



*Nebraska History* posts materials online for your personal use. Please remember that the contents of *Nebraska History* are copyrighted by the Nebraska State Historical Society (except for materials credited to other institutions). The NSHS retains its copyrights even to materials it posts on the web.

For permission to re-use materials or for photo ordering information, please see:

<http://www.nebraskahistory.org/magazine/permission.htm>

Nebraska State Historical Society members receive four issues of *Nebraska History* and four issues of *Nebraska History News* annually. For membership information, see:

<http://nebraskahistory.org/admin/members/index.htm>

## Article Title: The Patronage Battle Between Bryan and Hitchcock

Full Citation: Paolo E Coletta, "The Patronage Battle Between Bryan and Hitchcock," *Nebraska History* 49 (1968): 121-138

URL of article: <http://www.nebraskahistory.org/publish/publicat/history/full-text/NH1968BryanHitchcock.pdf>

Date: 8/14/2013

Article Summary: Gilbert M Hitchcock of the *Omaha World Herald* and William Jennings Bryan were close friends from 1894 to 1896, however, by 1899, this friendship began to wither because of Bryan's opposition to Hitchcock's desire to become a United States senator and their disagreements on political appointments.

### Cataloging Information:

Names: Monroe Leland Hayward, William Jennings Bryan, Gilbert M Hitchcock, William A Poynter, William V Allen, William H Thompson, Alton J Parker, Richard L Metcalfe, Arthur Mullen, Judson Harmon, Woodrow Wilson, C M Gruenther, Charles Bryan, Thomas S Allen, J Sterling Morton, Champ Clark, James Reed, James O'Gorman, Albert Burleson, F W "Doc" Brown, William G McAdoo, Franklin K Lane, Thomas S Allen, Merton L Corey, Addison C Tibbits, Tom Allen, George W Norris, Edward M House, Thomas W Gregory

Photographs / Images: Woodrow Wilson's cabinet, including William Jennings Bryan; US Senator Gilbert M Hitchcock, from a portrait by J Laurie Wallace

## THE PATRONAGE BATTLE BETWEEN BRYAN AND HITCHCOCK

By PAOLO E. COLETTA

SOON after William Jennings Bryan's arrival in Nebraska from Illinois in the fall of 1887, his attacks upon the purveyors of patronage and the pampered monopolies and his defense of the common man won him the support of Gilbert M. Hitchcock of the *Omaha World-Herald*, who had been favoring the Independents (Populists). Hitchcock became a close personal friend of the Bryan family, predicted a remarkable career for Bryan and sincerely congratulated him when he became the second Democratic congressman chosen in the rock-ribbed Republican state. From 1894 to 1896, while Bryan was an editor of the *World-Herald*, his friendship with Hitchcock flourished, and Hitchcock gave him unstinted support in the campaign of 1896 even though he opposed free silver. By 1899, however, a decade of friendship began to wither because of Bryan's opposition to Hitchcock's desire to become a United States senator.

When Monroe Leland Hayward, Nebraska's junior senator, died on December 5, 1899, the appointment of his successor

*Dr. Coletta, a frequent contributor to Nebraska History, is a professor in the Department of English, History and Government at the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland.*

fell to the Populist governor, William A. Poynter, who asked Bryan's advice. Bryan said that "good faith" required the appointment of ex-Senator William V. Allen, Populist, and that the two other leading aspirants, Hitchcock and William H. Thompson, both Democrats, would be rewarded "if we win the presidential contest." Hitchcock, who had been defeated as a Democratic-Populist fusionist candidate for Congress in 1898, became incensed and wired Bryan that "If you insist on sacrificing me we part company forever." He felt that Bryan's saying that "good faith demands the appointment of Allen" branded him as unfaithful and nullified his influence for the future, and the "sting of ingratitude" letter he published upon the appointment of Allen marked a break in his friendship with Bryan which did not heal. Soon he was leading one Nebraska Democratic faction and Bryan another.

A situation similar to that of 1899 developed in 1900 when both Bryan and Allen strenuously fended off Republican redemption of the state. Republicans circulated the rumor that since Bryan's chances of winning the Presidency were poor he would hedge by saving Nebraska in order to get himself elected to the Senate. The rumor jarred Hitchcock, who demanded that Bryan declare publicly that he would not accept the senatorship "under any circumstances." Bryan obliged by stating that he would not even if defeated for the Presidency accept a senatorship "under any circumstances." Thereupon Hitchcock promised Bryan full support for the rest of the campaign.

Hitchcock was elected to Congress in 1902 and, to bolster his chances for reelection, cooperated with Bryan in 1904. At that time, with Alton J. Parker as the Democratic Presidential candidate, Bryan concentrated upon the state rather than the national campaign. As in the past, he advocated Democratic-Populist fusion; but the Populists rejected Parker, with the result that each party named its own Presidential electors. Meanwhile, Hitchcock sought to obtain a legislature that would send Bryan to the United States Senate and threw his *World-Herald* behind fusion and Bryan's choices for state

office. He lost his own bid for reelection but was elected for two terms beginning in 1907.<sup>1</sup>

In 1909 Bryan's raising of the issues of direct legislation and of prohibition further divided his following, which he considered "progressive," from that of Hitchcock, which he considered to be "reactionary," with the added great distinction that Bryan was dry and Hitchcock wet. Moreover, Hitchcock was displeased when Bryan supported a dry, Richard L. Metcalfe, associate editor of the *Commoner*, against him for senator. Bryan demanded county option, which Hitchcock felt was a first step toward state prohibition. Although Bryan was still a powerful political figure, Hitchcock issued him a direct challenge in a bid for the Senate. Bryan drove happily forward on his new moral crusade, shrugging off those who told him he was making a major political mistake. To those who pleaded with him not to jeopardize his position as a national leader, he retorted that his mind was made up, for, in addition to the morality involved, he yearned to defeat the liquor interests which had opposed him throughout twenty years of political life, even though he had as yet taken no step against them. It made no difference to him if his leadership in the temperance movement made him forever politically ineligible for high office. He was not even bothered by the fact that two thirds of Nebraska's Democrats were wet and only one third dry.<sup>2</sup>

As Arthur Mullen had predicted, Bryan's attempt to make Nebraska as dry as Death Valley caused hell to break loose at the Democratic State Convention held at Grand Island late in July, 1910. Bryan fought strenuously for county option

---

1. The foregoing is condensed from the author's *William Jennings Bryan. I. Political Evangelist, 1860-1908* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), pp. 45, 48, 66, 88, 248, 276, 277, 348, 351, and "A Tempest in a Teapot?—Governor Poynter's Appointment of William V. Allen to the United States Senate in 1899," *Nebraska History*, 38 (June, 1957), 155-163.

2. *Nebraska State Journal* (Lincoln), April 29, 1910; *Omaha World-Herald*, July 17, 26, 27, 1910; *The Commoner* (Lincoln), February 18, July 15, August 5, 12, 1910; William Jennings Bryan and Mary Baird Bryan, *The Memoirs of William Jennings Bryan* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1925), p. 290; Arthur Mullen, *Western Democrat* (New York: Wilfred Funk, Inc., 1940), pp. 142-145; Addison E. Sheldon, *Nebraska: The Land and the People* (3 vols.; Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1931), I, 842-845.

and direct legislation, but Hitchcock's wet forces won their point in having the platform deal with national rather than state issues. These same forces effectively muzzled him by skillful parliamentary tactics, then delivered an overwhelming defeat to his attempt to make Democrats drink water.<sup>3</sup> By fighting for county option, Bryan opposed the leading gubernatorial aspirant of his party, the wet James Dahlman, and caused wounds that cut deep and left permanent scars in their friendship, which was never completely restored.<sup>4</sup> At any rate, the battle marked two turning points in the history of the Nebraska Democracy. For the first time, the party had faced a straight-out fight over the liquor question. Second, by suffering defeat in a Democratic convention for the first time since 1893, Bryan lost the leadership of the party in his own state.<sup>5</sup>

Hitchcock commended Bryan's courage and honesty and hoped the prohibition issue would be settled in November, for it would be embarrassing if it entered the national campaign of 1912, but he also spoke for many when he alluded to Bryan's "stirring up of a frantic strife over a peanut issue" and decried fighting like cats and dogs over whether the prohibition unit should be the city and township or the county when people elsewhere were studying and debating great national problems that affected the life and future of the Republic.<sup>6</sup> Then, in a week devoted to the Nebraska campaign, Bryan urged the defeat of his good friend Dahlman while supporting the rest of the ticket, including Hitchcock for senator. Largely because of his efforts, Dahlman was defeated while Hitchcock received the preference for senator by a resounding twenty-five thousand

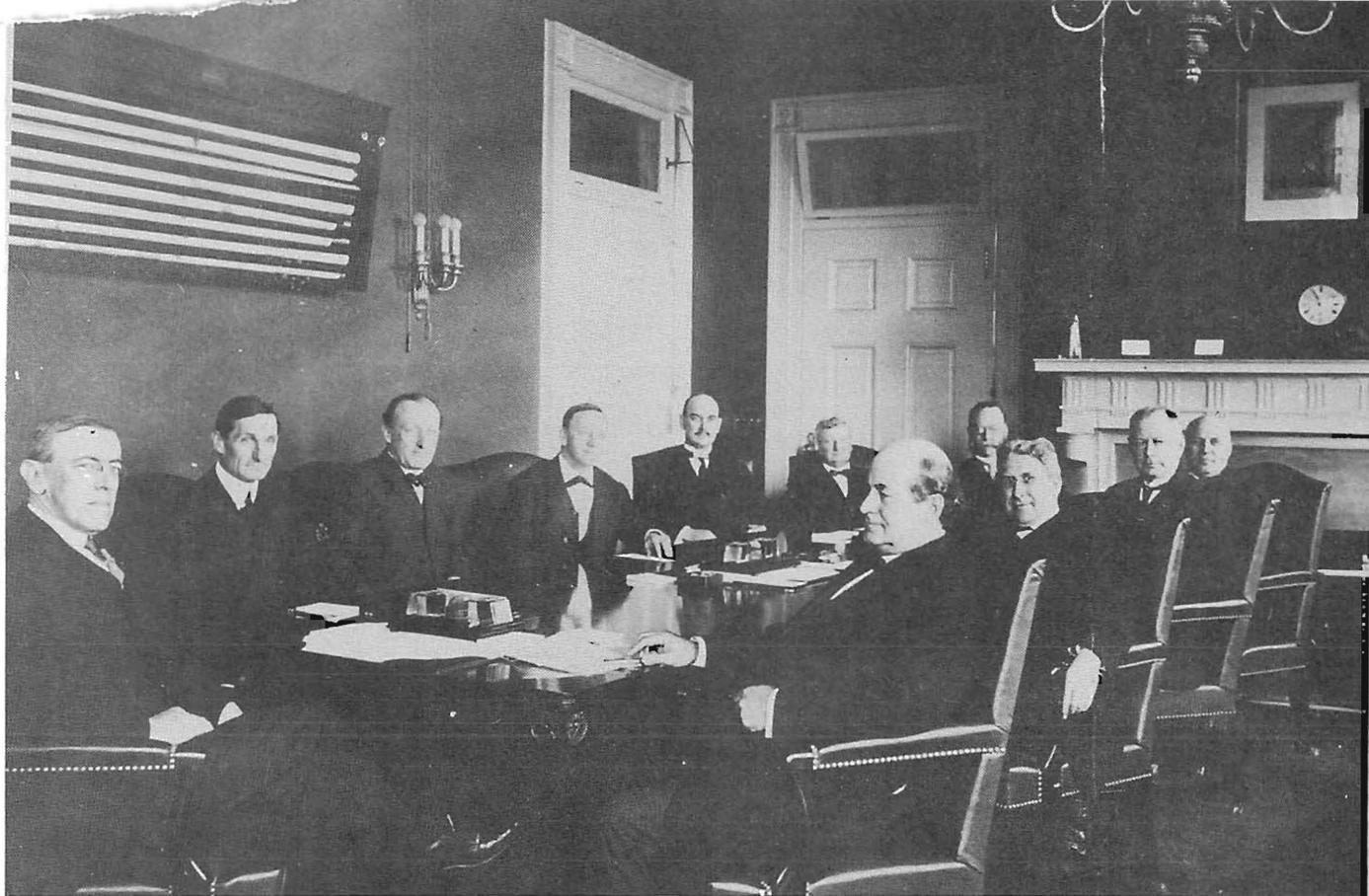
---

3. *Nebraska State Journal*, April 16, 17, 29, July 27, 29, 1910; *Omaha World Herald*, July 10-13, 27, 29, 1910; two undated letters, Bryan to C.W. Bryan and Charles Bryan to William Bryan, September 1, November 20, 27, 1910, Silas Bryan Papers; J. Sterling Morton and Albert Watkins, *An Illustrated History of Nebraska* (3 vols.; Lincoln: J. North & Co., 1910-1920), III, 280-281. The author is indebted to the late Silas Bryan, son of Charles Bryan, for use of the unpublished correspondence between his father and uncle.

4. *Omaha World-Herald*, July 25, September 5, 1910; Fred Carey, *Mayor Jim: The Life of James C. Dahlman* (Omaha: Omaha Printing Co., 1930), pp. 119-120.

5. Mullen, *Western Democrat*, p. 144; Sheldon, *Nebraska*, I, 847.

6. *Omaha World-Herald*, September 21, October 22, 1910.



The cabinet of President Woodrow Wilson; Wilson is at the left front, Bryan at the right front.



U.S. Senator Gilbert M. Hitchcock, from a portrait by J. Laurie Wallace.

votes, tantamount to his election by the Legislature. Bryan congratulated the man he had called "a tool of the brewers" and promised him full support toward election, to the extent of asking progressive Republicans as well as Democrats to vote for him.<sup>7</sup> As if to repay him for his ingratitude to Dahlman, Hitchcock as senator promised more trouble for Bryan in the future than Dahlman as governor ever would have.<sup>8</sup>

Although a Judson Harmon man, Hitchcock had buried the hatchet after the Baltimore convention and supported Woodrow Wilson, but this modicum of consensus failed to hide the continued bitter opposition in Nebraska of the wet Hitchcock-Mullen-C. M. Gruenther group to the dry William and Charles Bryan-Thomas S. Allen-Metcalf group. When a congressman, Bryan had unsuccessfully competed with Secretary of Agriculture J. Sterling Morton, also of Nebraska, for patronage. Now his role and Hitchcock's were reversed, with Senator Hitchcock in open and active opposition to the Secretary of State for the leadership of the Nebraska Democracy and seeking to win Wilson's support against him on the Nebraska patronage.<sup>9</sup> In addition, according to Brother Charles Bryan, Hitchcock was privy to a plan to organize Nebraska for Champ Clark in 1916. His appointments would therefore go to men who had supported Clark in 1912 and would support him in 1916. "...the liquor interests and a certain religious element," he said, were going to push Clark, as were Senator Hitchcock, Missouri's Senator James Reed, New York's Senator James O'Gorman and "all of the other special interests of the country." By supporting Bryan's enemies, Hitchcock sought to discredit the administration, and Bryan in particular, and conduct "a

---

7. Bryan to Charles Bryan, November 1, 2, 1910, Silas Bryan Papers; *Nebraska State Journal*, November 1, 1910; *Omaha World-Herald*, September 17, 21, 22, October 22, September 6, November 1, 3, 4, 1910; editorial, "Mr. Bryan as an Insurgent," *The Independent*, 69 (September 29, 1910), 717-718; Mullen, *Western Democrat*, p. 144; Sheldon, *Nebraska*, I, 848-850.

8. For Hitchcock's opposition to Bryan on the currency reform bill that established the Federal Reserve System, see the author's "William Jennings Bryan and Currency and Banking Reform," *Nebraska History*, 45 (March, 1964), 54-55.

9. The Diary of Edward M. House, House Papers, Yale University Library (entry of January 21, 1914).

contest in this state until one or the other faction was exterminated." The fight was thus one for life for Wilson's progressive reforms and a direct challenge to Bryan's continued power in the State of Nebraska by what Charles called the "corporation, rough-necked element under the leadership of the combined liquor interests and other special interests" of the state.<sup>10</sup> Bryan had two excellent reasons for opposing Hitchcock, but Charles soon furnished him with a third. Barring an "unexpected hitch," he would "probably" make the race for governor. Therefore, he wrote to Bryan,

I hope you can find time to answer my recent political letters on state politics and patronage....If the patronage can be held up, including the post-offices, until after the primary, it will be a great political stroke, as we would have the help of all the candidates for all offices, as long as the appointments remained in doubt....It will be all right to put Brown's appointment through if you are sure that Hitchcock will not hold up the confirmation....<sup>11</sup>

On March 18, 1913, in keeping with Charles's plan, Bryan wrote a personal letter to the Postmaster General, Albert Burleson, endorsing ex-Mayor F.W. "Doc" Brown for postmaster of Lincoln and requesting that he recommend the appointment to Wilson.<sup>12</sup>

Bryan originally had agreed with Hitchcock's plan that Hitchcock, Nebraska's three Democratic congressmen, the Democratic national committeeman, and the state chairman would handle the state's patronage, and that the three Republican congressmen would consult with their three Democratic brethren on post office appointments. The only suggestion he had at the time was that President Wilson should be added to the committee. But custom gave the post office patronage to the congressman if he were of the President's party, except for the postmaster of the senator's home town, whom the senator could name. The rest of the patronage would be dispensed by the party's state organization.<sup>13</sup> While Brother Charles put the pressure on

---

10. Charles Bryan to W.J. Bryan, March 5, September 5, 1914, Silas Bryan Papers.

11. Charles Bryan to W.J. Bryan, September 5, 1914, *ibid.*

12. Bryan to Burleson, March 18, 1914, *ibid.*

13. Daniel C. Roper, in collaboration with Frank H. Lovette, *Fifty Years of Public Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1941), p. 133.

William G. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury,<sup>14</sup> Bryan asked Secretary of the Interior Franklin K. Lane to name two Bryan supporters as Register and Receiver, respectively, of the land office at Lincoln, Nebraska. Lane explained senatorial custom to him and said that he must abide by it. He favored giving the posts to Bryan but wished to avoid a fight with Hitchcock. Bryan retorted that the adoption of such a policy would lead to the filling of offices "by followers of Mr. Harmon—reactionaries." When he persisted in demanding the places, Lane said that he would take the matter up with Wilson. "Evidently there is a great personal bitterness between Mr. Bryan and Senator Hitchcock, and I have very little hope of being able to reconcile them on matters of patronage," he wrote to Wilson. If Wilson would ask Bryan and Hitchcock to divide the offices, Lane continued, a fight could be avoided. Wilson promised that he would try to get Bryan and Hitchcock to agree.<sup>15</sup>

Hitchcock had asked Bryan to remove his brother-in-law, Thomas S. Allen, as Democratic State Chairman. Bryan had complied.<sup>16</sup> When Hitchcock requested that Wilson appoint C.M. Gruenther as Collector of Internal Revenue of Nebraska and enclosed a copy of the formal request sent to McAdoo, Wilson replied that he had raised "a very perplexing and to me distressing question" which they had already discussed, with the situation further aggravated because Hitchcock wanted Merton L. Corey appointed as Solicitor of the Treasury Department. But Bryan opposed him because he was "tinged with the reactionary element" and countered with the name of Judge Addison C. Tibbits, a "progressive."<sup>17</sup> Since talking with Hitchcock, Wilson had also talked with Bryan, who did not think that Hitchcock's stature in the state entitled him to any patronage at all but that it would help the state ticket if appointments were

---

14. Charles Bryan to McAdoo, March 13, April 25, 1913, McAdoo Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

15. Lane to Wilson, two letters of May 23, 1913, Wilson to Lane, May 24, 1913, Woodrow Wilson Papers, State Department Section, National Archives.

16. Charles Bryan to W. J. Bryan, September 5, 1914, Silas Bryan Papers.

17. Bryan to McAdoo, July 31, 1913, McAdoo Papers; Bryan to Charles Bryan, day letter, July 28, 1914, Silas Bryan Papers.

made by agreement. Wilson let Hitchcock know that he wished to see him again and took Bryan's proposal to divide the patronage under consideration.<sup>18</sup>

Years before, Bryan had criticized United States Supreme Court Justices Harlan and McKenna for obtaining appointments for relatives. Now he wished to name his brother-in-law, Tom Allen, as a federal attorney and Brother Charles as a member of the prospective Federal Trade Commission, but Wilson, as Bryan wrote to Charles, "was very much opposed to my naming a relative."<sup>19</sup> Bryan thereupon suggested that Charles find good men for these positions who would resign after a year; he would then be able to get Allen and Charles appointed.<sup>20</sup> When this plan failed, he tried, again unsuccessfully, to have McAdoo recommend Charles's appointment as Custodian of the Treasury Department.<sup>21</sup>

As Wilson played the part of buffer between Bryan and Hitchcock, many cabinet members, the Nebraska congressional delegation, the Democratic state organization, and even the Republican Senator from Nebraska, George W. Norris, became involved.<sup>22</sup> When Wilson declined to approve Bryan's plan to divide the patronage, Bryan felt free to withhold approval of Hitchcock's men. Since Wilson had objected to the naming of Tom Allen, Bryan concluded that "There is no reason for considering Hitchcock's wishes, and I will recommend our men without consulting him." Moreover, he told Brother Charles that "The settlement I propose is that I shall have a Senator's rights—dividing with Hitchcock equally...."<sup>23</sup> He became more adamant than ever in his

---

18. Hitchcock to Wilson, February 28, 1914, Wilson to Hitchcock, March 7, 1914, Woodrow Wilson Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress. Hereinafter these papers will be followed by the designation "LC."

19. Bryan to Charles Bryan, n.d., Silas Bryan Papers.

20. Bryan to Charles Bryan, telegram, June 18, 1913, and letter of no date, *ibid.*

21. Bryan to Charles Bryan, telegram, August 18, 1914, *ibid.*

22. See among others, Wilson to Burleson, February 24, 1914; Lane to Wilson, April 17, July 16, 1914; Wilson to Norris, July 22, 1914; Norris to Wilson, July 24, 1914; McAdoo to Wilson, July 21, 1914; Bryan to Wilson, August 21, 1914, Wilson Papers, LC; Bryan to Charles Bryan, June 18, 30, 1913, and April 4, 1914, Silas Bryan Papers.

23. Bryan to Charles Bryan, June 14, 1914, and undated letters of later dates, Silas Bryan Papers.

position when Hitchcock opposed several nominees to the Federal Reserve Board and, according to Brother Charles, "posed" as a progressive while seeking "to make it appear in the state that [he] is more powerful than the President and you combined...." and "that if it was not for him, Wilson would turn the country over to the special interests."<sup>24</sup>

In June, 1914, Bryan and Hitchcock named three men each for the Nebraska positions but could agree only on one, and Lane asked Wilson if he had yet found "any solution to this riddle."<sup>25</sup> In late July, Brother Charles reported to Bryan that he and Tom Allen had led the Democratic state convention to a "very satisfactory" outcome after "quite a fight." They had won endorsement of the work of the President, Secretary of State and the three Democratic congressmen. Hitchcock had been praised as the first Democratic senator elected from Nebraska, and his ability and honesty of purpose had been noted, but neither his work nor his record had been endorsed.<sup>26</sup> Bryan told Wilson that Charles and Allen had led the fight and that he was happy that Hitchcock had not been endorsed because "that would have been inconsistent and a reflection upon the President." He then told Charles that "I think we will be able to get some action on patronage soon."<sup>27</sup>

On August 20, 1914, Hitchcock told Wilson that he had submitted a plan to Bryan, who had taken it under consideration.<sup>28</sup> On the twenty-first Bryan submitted a letter to Wilson for Hitchcock. To Wilson, Bryan insisted that Hitchcock would appoint reactionaries to office, demanded what he considered to be his rightful share of the state's patronage, denied that Hitchcock had the right to claim appointments to positions outside Nebraska or in the State Department, suggested that appointments made by agreement would help the Democratic ticket in Nebraska, and

---

24. Charles Bryan to Bryan, July 16, 21, 1914, *ibid.*

25. Lane to Wilson, June 13, 1914, Wilson Papers, LC.

26. Charles Bryan to Bryan, day letter, July 29, 1914, Silas Bryan Papers.

27. Bryan to Charles Bryan, August 2, 1914, *ibid.*

28. Hitchcock to Wilson, August 20, 1914, Wilson Papers, LC.

offered to share the state appointments, which was more than Hitchcock deserved. To Hitchcock he said that

The names to be suggested by us for positions in Nebraska will be the names of Progressives only, for no other kind of a Democrat is entitled to serve under this administration in Nebraska, and each of us to have the right to veto a recommendation made by the other....In case either one of us vetoes a recommendation made by the other, the reasons shall be given to the press in Nebraska, so that the one making the veto will be responsible to the Democracy of the State for his action. 29

Wilson replied that Bryan's letter to Hitchcock was "unwise" and that his plan to split the patronage of Nebraska was "a blind alley." Hitchcock had already rejected the idea, and splitting would make it appear that they had made an "arrangement" to control it. Rather than forward the letter to Hitchcock, he asked Bryan to reach a full understanding with him in a face to face talk.<sup>30</sup> Hitchcock proved to be as obdurate as Bryan even when Bryan said that he would now settle for only one of the seven Nebraska positions. In mid-October, 1914, he and Hitchcock finally met face to face. Bryan read Hitchcock's two written proposals of adjustment but would neither accept nor reject them and finally said, as Hitchcock wrote to Wilson, that he would "let the whole matter go over until after the approaching elections."<sup>31</sup>

In early December, Brother Charles provided William Jennings with a long and comprehensive summary of the situation:

DEAR BROTHER:

...Sprague is the secretary of the state committee who was put in by Mullen and the executive committee to over-ride [William H.] Thompson. The object in withdrawing Greunther is to put in the reactionary secretary of the state committee so that it will give Hitchcock the official machinery of the state committee, to make his campaign for Senator. This

29. Bryan to Wilson, enclosing letter to Hitchcock, August 21, 1914, *ibid.*

30. Wilson to Bryan, August 22, 1914, *ibid.*

31. Hitchcock to Wilson, October 17, 1914, Wilson to Hitchcock, October 21, 1914, *ibid.*

whole matter here is hinging on and is being promoted by Hitchcock and reactionary followers to get Hitchcock officially reinstated as in good standing with Wilson and at the same time give him the official organization in this state to make his race for Senator. The campaign prior to and at [the state convention] at Columbus was to get Hitchcock officially endorsed by the Democrats of this state to help his senatorial campaign, and it is now the move to have Wilson recognize him as a Democratic senator in good standing and entitled to make the recommendations for Nebraska patronage, so that we would have no ground to oppose his re-nomination or as far as his political standing was concerned as a Democrat. The way the matter stands now, we can oppose him, showing that he was out of harmony with the administration, and prove it by the quotation from Wilson in his message to the Senate on the currency bill, in which he said that Hitchcock usually worked with the Republicans. The permitting of Hitchcock to put in his reactionary crowd into the federal offices would not promote harmony in the party or unite the party for a campaign two years from now. It would only strengthen the Hitchcock Machine and would remove the proof of our charge that he is in league with Wall Street, and other special interests, as evidenced by his report from the finance committee on the currency bill and Wilson's statement classing him with the opposition to the administration.

In Met[calfe]'s last issue of Richmond's paper which he has taken over, he offers considerable gratuitous advice to you and repeatedly emphasized the point that he has helped make both you and Hitchcock; that you are both under great obligations to the Democrats of this state; that the Democrats are humiliated because the patronage question is not settled; that the differences between you and Hitchcock are personal rather than for principle; and that you ought to get together and make sacrifices of your personal feelings in the interest of the party . . . . You will note that there is no distinction made between a man

standing for principle and one who has none. He makes no distinction between what you stand for and what Hitchcock stands for, nor intimates that there is any issue among Democrats in Nebraska.

Met's efforts are right in harmony with the patronage movement that was being pushed by Fleharty and Fanning, which is part of the Mullen-Byrnes executive committee, to reinstate Hitchcock and prove to everyone in the state that Hitchcock is advocating the same things that you and your friends are in the state, and that such prominent leaders as yourself and Hitchcock should work together and give the reactionary crowd control of the organization, offices, and the official recognition from Washington, regardless of the fact that it would put all of the progressives out of the party and get the party of this state and the nation back to where it was 20 years ago, although in those days it was the railroads that were dominating our party councils and making the campaign, with the liquor element and other smaller organizations co-operating quietly. But today it is the liquor dealers' organization, with its immense organization, that is leading the fight and attempting to use our party to further their special interest and the railroads and the smaller corporations are co-operating quietly under the liquor dealers leadership. The liquor dealers and Hitchcock are playing for big stakes in this patronage matter, and I sincerely hope that if the President will not stand by you and at least help you to try to put through the appointment of men who will recognize you as having been responsible for their appointments and will stand by progressives in their coming struggle in this state with Hitchcock that the President will not consent to permit Hitchcock to get the credit for putting through his program, which recognizes him as official leader of the party and by the president, which would take away our advantage against Hitchcock in the coming struggle....

Do you feel that it would be advisable for you at this

time to send me a statement for publication, or send an editorial commenting on the patronage question and showing that the matter was not personal between you and Hitchcock; that it was a question of whether the progressive or reactionary forces should be recognized as the Democratic party in Nebraska; or anything along this line that you cared to say, so that it would stop fellows like Met and others who are constantly boosting Hitchcock and assuming that there is no principle at stake but merely a matter of likes and dislikes or personal animosity between you and Hitchcock, rather than a matter of whether Wall Street and the liquor interests shall control and whether the party will represent the people who want good government and clean politics in the interest of everyone.<sup>32</sup>

Bryan himself now pushed matters in Washington. Wilson had urged his alter ego, Colonel Edward M. House, to go forward with a plan to link the nations of the Western Hemisphere together for their peace and security. On December 20, 1914, House stopped at Bryan's residence to

---

32. Charles Bryan to Bryan, December 5, 1914, Silas Bryan Papers. Illuminating also is a later letter by Charles to Bryan:

*Replying to your inquiry about Harry Fleharty, of Omaha...Fleharty is one of the men who denounced you in a public speech at Grand Island four years ago. The speakers at that time were Oldham, Mike Harrington, and Fleharty, and Fleharty is the ablest speaker of them all. He is the best campaigner that the brewery forces have, and he is the one who traveled over Nebraska last spring and selected the Democratic candidates for state senator for the brewery forces, the same position that John Byrnes filled two years before at a salary of \$10,000 for ten months work.... If any of that element are to receive appointment at our hands, it should be Dahlman. Dahlman's word is good, and if he is appointed on our recommendation, it seems to me as though some of the clean, moral, progressive Democrats of the state who are not on the market should be recognized for the other places if the progressive forces are to be permitted to make any recommendations. As to Sprague, I will say there is nothing to him. He is merely a tool for Mullen, Byrnes and Nolan.... [February 10, 1915. Silas Bryan Papers.]*

The author can only conjecture on the Bryan-Metcalf break. Bryan took Metcalfe away from the *Omaha World-Herald* to work on the *Commoner* at double his former salary, and their relations apparently were satisfactory until Bryan won Metcalfe an appointment to the Isthmian Canal Commission. Upon his return to Nebraska, Metcalfe began to cooperate with the Hitchcock forces, perhaps, as Charles intimated, because Hitchcock put up the money which enabled him to edit a newspaper of his own.

tell him about his progress in order, as Wilson had indicated, that there "would be no hurt feelings" for House's treading into business that pertained to Bryan. As House told his diary:

Bryan seemed pleased with what had been done but drifted off into the question of patronage and the best way to "do up Senator Hitchcock" in Nebraska. He followed me all the way to the automobile bareheaded in the cold bleak wind to get in as much as he could upon that subject....

While House was reporting to Wilson and Wilson was asking House if he could leave soon for Europe to try to arrange for peace there, Bryan telephoned, according to House,

to discuss some international incident, and then immediately drifted off into the patronage question, as to the best means of "putting Hitchcock in a hole." It amused the President greatly and we both laughed heartily. When he had finished the President said "damn" with force, and said he must relieve himself of such unimportant and futile talks at a time when the great world tragedy was uppermost in his mind....<sup>33</sup>

Brother Charles had pointed out to Bryan that the veto plan he had offered to Hitchcock was "a surprise and a disappointment" and

would be disastrous to the progressives of the state. The Senator will find some grounds for objection to anyone who has had enough moral courage to stand up and fight the people's battles, and he and Mullen will not hesitate to manufacture objections and publish them. You could not follow their course in objecting to the men that Hitchcock wanted, and as a result the places would all be filled with milk and water men or with hypocrites.

Publication of objections by Bryan and Hitchcock would not help Nebraska's progressives nor help party harmony. Charles's political sagacity was revealed when he reminded Bryan that

When I made a recommendation at your request of three men for the three prominent places, namely, Dahlman, Allen, and Mark Murry, I had in mind the making of what could appear to be the best harmony program that the progressives of the state could consent to. Dahlman would represent the wet reactionary immoral forces of the state, although personally friendly to us. Tom [Allen] the dry progressive

---

33. House Diary, December 20, 1914.

moral reform forces of the state, and Mark Murry would be recognized as neutral....<sup>34</sup>

The nomination of Hitchcock's choices to the state administration would be an "insult," he wrote to Bryan on January 2, 1915,<sup>35</sup> and he also noted that the Bryan-Hitchcock feud had spread to the State Legislature, with the "reactionary" and "wet" combination—the "Hitchcock brewery crowd"—opposed by the "dry, progressive, Bryan people"—and a two-year battle promised for control of the state.<sup>36</sup>

On January 14, 1915, Bryan complained to Wilson that almost two years had gone by with Republicans instead of Democrats filling Nebraska's offices, and then capitulated. "I am so much interested in aiding you in carrying out the policies for which your administration stands, that I am not willing that any matter of patronage should jeopardize measures before Congress," he wrote. He was convinced that he and Hitchcock could not agree on the political merits of the candidates each suggested and,

not being willing to purchase from him concessions in favor of a few progressives by advocating the appointment of reactionaries recommended by him, I write to relieve you of any embarrassment which may have arisen from your desire to have my opinion in regard to applications...and to ask you to feel free to follow your own opinion, after consulting with *anyone* whose judgement you may desire to have. All I ask is that if, relying upon the opinion of someone else, you make an appointment, I may be permitted to inform the Democrats of Nebraska that my opinion was not asked and that I do not share in the responsibility for the particular appointment.<sup>37</sup>

Confessing that he was still "very much puzzled how to handle the matter," Wilson wrote to Lane that he would confer with Senator Hitchcock the following week.<sup>38</sup>

Having given up the fight, Bryan tried to mollify his

34. Charles Bryan to Bryan, September 5, 1914, Silas Bryan Papers.

35. Charles Bryan to Bryan, January 2, 1915, *ibid.*

36. Charles Bryan to Bryan, January 10, 1915, *ibid.*

37. Bryan to Wilson, January 14, 1914, Wilson Papers, LC. Somewhat bitterly, Bryan told Lane the same thing in their next cabinet meeting. Lane to Wilson, January 27, 1915, *ibid.*

38. Wilson to Lane, January 29, 1915, *ibid.*

Nebraska friends. He was so busy with departmental business that he had had to neglect "business matters," he told Ignatius J. Dunn, his good friend from Omaha who had nominated him in 1908. He regretted any delay he might have caused in the filling of the Nebraska offices, yet he would not accept the kind of men Hitchcock wanted. The division in the Senate was so close that the vote of a single senator could decide an issue adversely. Skirting Dunn's suggestion that he run against Hitchcock for the Senate in 1916, he offered to support Dunn against Hitchcock and concluded that

I am doing the best I can in these matters and I hope our Nebraska Democrats who have gladdened my heart all these years by putting the emphasis upon "principle" rather than "appointment" will bear with disappointment if we do not get things just as we want them in Nebraska.<sup>39</sup>

Meanwhile, Hitchcock and his Nebraska friends put the pressure on Lane, who resented what he wrote to Wilson was Hitchcock's "bitterly unfair and unjust attitude."<sup>40</sup> Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory put pressure on Hitchcock to get the Republicans out of Nebraska's offices and, with McAdoo's concurrence, caused the entire situation to flare up again by suggesting that he, McAdoo, Hitchcock and Bryan name one man each and that Hitchcock agree to them all.<sup>41</sup> Hitchcock stood squarely on senatorial courtesy and told Gregory that "I can not bring myself to assent to the plan you propose," pointedly noting that he would not be told who to name by cabinet officers and that he particularly resented the naming of anyone by Bryan, who had just resigned and was merely an ordinary citizen.<sup>42</sup> Gregory replied heatedly and refused to take the blame for

---

39. Dunn to Bryan, February 3, 1915, Bryan to Dunn, March 1, 1915, Dunn Papers, Nebraska State Historical Society.

40. Lane to Wilson, January 25, 1915, Wilson Papers, LC: *see also* W.H. Mitchell to Lane, March 14, 1915, and Hitchcock to Lane, March 14, 1915, *ibid.*

41. Gregory to Hitchcock, June 18, 1915, Gregory Papers, Division of Manuscripts, Library of Congress.

42. That progressive Democrats believed that Bryan retained power to influence appointments in Nebraska even after his resignation is revealed in Dunn to Bryan, June 7, September 23, 1915, and Mrs. W. J. Bryan to Dunn, December 4, 1915, Dunn Papers.

the situation, in which he saw Hitchcock opposed to Bryan's choices because they were Bryan's and Bryan opposed to Hitchcock's merely because they were his.<sup>43</sup> Hitchcock remained adamant. The adjustments suggested by Gregory and renewed by McAdoo "involve more sacrifice than my friends and I can make," he telegraphed, but then he wrote that he would return to Washington from Nebraska if such a trip would result in a satisfactory adjustment of patronage matters.<sup>44</sup> McAdoo, now Wilson's son-in-law and with the Presidential bee firmly fixed, had been charged in some newspapers as a leader of a cabinet conspiracy to force Bryan out of office; whereas in fact he wanted to stand by Bryan, of whom he was very fond,<sup>45</sup> and in this way to maintain party harmony. He was on vacation in Maine and asked Gregory to let Hitchcock know that he wished to name a Bryan man for one of the two Treasury posts in Nebraska. "For my part, I do not think that the fact that Mr. Bryan is no longer in the Cabinet should alter our attitude in the slightest degree," he told Gregory. "Mr. Bryan is one of the great leaders of the party. He has long occupied a distinguished place in its councils, and, even as a private citizen, his recommendations are entitled to consideration and weight." If Hitchcock would not accept the man recommended by Bryan, "I shall be obliged to make my own recommendations to the President and let Senator Hitchcock take the responsibility for their confirmation or rejection by the Senate."<sup>46</sup> He told Hitchcock the same thing, "in the friendliest spirit,"<sup>47</sup> but Hitchcock remained obdurate. It was not until May 16, 1916, with Bryan out of office since the previous June and the Administration more than three years old, that Hitchcock had his way and the Nebraska offices were filled.<sup>48</sup>

---

43. Gregory to Hitchcock, June 29, 30, 1915, Gregory Papers.

44. Hitchcock telegram and letter to Gregory, June 30, 1915, *ibid.*

45. William Gibbs McAdoo, *Crowded Years: The Reminiscences of William G. McAdoo* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1931), p. 337.

46. McAdoo to Gregory, June 30, 1915, Gregory Papers.

47. McAdoo to Hitchcock, July 1, 1915, McAdoo Papers.

48. Lane to Wilson, September 25, 1915, April 5, May 16, 1916, Hitchcock to Wilson, February 23, 1916, Wilson to Hitchcock, February 23, 28, 1916, Wilson Papers, LC.