

# GOEBEL AND STONE

Were Not Free Silver Men Until They Began to Play For the Governorship.

SO SAYS JUDGE BECKNER.

[Reprinted by Request.]

Winchester, Ky., May 17.

To the Louisville Dispatch:

I have been away from home several weeks, and have paid but little attention to the canvass for the nominations for State offices. Since my return my attention has been called to the following extract from one of the speeches of the Hon. W. J. Stone, who is an aspirant for the Governorship. I understand that Senator Goebel has been making similar statements. At Russellville, on the 1st inst., Capt. Stone is reported to have said:

"Do you remember the convention in 1895 to nominate candidates for Governor and other State offices? It was assembled in Louisville. When the delegates from this county got there they found in that convention Gen. P. Wat Hardin. What did he do? He had Judge Beckner of Winchester, who then was and is now, a gold standard man, made chairman of that convention. Then Judge Beckner had the appointment of all committees. What did he do on resolutions? John S. Rhea, John D. Clardy, Ellis and Richardson and Urey Woodson wanted to bring Blackburn to the front. They took William Lindsay of the town of Frankfort, a gold standard man. Then what happened? He brought out a platform in that convention indorsing Mr. Cleveland."

I intend to vote, of course, for whoever is nominated by the Democratic convention in June, and am quite well acquainted with each of the candidates. They are all better than they seem to be, from what their opponents are saying about them. There are one or two errors, however, in the above extract from Capt. Stone's speech, which in the interest of justice and fair dealing I feel it to be my duty to correct. Gen. Hardin did not have me made temporary chairman of the State convention in 1895. I was requested to come to Frankfort the evening before the convention by Hon. L. C. Norman, one of the ablest and safest leaders that the Democratic party in Kentucky has had of late years. He asked me to become a candidate for the temporary chairmanship. I told him I was the personal friend of Gen. Hardin and would not do anything that could prejudice his interests. Maj. Norman said that there were other men besides Gen. Hardin interested in that convention, and that he could not object to me, as I had always been his friend, adding that if I refused to consent that somebody opposed to Hardin would be elected by the sound money men and thus give him a black eye.

At Louisville, the most thoughtful and discreet of Gen. Hardin's friends approved Maj. Norman's choice, and he had to submit, although to do him justice, he wanted a candidate who agreed with him on the money question. When I was asked whom I would appoint on the committees, I answered that under no state of the case would I dicker about the matter, and that it would be time enough for me to announce my selections when I had been given power to do so. I do not now remember to have made but one exception. Senator Blackburn was urged upon me as the choice of the extreme free silver men for a place on the Committee on Resolutions, and just before the vote was taken between Capt. Stone and myself, a very frank, manly gentleman from Western Kentucky, for whom I have always entertained feelings of warm regard, came to me and asked me directly whether or not I would give Capt. Blackburn the appointment. Treating him with the candor that I would have expected from him, and to prevent complaint of bad faith afterward, I told him I would not. I did not care at all about his being a free silver man, and certainly I had no feeling or personal hostility to the Senator. He had run before the meeting of his district delegates for a place on the same committee and been beaten by a sound money man. As I was opposed to the 16 to 1 propaganda, and was anxious to see the convention stick to the landmarks, I could not of course consent to be instrumental in placing a gentleman who was the leader of the opposing views where he would be so influential in thwarting a program which I regarded as of such vital moment to the party.

I selected the men whom I appointed on the Committee on Resolutions without consulting anybody. One of these was Judge William Lindsay, who had little more than a year before been elected to the United States Senate by the unanimous vote of the Democratic members of the Legislature of Kentucky, including Hon. William Goebel, then the State Senator from Kenton. The other was Hon. J. D. Clardy, who had the fall before been elected to Congress, who was then as sincerely in favor of free silver as Senator Blackburn himself, and whom I knew to be as honest a man and as true a Democrat as the State contained. Of course I selected Judge Lindsay because I thought he would be potent in securing the adoption of such a platform as I preferred. I appointed Dr. Clardy because I thought that in a convention composed of brethren differing about a question of policy, it would be fair to give both sides honest representation. I have never drawn a line with reference to the financial issue in supporting candidates for office within the party without conceding to every other Democrat the same right to his opinion that I have, and never believing him to be any less fitted for public place, because he differed with me. Neither have I ever denied my own views nor in any way tried to dodge my record. When I entered Congress in the fall of 1894, I found that the

great issue of the session would be finance, and that I would have to vote on my responsibility as a representative.

It was evident that the Democrats of the House were divided into two camps, one for what was called silver and the other in favor of a single standard of value. Naturally, of course, my inclinations were to fall in with the majority from the South and West, but after as diligent a study of the matter as I could give it, in the short time I had, I concluded with Jefferson (who has always been my political guide) that it was a commercial question, and that existing conditions in this modern world will not admit of two standards of value, and voted accordingly. Capt. Stone and I voted together, and I supposed for the same purpose. He may then have favored 16 to 1, but I am sure I did not suspect it. I never voted to give a bill its third reading in order to get a chance to kill it at a later parliamentary stage, nor did I make a record in opposition to that of the free silver leaders in the House when Capt. Stone and I stood shoulder to shoulder, for any reason save that I did not conscientiously believe in their policy. Of course, there are many things in politics in Kentucky that I do not know, Mr. Editor, but I have taken much interest in public questions during the past thirty years, have as large an acquaintance in the State as any other citizen, perhaps, and have tried to keep up with every movement of general interest, and certainly may claim to be somewhat informed as to the views and history of its leading politicians, and yet if either Capt. Stone or Senator Goebel were free silver men before they began to think of making the present race for Governor, I never heard of it.

When the Legislature of 1896 met and there was a Democratic caucus to nominate a candidate for Senator, Mr. Goebel did not prefer Hon. J. C. S. Blackburn, who was, above all men in the State, recognized as the leader in the 16 to 1 movement. After Joe was nominated Capt. Stone was still voted for by those who were so strenuously and fanatically for a gold standard that they were willing to bolt the action of their party. If he ever protested or objected it was not done loud enough to come to my ears. At the same time I was getting up petitions and calling meetings and writing letters to induce our State Senator, who was kicking out of the party traces, to support Capt. Blackburn, who had fairly and squarely received the nomination. Capt. Stone made another mistake in his reported speech at Russellville when he stated that "Judge Beckner had the appointment of all the committees" at the convention in 1895, and it is quite a blunder for a gentleman who has been so much in politics. Everybody ought to know that the temporary chairman on such an occasion is accorded the privilege of naming two members of each committee and no more. So far as I am concerned, I do not care whether our candidate for Governor is for or against free silver. As I see it, there are other issues of far greater importance in the State races. I much prefer, however, to vote for one whom I believe to be sincere in his convictions to one who has been in the past and fall into a current which he has heretofore professed to believe was running to destruction.

Respectfully,

W. M. BECKNER.