

PENROSE AS POTENTIAL PRESIDENT MAKER IN CHICAGO

Pennsylvania Senator's Leadership of the Old Guard, His Solid Backing in His Own State and His Skill as Arch-Politician, May Give Him Deciding Voice in Spite of Ill-Health

JUST before Congress adjourned in 1904 Senator Boies Penrose of Pennsylvania entered the Senate Chamber radiating more than his usual abundance of vigor. It was a national convention year, and this appeal has always raised his energy to the highest point. Senator Russell Alger of Michigan, long in poor health, though his great wealth placed at his command the best medical skill in the world, sat immediately in the rear of Mr. Penrose, and when the Pennsylvania Senator had taken his seat Mr. Alger leaned forward and said, as the story of the day was repeated:

"Senator, I envy you and willingly would I give \$1,000,000 to possess your health and vigor."

Now it is Senator Penrose who is in poor health, and there is little doubt that, on the eve of what may turn out to be a crucial convention in the history of his party, he, in his turn, would give \$1,000,000 to come into possession of the health and vigor he had when the late Senator Alger made that half-humorous, half-plaintive remark. But whether or not his physical condition shows any improvement in the next week, he is determined to play his hand to the limit, according to the best information obtainable from physicians' care since his return from a health-sustaining sojourn in the South.

Old Guard Still Strong.

In every respect save the one of health, the knowing ones say, he holds the strongest hand of a political career that has had a powerful influence in the naming of the Republican Presidential ticket since McKinley's time. This convention sees him the dominant figure of the Old Guard, and the undergrip of the Old Guard is firm in many places even where the flourish and eloquence of the progressives seem to give an opposite indication. On this firmness of hold, on whether a leader of dominance, wise in convention ways, is there to exert himself, depends in large degree whether the convention shall be guided to the only possible successful outcome—compromise. Forces will be at play at Chicago affecting both wings after the balloting begins, and men at Washington who know the explosive quality latent in any national convention say that a leader of authority, working behind the scenes, is especially needed by the Republicans this year to insure the convention not getting out of hand.

Heretofore the Old Guard has had more than one man capable of playing this part behind the scenes, with the loyalty of the ingrained partisan who in an hour of crisis will set aside personal fortunes and personal choice for the sake of harmony. In the last Republican convention there were two leaders of this kind—Murray Crane of Massachusetts and Boies Penrose of Pennsylvania. With the announced retirement of Mr. Crane as the National Committeeman from the Bay State, the authoritative organization leadership of the Old Guard, formerly divided among several, is concentrated in the hands of Senator Penrose.

People Voice for Him.

That is one card in his hand. The old-timers look to him as never before. Another is that recent events have put his own State behind him in a way, it is pointed out, that comes up to the strictest requirements of the progressives—by the voice of the people. In the recent primary he scored a sweeping victory. He will be in control of the State's seventy-six delegates to Chicago, and his party has nominated him for his fifth term in the United States Senate.

A little while back the man the progressives have long held up as the arch standpatter led a reform fight in Philadelphia in the Mayoralty race. One aim, wholly at variance with the precepts and practices of the political boss, was to take the police and firemen out of politics. Reformers flocked to Mr. Penrose with their eloquence and their plans. He took their plans, rounded them up as vote makers, organized them with the political sagacity of twenty-five years—and reform won.

With only a break when Roosevelt carried Pennsylvania, in 1912, Senator Penrose has held the State, as distinguished from Philadelphia, safe in his control ever since he succeeded Matthew Quay as boss of Pennsylvania. But in much of that time Philadelphia has been a stronghold in rival hands. Now State and chief city are his. A solid delegation of the size of Pennsylvania's, assuredly his, is a card that can hardly be matched elsewhere. Even nationally prominent favorite sons—Loriden of Illinois and Harding of Ohio—will not have their own States behind them in this manner. So with New York, Indiana, New Jersey, Massachusetts; no leader from any of these can set out a solid block of delegates to build on such as Penrose's supporters claim for him.

A Passionate Politician.

Another card, and this year one of enhanced value, is the knowledge and skill that comes of a passionate study of politics for a quarter of a century. Even though it is recognized that Mr. Penrose's ability has left its mark on every financial measure passed by Congress in the last fifteen years and has made him an authority in revenue legislation, it is politics—the big game that thrills in convention halls and culminates in battles at the polls—that has held him.

Cloakroom gossip attributes to Senator Philander C. Knox of Pennsylvania this knock:

"If Senator Penrose had not been so absorbed in political detail he would have made a statesman of the highest rank."

Senator Penrose, while appreciating the compliment, knowing no disparagement to his real accomplishments in the Senate was intended, might answer that it is to Penrose's absorption in political detail that Senator Knox is indebted for his own seat in the Senate. Though the ties between the two Pennsylvania Senators are intimate, they are very different men.

Senator Knox has never mixed in the broil of politics. Senator Penrose has looked after his colleague's election. Penrose's supporters say that the selection of a man of Knox's high qualifications is an outstanding illustration of a fundamental rule of Senator Penrose—that he picks the best. They point, as a light on this phase of Penrose's character, to a political sensation of 1912, when, on the floor of the Senate, Senator Penrose charged that ex-State Senator William Flinn of Pittsburgh had offered him and Israel W. Durham \$1,000,000 or even \$2,000,000 if they would support Flinn for the seat in the Senate made vacant by the death of Senator Quay. The offer was declined, Senator Penrose said, and the honor went to Senator Knox. Mr. Flinn made a sweeping denial of the charge.

But politics, as Senator Knox is quoted as saying, appeals to Boies Penrose primarily; he, in his turn, appeals to few men in the whole history of the country, and fewer still have studied it in home State and in the country as a whole as he has. Now, at the maturity of his powers, a glance at his career will show what a hand he holds here. When he, sprung from distinguished families on both his father's and his mother's side, was graduated from Harvard in 1881 second to his brother, Charles A. Penrose, who carried off first honor, the subject of his oration was "Martin Van Buren, the Politician." Van Buren was the country's first great politician. He looked beneath the oratory, the huzzas, the bonfires and the torchlight processions and conceived a party organization reaching from the voter in the precinct to the polls. A strong believer in party government, he set out to make his party rule, and was the factor in nominating for President others besides himself. He was the father of organized politics.

Van Buren His Model.

Van Buren, it is evident, was a model for the young Penrose, but his own individuality colored his career from the first. President-seeking itself seems not to have been a magnet; he was willing rather to keep in the background of the

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"What do you think about it?" Mr. Penrose asked of Mr. Quay, half-amused, half-serious.

"I think Cameron is right," answered amused, half-serious.

"All right," responded Mr. Penrose, his eye twinkling, "let the organization pick the woman out, and I will marry her."

Years after he was asked if the story was true.

"Yes," he laughed. "I have been ready, but the organization never made good on its part."

The story has often been repeated as an illustration in joke form of Mr. Penrose's devotion to the organization. Under him, Republican political managers say, Pennsylvania became the best organized State in the Union. At the top was Penrose, always marshaling forces with the aim of party success. At the conventions his was the voice, frequently, that decided which from the party standpoint was the most available candidate. In the early days of his control Mr. Penrose was hurriedly leaving Harrisburg, following the close of the Republican State Convention. A pleasant-faced man went up to him and said:

"How are you, Senator?"

Penrose, tired and in a rush, grunted out one of those unintelligible answers he can produce on occasion and turned toward the other end of the platform.

"See here," insisted the man. "I guess you don't know me, do you?"

"I have never had the pleasure of meeting you," said the boss of Pennsylvania, with that well-known satirical note rising in his voice.

"Never heard of me, then?" persisted the stranger.

"No," thundered Penrose, evidently thinking sport was being made of him, "and I don't want to hear of you."

"Well," said the man, with sudden curtness, "I am Professor Houck, whom you insisted a few hours ago on nominating for Secretary of Internal Affairs."

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at Philadelphia a few days ago said after his return to the capital:

"Senator Penrose said to me: 'I am 60 years old. At the best, my career can last only a few years longer. With what better service can I crown it than to exert myself that a man fitted for the duties of the Presidency be named?'"

In every convention, it was pointed out, Senator Penrose's voice has been one of a leading importance in the final decision. It has been, however, except in the case of the renomination of Mr. Taft (when Penrose was the dominant factor), the voice of acquiescence to some one else's initiative. Murray Crane, for instance, won the initiative in the naming of Charles E. Hughes. Mr. Penrose, doubtful of the choice, at length agreed. In spite of being a sick man, Senator Penrose, by all accounts, has for weeks practically given his whole thought to the subject. Several times his physicians have had to interfere and cut down his engagements. A Senator, credited with being one of the Pennsylvania Senator's closest intimates, said that there had been scarcely a day in recent weeks when twenty-five men of prominence in their home States had not called on him to see Senator Penrose. This list was weeded out from a much larger list of requests.

A Crowd of Visitors.

Most of the applicants came to Washington to see if from there they could not find a way to Penrose's presence. Of the list of twenty-five, from ten to fifteen actually got to see Senator Penrose. In his visitors amounted to from ten to fifteen a day except when the physicians interfered. He has been a hard man to handle, and, according to one informant, insisted on receiving callers even when at night he was unable to lie down and was compelled to take his rest sitting in a reclining chair.

Best callers say Penrose has championed the nomination of Senator Knox as the man eminently qualified for the Presidency; as the man he wanted to see named, but, while the sincerity of Mr. Penrose's support of his colleague was not questioned, the impression was not made that Penrose intended to go into a finish fight for Knox. This impression, it appears, lay not so much in what Senator Penrose said as to what he left unsaid. It is a method he had long followed—by some named as the essence of his strategy—to study every move in a situation, to watch each new development, to wait for the strength of each element to reveal itself, to hear what the representatives of each side has to say, and then to throw his strength without an hour's unnecessary delay where it will be the deciding factor.

Two of those reported to be closest to Mr. Penrose and who have seen him several times recently were asked in Washington if the Senator intended to go the limit on Knox. The answer, of each, separately given, was to this effect: "It hasn't been fully decided yet." The inference was that if, following a deadlock, Mr. Knox was put forward and failed to be the man under whose name a compromise could be reached, Senator Penrose had others in mind—in the very back part of his mind at present—whom he would bring forward in trying to unite the two wings of the party on a standard bearer.

Senator Penrose is a hard fighter, it was pointed out, but not a reckless one, and much less so since the big split that followed the steam-rolling of the Taft convention. Above all, it is asserted, he wants to see the party win this Fall and will go far in avoiding a split or any disaffection that will weaken the lineup at the polls.

Influence Against the Radicals.

But, if his health permits him to make the fight, there is no doubt he will use all his strength and strategy to prevent the final choice from swinging so far to the progressive end of the party as to make the man named unacceptable to the main body of the conservatives. If after the first round of balloting no nomination has been made, Senator Penrose, his friends say, will, through combinations with the delegations of neighboring States and in New England, have tied up not less than 150 votes. With the breaking of instructions, on the assumption that some of the present leaders win on the early ballots, it is expected by his backers he will add to the 150 and be in a position to achieve his ambition—be in a position to be the deciding voice in the naming of the candidate.

Opponents of Penrose who have heard of the interest, extraordinary even for him, that the Pennsylvania Senator is taking in the convention say that no such outcome is possible—that it is the dream of a sick man.

Every political manager admits, however, that the state of Mr. Penrose's health, as the convention draws near, is a factor of the first importance. If some sudden relapse should keep him away it will be a different convention than it will be if he is in Chicago and able to follow up his plans.

Full preparations have been made by him to be there. A large apartment has been rented handy to the convention and representatives chosen to act for him in committee, on the floor and in the going to and fro between the delegations. Strong indeed will the physical handicap have to be to prevent him from carrying out his undertaking. He never backs away from a fight, but taking the chances of the winner or loser, advances, dealing blow for blow. That has been his way in the Senate. Though some warnings of the breakdown that followed must have come to him when he was making his fight in the Senate to overcome progressive opposition to his election to the Chairmanship of the Senate Finance Committee and in the succeeding fight to defeat the Vares in Pennsylvania, he stuck to it until victories were won.

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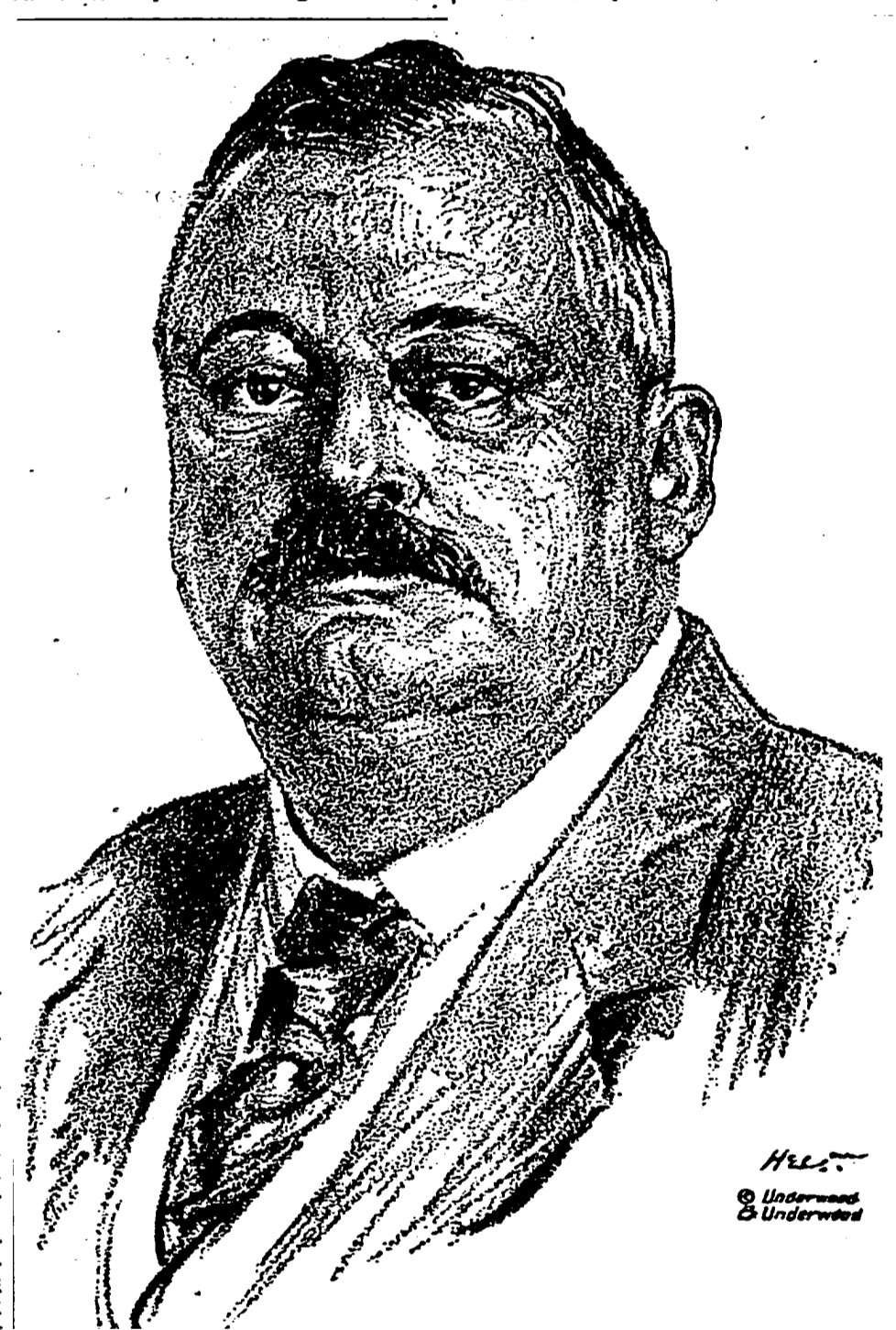
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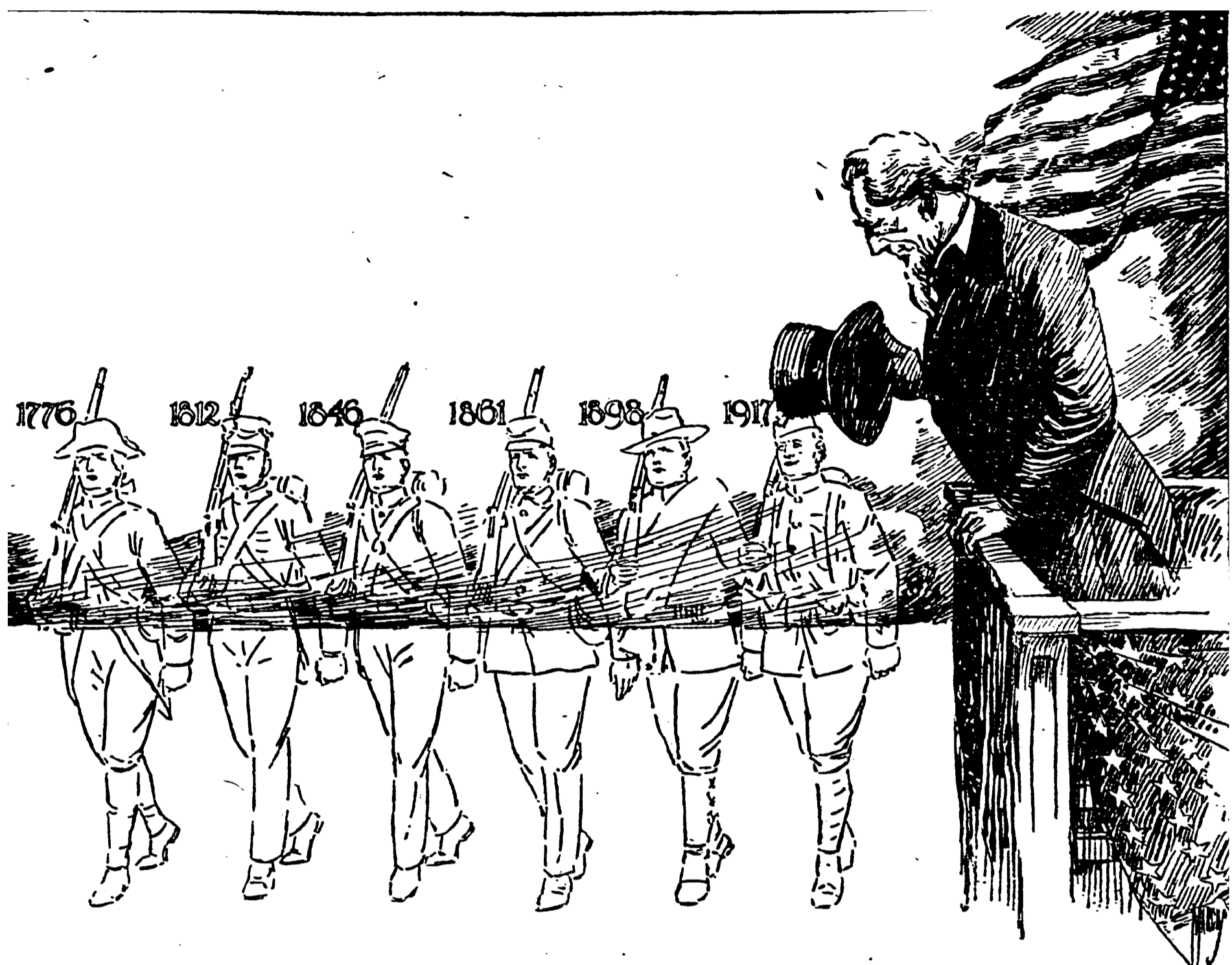
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