

The Real Reasons California Went for Wilson

Western Authority Says His Mexican Policy and the Support Women Gave Him Placed the State in the Democratic Column

Edgar Williams, the writer of the following article on the real causes of the loss of California to the Republican Party in the Presidential election, is the President of the Civil Service Commission of that State and a journalist well known on the Pacific Coast. He was formerly a member of the New Jersey Legislature and editor of various newspapers in that State.

By Edgar Williams.

BECAUSE California's vote in the recent national election finally turned the scale in favor of President Wilson, Democrats give the voters of that State the credit of re-electing the President, and Republicans place upon them the responsibility for defeating Mr. Hughes.

If its vote had been announced before Ohio, Kansas, Utah, and New Hampshire those States, singly or jointly, would have been given credit for the result.

California is willing to accept the responsibility for the result of the election if the country so desires. But they are also eager that all the circumstances of the campaign shall be carefully scrutinized by the country and thoroughly understood, for they are not willing to leave unchallenged and undenied the most brazen kind of false witnessing and the most outrageously false accusation ever made against the political honor, morality, and integrity of a man who did more for Mr. Hughes than any other campaign orator in the country, under conditions which would have caused most men to have done very differently than he did.

Before Mr. Hughes visited California it was recognized by the thoughtful and observing that the contest for the electoral vote of the State would be close, but with the odds favoring the Republican nominee. California was, of course, put in the Republican column by the electoral calculators of the Republican National Committee, but those on the ground preferred to wait, they were not so sure. Certain things gave President Wilson a personal strength in California which made California doubtful, a comparatively close State at least, before the tragic faux pas which carried it definitely over the line for him.

That the United States had been kept out of war was a potent, moving consideration with many voters, men and women, throughout the West and Northwest, and particularly in California. I will give one concrete, tangible proof of that. San Diego County, in the southern extremity of the State partly bordering on Mexico, had been a very regular Republican county, less responsive to progressivism than the other large counties of the State. It gave John D. Fredericks, the regular Republican candidate for Governor in 1914, a majority of 213 votes over his Progressive opponent. When it is recalled that he was defeated by Governor Johnson by 188,505 votes, and that it was one of the four counties of California's fifty-eight which gave Fred-

ericks a majority, the regularness of its regularity will be the better appreciated. It was one of those counties which were naturally and reasonably counted upon for a big majority for Mr. Hughes. He addressed an audience of from 18,000 to 20,000 at the Exposition open-air auditorium. What was his vote in San Diego? His highest elector received a beggarly majority of 184. It should also be noted that Congressman Kettner, Democrat, received 14,732 majority, and Governor Johnson, 12,000. These wide variations indicate the most independent kind of voting. The only way I can explain Governor Johnson's vote in a county heretofore unfriendly to him is that, having carried the Republican primary decisively in a fair, square fight, the bulk of the regulars supported him this time.

Extensive inquiries as to the reasons for the vote plainly indicate that President Wilson's large vote was due to the support of all, especially the women, who were glad that the United States had been kept at peace with Mexico. As a border county, many felt that San Diego would suffer more or less in the event of war. There is no doubt that many were influenced by the Democratic "kept-us-out-of-war" slogan. And, in the same connection, is interesting to note that all the border States were for President Wilson. New Mexico, a fairly dependable Republican State, might have been expected to support Mr. Hughes, but it did not. I do not like to disagree with anything in William Allen White's "Who Killed Cock Robin," but he is wrong when he says that "he kept us out of war" did not influence tens of thousands of votes.

The enactment of the Adamson law and the preventing of the great railroad strike which had been threatened helped the President materially in this State. It strengthened him with the labor unions and also with the fruit growers and farmers, all shippers who would have had immense losses if there had been a tie-up of freight. If shipments had been held up, many would have been embarrassed and not a few ruined. The settlement of the strike was a boon to them, and President Wilson profited thereby in a substantial manner on Election Day.

It was felt also that President Wilson had shown himself to be progressive and more concerned, or at least equally concerned, about human rights and interests as about property rights so understood; as much alive to the welfare of society as to the welfare of those who have looked upon themselves as constituting "the State," to whose interests all others should contribute or be subordinate.

All these considerations, feelings, and convictions concerning President Wilson contributed vastly to make him a formidable opponent of Mr. Hughes and to make California a close State.

But notwithstanding President Wilson's strength, California would have been carried for Mr. Hughes but for that fatal campaign mistake in August. It was made notwithstanding the protest of both the State members of the National

Republican Committee. Why, nobody knows. But this fatal blunder was followed by others and a Presidency was lost.

Mr. Hughes was so used by the campaign managers of the regular State organization, temporarily in power by the grace of the former Progressive organization, that the impression was created that he was not favorably disposed toward Governor Johnson. The presence and co-operation of the liberal element of the party in the management of meetings were not desired, and they were made fully aware of the fact. There was no guessing at it or misunderstanding. So far as Governor Johnson was concerned he was informed that he was very much outside of the breastworks and his presence at a Hughes meeting would not be tolerated.

The impression intended to be made was made upon the mind of the public. Deafmutes never understood the sign manual better. The public interpreted Mr. Hughes's campaign in California to mean that he was not a liberal, but a conservative; not a standpat reactionary, perhaps, but not a real progressive. A state of mind was created just as it was planned. The mental impression that Mr. Hughes sympathized with the Old Guard and did not favor Governor Johnson and his works was duly created.

But, fatal miscalculation! It did not work as expected. It did not prevent Governor Johnson from receiving the nomination in the Republican primary and subsequent election as United States Senator. It did defeat Mr. Hughes for President. And, after all, having had the greatest admiration in the world for Mr. Hughes, having favored his nomination for President in 1908, 1912, and 1916, (I was one of five or six California editors who favored him in a poll of The Chicago Tribune in 1912,) and speaking with the favorable bias of an admirer, I nevertheless feel that Mr. Hughes is not without large responsibility for the unfavorable impression made upon the California electorate. His managers might drive off Progressives and bar Governor Johnson from any participation in the Hughes meetings, but they could only make use of Mr. Hughes as that gentleman permitted. They could not direct his thoughts, they could not control his utterances. If they did it was with his consent and acquiescence. And his speeches did not lead the dominant, liberal element of the Republican Party to regard him as a liberal with Progressive sympathies. And it was what he did not say, his great silence on the things nearest the California voters' hearts, that told.

When, however, he never mentioned the name of Governor Johnson in his speeches; never said one word in praise of the Governor's brave and successful fight in overthrowing corporate control and restoring California to the people, Californians generally agreed that whatever his record as Governor of New York may have been, (and only a small number of voters were acquainted with

it,) he was not now a progressive, and they were absolutely sure that he was a near reactionary when he said to an audience of 15,000 or more in San Francisco: "With local differences I have no concern."

Mr. Hughes never sought to dispel the bad impression made by his San Francisco statement, and when he left California after a profound silence concerning those essential principles and policies the people were so eager and impatient to hear enunciated, the electoral vote of the State had been lost to him.

If any man had provocation to remain in his tent Governor Johnson had, but the natural resentment which he felt over his unpardonable treatment he did not show. He subordinated it to his loyalty to the Republican Party's standard bearer. He therefore took the field without any delay and made what was probably the best of his many campaigns. He spoke at seventy-nine scheduled meetings and at probably twenty others. Thousands were convinced by his appeal that Mr. Hughes could be trusted as a forward-looking man with progressive ideals, who should receive the support of every Republican. He referred constantly to his record as Governor of New York to prove this. There were thousands, however, who would not be convinced, and there were also others who, whether convinced or not, resented Mr. Hughes's course in California, and the loss of these votes was fatal.

The strongest Progressive organization in any county of the State from the beginning has been Alameda County. It was so efficient and successful as to excite the particular criticism and opposition of the regular organization. Governor Johnson was always strong there and could depend upon good majorities. Alameda County gave Mr. Hughes a majority of nearly 8,000. In proportion to population this was the largest majority given Mr. Hughes by any county of the State. In San Diego County, as has been shown, where the regular Republican organization was strong, and where Governor Johnson had no effective organization to depend upon and was never successful, Mr. Hughes received a scant majority when the normal Republican majority is about 10,000.

But that majority of 296,815 for Governor Johnson and 3,773 majority for President Wilson! Why the Republican candidate for President was short of votes has been explained. The reasons why Governor Johnson received his immense majority are as easily explainable. The disparity does not mean so much, or what the average Eastern voter unacquainted with California politics would imagine. Generally speaking it was the reward bestowed upon a faithful servant of the people by a grateful and appreciative electorate.

In 1914 Governor Johnson received 121,573 votes in the Progressive primary for the Gubernatorial nomination. The

candidates for the Republican nomination received 240,141 votes. Apparently Governor Johnson was doomed to defeat. The Old Guard certainly thought so. He was elected by nearly 190,000 votes over Fredericks. In the same election Frank C. Jordan, regular Republican, was elected Secretary of State by 270,966 votes over his Progressive opponent. In the same year Johnson, as the Progressive candidate for Governor, and having a Republican opponent also, had a majority over his Democratic opponent, Senator Curtin, of 344,374. In 1916, as the only candidate against his Democratic opponent for United States Senator, Mr. Patton, no other candidate dividing the Republican vote, he received a majority of 296,815.

It has been urged in feeble proof of

treachery that in those counties where Governor Johnson was strongest, in those very counties President Wilson received his largest vote. Sacramento, Fresno, and San Francisco Counties are particularly referred to. He received less votes in both Sacramento and Fresno Counties than in 1914. In Fresno County, also, the regular Republican organization was in full control and managed the campaign. In San Francisco County Governor Johnson received a greatly increased vote, but the situation there was extraordinary and is well understood in California.

He has always been strong in labor circles, especially in San Francisco, and he was more unitedly supported there last November than ever. On the other hand, labor was driven to Pres-

ident Wilson by the almost unbelievable blunder of the Commercial Club dinner, which was served by colored waiter strikebreakers after a perfectly fair and reasonable request of union waiters to remove an offensive placard while the dinner was served had been refused.

Governor Johnson has always been strong in Los Angeles County. In 1910 that county gave him about 7,000 majority; in 1914, 54,368 majority; in 1916, 58,531 majority. Roosevelt and Johnson had 20,483 majority in 1912 and Mr. Hughes 21,484 majority in 1916. This was the largest majority given Mr. Hughes by any county, and does not indicate that where Governor Johnson was strongest Mr. Hughes was weakest. He received 157,918 less votes for United

States Senator, with both Republican and Progressive nominations, than the combined Republican and Progressive vote in 1914. Mr. Hughes received 174,998 votes more than the combined Roosevelt-Taft vote in 1912.

It is therefore a matter of record, attested by the press of both wings of the Republican Party, that Governor Johnson consistently and continuously supported Mr. Hughes on the stump and that his support was hearty and enthusiastic. And now, nearly two months after the election, his enemies, who would move heaven and earth to prove disloyalty to Mr. Hughes, can only point to the 296,815 majority he received for United States Senator and the 3,773 majority President Wilson received, roll their eyes, and shrug their shoulders.

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