taft, the popular election of Senators, the income tax, the guaranty of bank deposits, and many others. Correspondent C. W. Thompson, who covered the campaign of 1908 for *The New York World* and was with Bryan much of the time, said that the Democracy's candidate "brought out issue after issue, trying to find a good paramour. They were all duds."<sup>48</sup>

In summarizing Bryan's stumping endeavors, one observes that the Nebraskan put forth a highly energetic effort, which was aimed especially at the North Central, Middle Atlantic, and Northern Great Plains areas. Because of the existing political conditions in the various sections of the nation in 1908, his decision to concentrate on these three areas was probably wise. Significantly, wherever Bryan appeared he was received by large, enthusiastic audiences, even in such eastern cities as Newark, Wilmington, Jersey City, Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Syracuse, and Rochester. His oratorical powers again proved highly effective. The lack of an outstanding issue was one of many factors working against Bryan.

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<sup>48</sup> C. W. Thompson, *Presidents I've Known and Two Near Presidents* (Indianapolis, Indiana, 1929), p. 52. See also *Current Literature*, XLV (1908), 362; *The Outlook*, Oct. 31, 1908, p. 457.