

Alliance and Democracy

VIEWS EXPRESSED BY GOV. BEN TILLMAN OF SOUTH CAROLINA, WHO IS AN ALLIANCER.

In response to my request for an expression of his views on the third party movement, Gov. Tillman said: "This movement seems to have attracted a great deal of attention throughout the country, though so far as I know very notice has been in this State. It is true that some ambiguous utterances of Col. Talbert, our State Alliance lecturer, have been construed as declarations in favor of the third party scheme, but I don't believe anybody of influence here has come out squarely for it, or that Talbert himself is in favor of it."

NO THIRD PARTY NEEDED.

"So far as I am concerned," continued the Governor, "and I believe I speak for the great body of the farmers in the State I am a Democrat pure and simple. I believe in fighting for reforms inside the party lines but never outside of them, and I believe any attempt to organize a third party in the State or in the South would be an absolute failure."

"So long as the fear of negro domination hangs over us we white people here in South Carolina can never afford to split. That fear is always over us, like the sword of Damocles, to warn us to fight out our differences inside of party lines. To seek redress of grievances in a third party would be to wreck our whole political structure and bring upon us evils far worse than those we sought to escape."

NO FIDELITY WANTED.

"It seems to me," added Gov. Tillman, "that the independent movement in this State in the last campaign ought to show the futility of any movement outside the party ranks or of any appeal to the negro vote."

NEGRO RULE AND FEDERAL INTERFERENCE GREAT EVILS.

"Will South Carolina be represented at the coming third party convention in Cincinnati?" I asked.

"There may be some volunteer delegates from this State," answered the Governor, but if there are, they will go there as individuals, and they will represent nobody but themselves. They certainly will not represent either the Alliance or the Alliance sentiment in the State."

"I am convinced that the farmers of this State are unalterably opposed to any and all third party schemes. So long as they have negro rule and Federal interference staring them in the face, the instinct of self-preservation tells them to stick together and work out their salvation as Democrats and inside the ranks of the Democratic party."

"Yes, sir," repeated the Governor earnestly, "you may put me down as absolutely and unequivocally opposed to this Cincinnati third party scheme and all similar schemes. I am, and always have been a South Carolina, Edgefield, dyed-in-the-wool Democrat, and I expect to do my fighting as I have done it in the past, strictly in the party ranks."

WHAT THE FARMERS WILL DO.

"Instead of running off after this third party will-o'-the-wisp," said Governor Tillman, "what the farmers of South Carolina expect to do is to try to get a democratic candidate for the next presidential campaign who will represent the reforms they advocate and who will be pledged to their support. In other words, while they don't want Alliance candidates for president, they want the Democratic candidate to be a man who is in accord with the ideas of the Alliance on the great issues of the day, such as the free coinage of silver and the reform of the tariff."

THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRATIC VICTORY LAST YEAR.

"What," I asked the Governor, "do you think was the cause of the Democratic victory last November?" "There were it strikes me," he answered, "three factors that contributed to that tidal wave, the McKinley bill, the free coinage or financial issue and the force bill. And as they were the issues in the last campaign, so they will be in the next."

"Hitherto the New England and Eastern States, the creditor states, have controlled the financial policy of the government and have robbed, imposed on and squeezed the South and West beyond endurance. Furthermore, being the manufacturing

States they have controlled the government's tariff policy, and managed thereby to burn our candle at both ends. Against this oppression the people of the agricultural States, the West and the South, have revolted."

THE SOUTH IS PRACTICALLY UNITED.

"In the South we are practically united on the three issues of tariff reform, free silver and the retaining of State control of all election, and those will be issues in my view, in next presidential campaign."

THE FINANCIAL RELIEF NEEDED.

"But," continued he, "the free coinage of silver is only one phase of the financial question. We want not only more silver, but more greenback, and I favor the direct issue of greenback based on the government's credit. If the government can float three hundred and fifty millions of greenbacks, why not a thousand millions! Or if it is found impractical to issue this money on the country's credit alone a system of land bonds might be established by which the money could be issued to the people based on land as a security. It seems to me that the government, with its powers of taxation and its unlimited resources, could issue the money on its credit, but if not, then such a system as I suggested could be devised which would give us circulating medium as good as gold and relieve the asphyxiation that has been produced in the agricultural States by the disastrous financial policy of the past."

"To sum up the matter," said Gov. Tillman, "we want more money, we want the tariff reformed, and we are too afraid of the negro to run off into any third party."

"Which of those questions do you consider of the greatest importance?" I asked.

THE MONEY AND THE TARIFF.

His reply was prompt:

"The financial question, undoubtedly. It is of more pressing importance to us than the tariff. We can stand the tariff a while longer, but more money we must have at once. It seems to me however that we can't afford to neglect neither the financial or the tariff issues. They are both of 'overwhelming importance, and they will not down. One of all could we afford to relegate the free silver issue to the rear."

THE SUB-TREASURY BILL.

Speaking of the Sub-Treasury bill, Governor Tillman said:

"I am opposed to the measure I want 'something better,' and that 'something better' I believe to be what I have already suggested—the free coinage of silver combined with this issuance of greenbacks either on the government's own credit or on land. The Sub-Treasury bill violates the Alliance doctrine of 'Equal rights to all, special privileges to none.' I don't believe that two wrongs can make a right, and because farmers have been systematically and outrageously imposed on the past is no reason why they should demand class legislation of their own benefit now."

"My opinion is that the majority of the farmers of the State are not in favor of the Sub-Treasury bill, though in that opinion I differ with some of the Alliance leaders. The reason no opposition has been developed to it inside the Alliance in this State is that it has never been made a square issue. In any contest with an Alliancer advocating the Sub-Treasury and a non-Alliancer opposing it, the Sub-Treasury would be pretty sure to win, but as between two Alliancers, both loyal to the order, one opposing and the other supporting the Sub-Treasury, I believe the Anti-Sub-Treasury man would get as many votes as the other. In other words where Alliancers have the subject presented to them clearly and are allowed to vote without the interference of prejudice, I believe the majority of them would go against the measure."

WE CAN'T AFFORD TO SPLIT.

"However," continued the Governor, "I don't believe the Alliance can afford to split on the Sub-Treasury. They will hunt something better rather than attempt to force it down the throats of the very large section of the order opposed to it. They must agree to disagree as to details in order to achieve the great reforms at which they are aiming."

THE FUTURE OF THE ALLIANCE.

"What of the future of the Alliance?" I asked Gov. Tillman. "It is hard to say, but it seems to me the order has a great future. Even when its political reforms have been secured, there is its business organization to hold it together. Already the order has done vast good, not only in affording direct relief to the farmers, as in the jute bagging fight and through co-operative stores, etc.,

but by teaching them the secret of acting together, or co-operation. It has shown the farmers that they can do something when united, and that without unity they are helpless."

TO THE ALLIANCE.

"There is one danger the Alliance will have to guard against," said the Governor, "and that is the individuals who would use the Alliance vote for their selfish ends. The rank and file of the order will have to relegate to the rear those leaders who would attempt to enforce unanimity; to measure men by a 'yardstick,' and ostracize or expell all who refuse to do their bidding."—Atlanta Journal.

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