

OLLIE MURRAY JAMES:
AN EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY KENTUCKY POLITICIAN

by
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INTRODUCTION

Ollie Murray James was the last Senator elected by the Kentucky Legislature after he had spent more than ten years in the Commonwealth's and national politics. While in the Senate, he proved himself to be the foremost western Kentuckian who rose from state to national prominence in the early twentieth century. He achieved this distinctness through his devotion to the Democratic Party and its leaders.

This is the second scholarly study of Ollie M. James. In 1932, Dr. Forrest Carlisle Pogue, Jr., made the first effort through interviews and letters from many of James' contemporaries, with the primary purpose of preserving his memory for later generations. Today Pogue feels that James could be set "more centrally" in the history of the first two decades of the twentieth century. This is the primary purpose of this thesis.

As with the earlier study of James, this study's major hindrance has been the unavailability of relevant material. After remaining in the basement of the Senate Office Building for forty years, the James family was notified that due to a needed expansion of the building that Senator James' papers should be removed for safe deposit elsewhere. No

action was ever initiated by the family and, as a consequence, Senator James' papers were officially destroyed in 1958. Primary sources for this thesis therefore include newspaper accounts of James' activities, references to him and events in the biographies of William Jennings Bryan and Woodrow Wilson, and the research notes of Miss Lemah S. James, a niece.

Miss James' research notes are located at Murray State University as well as a copy of her unpublished manuscript entitled, "Pennyrile Portrait: The Life and Times of a Kentucky Squire." This manuscript has many references to James, but it is primarily a family history. A copy of the original may be found at the Kentucky State Historical Society in Frankfort. Mrs. Ruth James, Ollie's wife, donated some of his campaign material to the James collection at the University of Kentucky. More than three-fourths of it, however, concerns Mrs. James' social life in Kentucky and Washington, D. C.

Kentucky has produced many leaders of state and national stature; however, little has been written about their role in the State's and Nation's histories until recently. Therefore, a comprehensive study of these leaders is needed before a complete history of the State can be attempted. Stepping stones to an exhaustive work are small independent research projects such as this one. This thesis, thus has value as a contribution to the history of Kentucky and its leaders.

CHAPTER I

The Formative Years

"His loss is a very great one to me personally," telegraphed President Woodrow Wilson to Mrs. Ruth James in sympathy for the death of her husband, who had fought in behalf of the Administration many times in the Senate over the past six years.¹ So moved was Wilson over the death of his close associate that he ordered the flags to be at half mast over the capitol for thirty days, a tribute paid to few for years of service in government. When Ollie James died on the twenty-eight of August, 1918, he further distinguished himself as he was the tenth senator to die since war had been declared in April, 1917.

The last senator elected by the Kentucky legislature in 1912, he promised publicly upon that occasion that he would vote the sentiment of all Kentuckians and defend them as he would his own honor. He promised that he would protect their money as he would his own, reflect their will and do their service, just to hear as a reward from Kentuckians, "'Well done, thou good and faithful servant.'"² Thus he began his career as senator from Kentucky, and he kept his promises.

He arrived on his last trip home in Marion, Indiana, President Wilson's private train coach, the "Washington." From Baltimore to Marion, thousands of people lined the tracks to pay their last tribute. The train was late, but to his friends and admirers the waiting was their way of saying welcome home not to a simple man in government, but to a man whom one newspaper described as the "State's foremost Democratic leader."³ His huge mahogany coffin was too large for the hearse provided and had to be placed on a common wagon drawn by two mules.⁴ But had James himself witnessed this, he would not have been ashamed for he had always been a simple man. Had he seen the masses of Kentuckians who lined the tracks and waited at the various stations for him to pass through for the last time, he would have heard his Kentuckians say those words dear to his heart, "Well done, Ollie James, our good and faithful servant."

Marion, the county seat of Crittenden County, was his home in later years; however, he was born in the southeastern portion of the county in the village of Sheriden, in a double log cabin, on the twenty-seventh of July, 1871. He was the third son born to Lemuel Harrison and Eliza Jane James.

Mystery clouds Ollie's real name as it is believed that he was named Orlando Murray by a woman who cared for his mother at his birth. The nurse, who was reading a novel in which the hero was named Orlando Murray, suggested it as a name to Mrs. James. Mrs. James, the type who always tried

to oblige everybody, agreed to the suggestion and it was entered in the family Bible as such. However, once young Orlando was old enough to rebel against his name, it was simplified to Ollie Murray, by which he was known the remainder of his life.⁵

Though Ollie was the name known by many people, close friends and associates in later years called him by his nickname, "Whitey." It had its origin when James, as a young child, developed an obsession for trains. While the railroad to Marion was being built, he would hop rides on freight and construction trains and his face would whiten as the wind hit it contrasting sharply with its griminess. He never considered his nickname derogatorily, even enjoyed being called by it.⁶

The James family included eight children. Ollie, the fifth child, was preceded by Mary Elizabeth, William, Edgar and Flora; he was older than Ada and a set of twins, Ruby and Rodney. William and Rodney both died quite young. Just after Ada's birth, the James family moved to Marion where James' father had been elected County Attorney. This was an unusual election because his father was a Democrat in a Republican county; a former Civil War veteran who had been a member of the Union Army; and above all, a man whose wife had had four brothers in the Confederate Army.⁷

Young James' education was under Professor H. H. Adams, even though "the public school idea was young and undeveloped in Kentucky," and did not set well in his parents' mind.⁸ When Reverend James F. Price came to Marion and opened a private academy, Ruby was the first to attend. Later Ollie and Ada enrolled at the academy. His tuition was paid by his building of fires and other chores not only at home, but throughout the entire county.⁹ In Reverend Price's civil government class, the young lad developed his talent for investigation and public speaking. When it was his turn to give an oral report, he would thunder it forth to his classmates. He later went so far as to learn speeches from the pages of the Congressional Record and to recite these to his class.¹⁰

James' education contained several other elements which became his passions in later life. The first of these was baseball, which he never played very well because his huge physical size made running a difficult task. But later, his megaphone voice, as well as his waving arms and kicking legs caused his presence to be noticed at any baseball game. Another ardent affection of youthful years which continually grew was his fervor for his father's sassafras wood smoked hams and sorghum molasses. On many occasions after a trip home from Washington, he would return with several hams and buckets of molasses for his use as well as gifts to some of his congressional friends' families.¹¹

He also liked horse racing, but loved even more to bet on the horses--something which his constituency and wife would later disapprove of. This uncontrollable obsession

led him to go to New Orleans to see Representative Joe Raincock from Covington, Kentucky for two days during a congressional break to attend horse racing. Once there, his enthusiasm for the sport got the best of him and he continued his stay for eight extra days. A search for the missing Congressman was initiated by Mrs. James, as she had expected him to be gone only two days. All was resolved when James returned home with his winnings.¹²

The whole James family was very religious, and religion became his greatest passion. During his childhood, religious education was stressed, and later he married Ruth Thomas, the daughter of a Methodist minister. Perhaps his next greatest love was for politics which, in essence, was his devotion to the Democratic party. "An old-fashioned, uncompromising Democrat" were the terms used by Senator Charles S. Thomas of Colorado at James' death to describe his loyalty to the party. Thomas recognized in James his inability to understand or to forgive any man who repudiated the party's platform or opposed the party's nominee.¹³

All parents have special ambitions for their children and this was no less true with young James' parents. His mother's chief ambition for him was that he be either a dentist or a traveling salesman. When he appeared not to like the idea of becoming a dentist, she almost succeeded in talking him into the notion of going west to travel as an agent for a patent churn. Nevertheless, a business venture at sixteen to Evansville, Indiana, proved to him that this career

was impossible. A stranger appeared in Marion with an iron rack for hanging spoons near the stove and praised it so highly that young James thought wealth was immediately in store for the person who could sell such a contrivance. He promptly traded his watch and a small sum of money for the patent rights in the state of Indiana. He embarked for Evansville to sell the rights, but the journey proved fruitless as he did not find a buyer. With his sample, he returned to Marion downhearted but convinced of his lack of salesmanship abilities. The rack was given to his mother as a gift for her kitchen.¹⁴

James' father was more successful than his mother in influencing his son's future. Since his early years, Ollie had always preferred the companionship of older men rather than children his own age. During an election year, he would travel all over western Kentucky listening to political speeches. His father, besides being involved in local politics, was also an extremely capable lawyer. "He was spoken of as one of two lawyers who could cite any part of the Kentucky code without reference to text, naming page and paragraph."¹⁵

Besides being a skilled lawyer with explicit knowledge of the law code, Lemuel Harrison also trained lawyers. Among his numerous students were Lee Cruse, who later became the first governor of Oklahoma; Will and Cavit Cruse, later appellate judge and Lawyer respectively; and Joe Ben and Tom Champion, who handled cases that attracted national attention

...of his father's advice, Ollie became more receptive to his father's advice after his first and last adventure into the business world.

He had been considering a career in law even before he went to Indiana and had attracted the attention of Thomas J. Nunn, Kentucky Appellate Judge, who had visited the James family when the young boy was fifteen. What impressed Judge Nunn most was James' aptitude for politics, and he suggested to Ollie's father that the lad be allowed to go to Frankfort to act as a page in the 1887 General Assembly. His father had also recognized this ability and readily agreed with Judge Nunn's idea. Simultaneously with his work in Frankfort, he began his study of law under his father.¹⁷

He served one session as page and returned two years later as clerkroom keeper, "a promotion won by his popularity with House members."¹⁸ It also brought with it an advancement in salary from five to seven dollars a day. What distinguished James from other pages at Frankfort was his unusually large size and his tendency to amuse legislators by his recitation of speeches he had heard during the day.¹⁹ At the age of twenty, four years after he had begun his law studies, he passed the legal examination, and because he was so well known by members of the State Legislature, they passed a special enabling act in order that he might be admitted to the bar while still a minor. Immediately his father took him into a full partnership. The firm was named James and James.²⁰

Being in Franklin, he was short of time and had to be satisfied with James' taste for politics; if it was anything, it served only as an appetizer. While still studying law, he had begun voicing his opinions in local curbstone political discussions around Marion. His first public speaking entry into politics was on the fourth of July in 1868, at the age of eighteen when he debated Edward T. Franks, a Republican of Marion who later ran unsuccessfully for governor.²¹

The debate was over the McKinley bill, a protectionist tariff which tended to be prohibitive--not merely to discourage foreign competition, but to eliminate it; not merely to protect infant industries, but to bring in new ones. It, of course, aroused cries of opposition from Democrats, especially those in agricultural sections of the country. Franks, an experienced debator, easily handled James' well expressed argument, but the young Democrat emerged from the debate "with great credit to himself and an undaunted spirit" about his cause being a just one.²²

Much against his father's wishes, James continued in a political frame of mind. His father was involved in politics only briefly when he ran successfully for County Attorney three years after Ollie's birth. When he sought the office a second time, he was defeated soundly. It was not because he was a poor county attorney, but because he was a Democrat seeking an office in a strong Republican minded county--one of the few in western Kentucky.²³ This episode turned him completely against political offices as well as a career for

his son in politics. Nevertheless, this episode eventually accounted in part for James' strong partisan beliefs. This was perhaps his father's greatest influence on James, because it was maintained the remainder of his life.

After his debate with Edward T. Franks in 1888, James continued to voice his opinions in the town's local political affairs. Finally in 1895, he was elected by Crittenden County's Democrats to attend the State Democratic Convention in Louisville. His major role at the convention was his speech in defense of the decisions reached by the Committee on Credentials of which he was a member.²⁴ However, this was only a minor incident of the whole convention.

FOOTNOTES

¹James Murray James Collection, Murray State University, Murray, Kentucky. Hereinafter referred to as James Collection, Murray State University.

²Ibid.

³James Murray James Collection, Louisville Public Library, Louisville, Kentucky. Hereinafter referred to as James Collection, Louisville Public Library.

⁴Ibid.

⁵James Collection, Murray State University; Judge Charles Kerr, ed. History of Kentucky (5 vols.; New York: The American Historical Society, 1922), II, 1092-93; Special Historical Supplement, Crittenden Press, December 7, 1972; and Forrest Carlisle Pogue, Jr., "The Life and Work of Senator Ollie Murray James" (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Kentucky, Lexington, Kentucky, 1932), p. 3. Hereinafter referred to as Pogue, "Senator Ollie Murray James."

⁶James Collection, Murray State University; and James Collection, Louisville Public Library.

⁷James Collection, Murray State University.

⁸Ibid.

⁹Ibid.; and Pogue, "Senator Ollie Murray James," p.6.

¹⁰James Collection, Murray State University; Pogue, "Senator Ollie Murray James," p. 7; Special Historical Supplement, Crittenden Press, December 7, 1972; and "The Five Passions of Ollie James," Current Literature, LIII (September, 1912), 276.

¹¹James Collection, Murray State University; and "The Five Passions of Ollie James," pp. 277, 278.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.; and Memorial Addresses on the Life and Character of Ollie James, 65th Cong., 3rd sess., Proceedings in the Senate, February 2, 1919, and House of Representatives, February 23, 1919 (Washington D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1920), p. 13. Hereinafter referred to as Memorial Addresses.

¹⁴James Collection, Murray State University; and James Collection, Louisville Public Library.

- 15 James Collection, Murray State University.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Ibid.; Memorial Addresses, p. 13, and Special Historical Supplement, Crittendon Press, December 7, 1972, p. 10.
- 18 James Collection, Murray State University.
- 19 Ibid.; James Collection, Louisville Public Library; and Special Historical Supplement, Crittendon Press, December 7, 1972, p. 10.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 James Collection, Louisville Public Library; and Pogue, "Senator Ollie Murray James," p. 10.
- 22 James Collection, Louisville Public Library.
- 23 James Collection, Murray State University.
- 24 Louisville Courier-Journal, June 26, 1895. Herein-after referred to as Courier-Journal.

CHAPTER II

"And politics--the damndest, in Kentucky"

Pre-convention days, 1895, found Kentucky Democrats debating not only who should seek the nomination for governor, but also how he should stand on the currency issue of silver or gold. Those who were actively seeking the nomination were Cassius M. Clay, Jr., of Bourbon County and Parker Wat Hardin of Mercer. Clay refused to discuss the silver issue because he felt that it had no place in this campaign; rather, to him it was a national issue related to the upcoming presidential election.¹ Hardin, because many of his close friends were advocates of the silver cause, was identified as an advocate of the cause.² Other undeclared and "dark horse" candidates included Captain William Stone, a former Congressman from the First District, Mitchell C. Alford, Lieutenant Governor from Lexington, and Henry Watterson, head of the Louisville Courier-Journal. Out of this group, Stone could be identified as a silverite, while Watterson was definitely a "gold bug." Alford never made his stance on the issue clear enough to be identified with either group.³

Even though the gubernatorial race was considered to be a Democratic victory no matter who won the nomination, the silver issue created unresolvable balance throughout the

Political issues began to align uneasily and political issues began to realign on the currency issue to such an extent that the Courier-Journal wrote that the "commotion over the currency question has caused the race for governor to assume" what it surprisingly described as "a state of uncertainty."⁴

The "state of uncertainty" was so great that United States Senator William Linsay of Frankfort remarked in a speech that same day at Frankfort that Kentucky Democrats would do well not to make silver an issue in the state election because one state could not decide for the whole Union; besides, Kentucky Democrats should support the federal administration no matter what the decision on the currency issue.⁵ President Cleveland's Secretary of the Treasury, John G. Carlisle, also a native of Kentucky, appeared in Louisville to speak for the administration's gold policy and reiterated Linsay's warning.⁶ The period immediately preceding the convention, nevertheless, showed signs that the warnings had been heeded since the candidates as well as the press still raged over the currency question. The Courier-Journal took the position that even if the question came up at the convention, sound money forces would win.⁷ Yet the trend of delegates elected to attend the convention gave the edge to the silver advocates, especially those delegates from western Kentucky.

The convention opened on June twenty-fifth with both sides seeking the votes of non-committed delegates. This

created so much confusion that even the Courier-Journal and Lexington Press described the meeting as "disastrous." After the first day of the convention, the "gold bug" Democrats controlled the convention and proceeded to issue a plank to the platform in favor of sound money. Parker W. Hardin won the nomination for governor over Clay, his strongest opponent, as well as Stone and Watterson, while R. E. Tyler of Fulton won the nomination for Lieutenant Governor.⁹

Nevertheless, the currency issue remained unsettled as some Democrats still chose to speak on the topic. Hardin further split the Democracy of the Commonwealth when he refused to support fully the platform, especially the plank favoring sound money. The State Democratic Campaign Committee was at a loss as to what to do about the situation, and as a consequence, took no action either way. When the Populist party of the State nominated Thomas S. Pettit of Owensboro, a fervent silverite, some Democrats moved to support him, while others refused to support Hardin or the Republicans. The Republicans avoided the currency issue because they saw that the Democrats' split gave them a chance to win the highest office in the State. The Courier-Journal, under Watterson's editorship, refused to support Hardin once he bolted the party's platform. Lacking a sound Democratic backing, Hardin consequently lost the governorship to Bradley.¹⁰

Even though the currency issue had cost the Democrats the governorship, advocates of free silver did not give up. Ollie was one of these Democrats. The following year, 1896,

... a presidential election year, and it was also another chance for silver enthusiasts to win complete control of the party at the State Convention. The convention convened at Shautaugua Auditorium in Lexington on the second of June. The major issue to emerge was again currency. The silver cause had a large number of the delegates' backing. The leaders were United States Senator Joseph C. S. Blackburn of Woodford County, who also sought Kentucky's endorsement for president, John S. Rhea of Logan County, and W. J. Ellis of Owensboro. Secretary of the Treasury, John Carlisle, was the leader of the gold cause.¹¹

Both sides had been busy speaking for their cause and when the convention began, they were no less so. James stated at a convention caucus of those for silver that the convention should denounce "the Democratic gold press and bolters." He further clarified his position and that of the whole caucus by saying that he personally did not care about using the names of President Cleveland and Secretary of the Treasury Carlisle, but wanted it stated that the caucus did not approve of the financial views of the Administration. As an afterthought, he declared that Senator Blackburn ought to be endorsed by the caucus and convention for President. This, he explained, would give Carlisle a "black eye," because he was also a presidential aspirant.¹²

The silver forces had the majority at the convention and chose twenty-three silver delegates to attend the Democratic National Convention in July at Chicago. James

...the Third District. The gold delegates were also selected from Phelps and William B. Hill, from Louisville, the Fifth District.¹³ A month later the delegation left for Chicago bound as a unit to vote for Senator Blackburn and the silver plank. Thus Kentucky joined nearly every southern and western state in a delegation to fight off the eastern states' control of the National Democratic party.¹⁴

The Republican party had already met and selected William McKinley as their nominee for president as the Democrats converged on Chicago for their national convention. The silverites immediately overthrew tradition by rejecting Senator David B. Hill of New York as temporary chairman, the choice of the National Committee, and electing Senator John W. Daniel of Virginia. Senator James K. Jones of Arkansas was made chairman of the committee of resolutions which was to develop the platform. He also chose William Jennings Bryan, the leading advocate of free silver, to speak in behalf of the silver plank for the platform.¹⁵ At this time, Bryan was not considered a serious challenger for the presidential nomination by any of the delegates. Their main order of preference were Richard P. Bland of Missouri, Horace Boies of Iowa, and Blackburn. But the Courier-Journal editor, Henry Watterson, quite perceptive of Bryan's ability, also included him on this list of hopeful nominees which he called the "Four B's of silver heresy."¹⁶

He then addressed the crowded convention hall, which he had turned into frenzy by a speech he had been practicing out loud on the farmers and laborers for the past year. He crystallized his famous "Cross of Gold" speech by showing that the farmers of the South and West were the backbone of the nation and that they should be heard.

Your [turning to the gold delegates] tell us that the great cities are in favor of the gold standard; we reply that the great cities rest upon our broad and fertile prairies. Burn down your cities and leave our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country.

My Friends, we declare that the nation is able to legislate for its own people on every question, without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation on earth; and upon that issue we expect to carry every state in the Union.... If they say bimetallism is good, but we cannot have it until other nations help us, we reply that, instead of having a gold standard because England has, we will restore bimetallism, and then let England have bimetallism because the United States has it. If they dare to come out in the open field and defend the gold standard as a good thing, we will fight them to the uttermost. Having behind us the producing masses of the nation...we will answer their demands for a gold standard by saying to them: 'You shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns, you shall not crucify mankind on a cross of gold.' 17

Bryan raised his hands to the sides of his head and moved them slowly down close to his temples as he stated, "you shall not press down upon the brow of labor this crown of thorns." As he completed the statement he moved his arms out at right angles to his body and held the position in a completely hushed convention hall. As he dismounted the stage the whole hall burst into an uproar. Completely overcome with emotion from the speech, James immediately rose from his seat with the Commonwealth's banner in his hand and the crowd on the aisle chanting "Bryan, Bryan,"

and the whole delegation followed him. Kentucky was joined by the Nebraska delegation and together they led the Parade of States around the floor of the convention hall for ten minutes. The next day Bryan won the nomination.¹⁸

The Democratic platform included planks favoring tariff reform, a graduated income tax, as well as planks for the regulation of railroads and the vigorous prosecution of trusts. However, the major plank in the platform was the one stating that the Party favored the free coinage of silver. Bryan's nomination alienated the eastern wing of the party and the radical platform made their willingness to remain in the party so nil that a split was inevitable. Two well defined factions developed within the party. The first was composed of the eastern-urban Democrats favoring gold, while the second was made up of the southern and western rural agrarian element of the party favoring silver.

Several weeks later the Populist party met in St. Louis. It was purposely scheduled to meet after the Republican and Democratic convention because Populist leaders thought that both of the major parties would have presidential candidates and platforms favoring gold and the trusts. This, of course, would cost the major parties many silver and anti-monopoly votes which they expected to capture. However, things did not turn out that way. Even though the Republicans did fulfill Populist expectations, the Democrats nominated Bryan and adopted most of the third party's demands. Therefore there was no real alternative except to nominate Bryan also.¹⁹

... .. must vote under their own separate ticket. Not for these projects, Bryan still received their nomination for president. To keep from sowing further dissension among those already disgruntled over the Bryan situation, Sam Watson, "a self-styled Jeffersonian radical from Georgia," was nominated for vice-president. This created a serious problem because the Democrats had nominated Arthur Sewall. Thus Bryan had two running mates. Neither party willing to compromise over the vice-presidential position and E. A. not willing either to endanger the cause of bimetallism or do anything unfair to Sewall caused him to accept reluctantly his predicament. He accepted both Sewall and Watson as running mates thus, in turn, inflaming both parties and delighting the Republicans who were avoiding the whole silver issue.²⁰

These difficulties apparently made little difference to James, as he immediately took to the stump for Bryan throughout Kentucky. However, National Democrats under the leadership of Walter H. Haldeman and Henry Watterson proposed a third party, the "Gold Democrats," with the distinct purpose of drawing votes from Bryan for a gold Democrat candidate. This would have the effect of giving the election to McKinley.²¹

The Gold Democrats, some 868, met in Indianapolis on the second of September and formally broke with their party. The outcome was the nomination of seventy-nine year old John Palmer of Illinois, a former United States Senator and former general in the Union Army. His running mate was seventy-three

four old Simon Bolivar Buckner, a former governor of Kentucky and general in the Confederate Army. Thus the Gold Democrats marched off into a presidential campaign already full of contenders. Their major weapon was the press, especially the Courier-Journal, whose editorial pages were full of anti-Bryan material from the middle of September until November.²²

On election day both Bryan and McKinley claimed victory. The days following November third, however, proved Bryan wrong, even though the popular vote was more representative of the public sentiment than the electoral college vote. Bryan received 6,502,925 popular votes to McKinley's 7,104,779, whereas in the electoral college Bryan received only 176 votes to McKinley's 291. The North voted for McKinley and gold while the West was divided in popular vote between the two candidates. The South voted solidly for Bryan and free silver, except for Kentucky where he lost by 142 votes. The silverite carried every county in James' district, except for Crittenden where he lost by four votes.²³ The Gold Democrats made a poor showing in the election, but the Courier-Journal, their chief weapon, wrote that they had saved the country from shame and the national party from destruction.²⁴

The years between 1896 and 1899 were quiet ones for James. He never ventured into any major political battles in statewide politics. The primary reason for this inactivity was that Republicans controlled the governor's office won in 1895 because of the Democrats' split over currency. Nevertheless, the Democrats retained their control over the legislature until they regained control of the governorship in 1898.

... Knoxville and Nashville Railroad had been an important force in Tennessee politics since the Civil War. Both Republican and Democratic administrations had granted it large concessions as rewards for support, and this continued to be true under the new Republican administration. However, discontent began to brew, as the Commonwealth's farmers and businessmen feared that these recent concessions had been at their expense, therefore contributing to their economic plight of the past ten years.²⁵

During this period, in response to the cries of farmers and small businessmen against this domination of not only the railroads but large corporations as well, a new force in the State's Democratic ranks was on the rise. This new force was William Goebel of Covington, who was described as "restless, intensely ambitious, and with no money." He was the son of a German cabinet maker; "there had been no judges nor brigadiers in his family, no bluegrass, julep tradition," and therefore he lacked what most other politicians of the time had. This inability caused him to be considered "an outlander and a plebeian."²⁶

Goebel was first elected to the State Senate in 1887 when he was thirty years old and remained there until the election of 1899. As a new political force between 1896 and 1899, he moved the Democrats in the legislature into positive action with the skill of a political strategist

and manipulative. He wrote the 1895 law which reform legislation -- the granting of a franchise to corporations, increasing the power of the railroad commission, and the writing of a new employer's liability law, his greatest area of reform work was in election reform. He wrote the 1895 Election Law and saw that it was passed by the State Legislature.²⁷

The 1895 law provided for a commission of three persons, appointed by the State Legislature, to appoint election boards throughout the State. Goebel's rationale for this law was a stroke of genius, as it was the election boards who counted the ballots. By retaining control of the legislature, who appointed the commission of three, the majority party would remain in control of the state as election victories would always be secured.²⁸

This was the state of Democratic politics in Kentucky on the eve of the party's 1899 state convention that was to elect a nominee for governor. Goebel's success in the Legislature made his name well known throughout Kentucky, but the results of the county caucuses provided him with only twenty-six pledged delegates. His opponents for nomination were Parker Wat Hardin and William J. Stone. Hardin had been the party's nominee four years earlier, but lost that election due to the currency issue. Stone, a one-legged ex-Confederate general, was now a farmer from Lyon County with three previous terms in the national House of Representatives.

Hardin had 362 pledged delegates and Stone only 215. Hardin thus showed the greatest strength when the convention opened. James' county pledged its eight delegates to Stone as did most of the First District, which gave the general sixty-one delegates to Hardin's twenty-eight. Twenty-three of the one hundred twelve delegates were uninstructed. Even though Hardin had the largest number of instructed votes, he was still some two hundred short of the necessary 547 to receive the nomination.²⁹

Stone and Goebel recognized that they had no chance to organize the convention if they remained divided. Unless an agreement could be reached, Hardin would receive the nomination. Thus James, one of Stone's chief supporters, suggested that an agreement be worked out with Goebel and his supporters. To this end he suggested a special meeting at Rufer's hotel two nights before the convention was to open. Stone sent James and John S. Rhea to represent him while Goebel commissioned Samuel J. Shackelford and Urey Woodson to act in his behalf. Goebel supporters, Henry Hines and C. M. Lewis, also attended.³⁰

The meeting proved, however, that agreement was impossible unless John Rhea, Stone's chief negotiator, would give up his major demand. Urey Woodson later related the following account of the meeting:

We met and tried to reach an agreement, but John Rhea obstinately held out that John Whallen political boss of Louisville's Democrats who was the co-proprietor with his brother of the Buckingham

Burlesque Theater and Saloon should be given the Louisville organization, He seemed to be far more interested in Whallen than in Stone, evidently because of his own earlier obligations to Whallen in a previous State Convention when Rhea was an unsuccessful candidate for Attorney General, He admitted this, although reminded that Whallen was now a leader in behalf of Hardin against Stone and Goebel, and a most active agent of the L. & N. But he refused to recede from this position. Therefore, I soon left the conference...and went straight to Stone's room.... I told...Stone...that there was no possibility of any agreement between Rhea and myself... because Rhea was demanding...that Whallen be given the Louisville organization for the future.

I suggested to Stone that he go with me then and meet Goebel in conference. He agreed.... I hurriedly told Goebel of the happenings of the night. I put them in the hack together.³¹

Stone promised not to tell Ollie or Rhea what had been discussed, but they later found out about an agreement. According to its terms, Goebel was to give Stone the support of one-half of the Louisville delegation, about thirty-six delegates, so long as his name was before the convention. Should Goebel be defeated or withdraw his name, he would throw to Stone all of the Louisville votes as well as the other votes that he commanded. Stone was to do the same if he was defeated or withdrew from the race for the nomination. The basis for the pact was the fact that the L. & N., their common enemy, had to be stopped.³² The Courier-Journal headlines on the opening day of the convention read, "Combination Effective." Even though the newspaper's editors knew nothing of the secret agreement between Stone and Goebel, they were aware that they had combined to organize the convention against Hardin.³³

The agreement disturbed James and Joh Rhea. Urey Woodson related James' actions the opening day of the convention:

Ten minutes before the convention was called to order at Music Hall by Major P. P. Johnston, Chairman of the Democratic State Central Committee, Ollie James came to me and said, 'for whom do you fellows want us to vote as temporary chairman?' I just said, 'Go and vote for anybody you please. You sat dumb that night while John Rhea was trying to turn us over to John Whallen, and I am disgusted with you.' Ollie replied, 'Oh, I know you stole old Stone away from us.' Later I said to Ollie, 'When Major Johnston calls the convention to order, you get up and nominate Judge David B. Redwinve for temporary chairman.' Ollie did this. I, across the aisle from him, stood on my chair and seconded the nomination on Redwine. Everybody in the hall immediately sensed the combination.³⁴

After eight hours of voting, Redwine was elected temporary chairman over W. H. Sweeny of Washington County by a majority of only twenty-two votes.³⁵

During the next three days, the convention waited for the Committee on Resolutions to report out a platform. Eventually its resolutions endorsed the various reform measures that had been passed or proposed in the Legislature by Goebel; therefore, no matter who became the candidate, he would still have to stand on a Goebel platform. This led Hardin to withdraw from the race.³⁶ Apparently Goebel, with the convention under his control, had forgotten Stone as he now sought the nomination more fervently for himself. James and Rhea sensed the situation even more clearly as Chairman Redwine made more and more decisions favorable to Goebel.

By this time, the convention had become so disorderly that officials finally asked the mayor of Louisville to send in police to maintain order. Before their intervention one

whole day was wasted because of the blowing of tin horns and ringing of cow bells by anti-Goebel elements. Ollie and Rhea were among the leading horn blowers. This activity, however, proved unsuccessful. Redwine calmly "ate his lunch at his desk while they hissed and hooted him, and continued their horn blowing," according to Woodson.³⁷

After police restored decorum, the convention began the nominations for governor. By now Stone and Goebel were the only contenders. When Louisville cast its entire vote for Goebel, the Stone forces were outraged since this violated the pre-convention agreement. James immediately went to Goebel and gave him three minutes to withdraw or he would bring Hardin back into the race. Goebel, unmoved by this threat, refused to withdraw. James, at this point, changed the votes of his county to Hardin, just as he had threatened to do. Other Stone people also began shifting to Hardin, but Goebel had enough of his own votes switched to Stone to create a deadlock which lasted for the next twenty-four ballots.³⁸

After the twenty-fourth ballot, the convention passed a resolution stating that the candidate with the fewest votes would be dropped. This seemed to be the only way to overcome the impasse created by Louisville's treachery. The result showed: Goebel 389, Hardin 382, and Stone 319. When Stone dropped out, Goebel won the nomination on the twenty-sixth ballot. James C. W. Beckham became his running mate as the convention's nominee for Lieutenant Governor.³⁹

"Goebel wasn't my choice," said James as he returned home quite disappointed, "but he is the candidate and I am for him till the end of time." Unlike some other disappointed Democrats, he immediately began to work for Goebel's election. Some Democrats, refusing to do this, supported exgovernor John Young Brown on an Independent Democratic ticket, while others completely bolted the party in favor of William S. Taylor, the Republican candidate. James did not completely agree with all of Goebel's campaigning techniques, but he did like the way he went after the corporations. Goebel's good points outweighed the bad, and James supported him for that as well as because he was the choice of the convention.⁴⁰

William Jennings Bryan was induced to come to Kentucky to speak in support of Goebel, thus subjecting him to further attacks by the Courier-Journal which had never liked Bryan and only partially endorsed Goebel. The second important newspaper in the State, the Lexington Herald, refused to back Goebel and attacked the Courier-Journal for its partial support. Nevertheless, Goebel and his stump speakers continued their crusade throughout the Commonwealth.⁴¹

On the first of the election returns Goebel appeared the winner by a narrow margin; however, official returns completed a month later showed Taylor the winner. Goebel decided immediately to contest the election. He chose James as one of his lawyers to handle the case. James rarely participated actively in the case, but he did provide advice. On the one occasion that he did address the committee hearing the case,

"Mr. James did little except to make a considerable quantity of noise," wrote the Lexington Herald. "He exercised his lungs and arms," the newspaper further described, "but gave his head nothing to do."⁴²

Throughout January the contest committee continued its hearings. Frankfort was unusually crowded during these tense filled days not only with impartial observers, but partial ones as well. The most partisan group present were the mountaineers--who fully armed in support of Taylor. Despite warnings from close friends and associates, Goebel, still a State Senator, went daily to the Capitol through the large unruly crowd. Goebel arrived at his usual time on the thirteenth of January, but there was no crowd. Not perceptive of this unnatural setting, he reached the Capitol entrance where he was mortally wounded by a sniper.⁴³

While on his deathbed, Goebel was declared Governor by the Legislature. Two days later he died and Beckham succeeded him as Governor. Taylor fled to Indiana where he remained the rest of his life. This exodus occurred after he was implicated in the assassination during the trials of Henry Youtsey and Caleb Powers, both of whom were accused, tried, and sentenced for the deed. James served as a prosecution lawyer in the trials that followed Goebel's assassination, but his role was mainly as an advisor.⁴⁵

The Democratic State Convention met that summer, nominated Beckham for governor, and chose its delegates to the National Democratic Convention in Kansas City. James was elected to

the chairmanship of the State Democratic Central Committee. This meant he would lead the fight for Beckham's election over the Republican nominee, Morris Belknap of Louisville.⁴⁶ Beckham won the election and wanted to appoint James' father to a position on the State's appellate bench as a gift for his son's efforts during the campaign. James declined the offer for his father because he disliked its appearance as a type of political pay-off for his work, even though his father thought otherwise on such matters. Furthermore, he did not want to feel obligated to or be influenced by anyone in politics.⁴⁷

With Beckham's election in 1900, James returned to Marion where he continued to work in the family's law firm. Yet his adventures in politics over the past six years had shown him that law was not exciting enough. Thus when it came time for the congressional elections, he decided to run for the First District congressional seat in the Fifty-eighth Congress.

FOOTNOTES

¹Courier-Journal, June 13, 1895.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.; June 26 and 27, 1895.

⁴Ibid., June 13, 1895.

⁵Ibid., June 14, 1895.

⁶Ibid., June 15, 1895.

⁷See the editorial pages of the Courier-Journal, June 18 thru June 25, 1895, the opening day of the State Democratic Convention.

⁸Courier-Journal, June 26, 1895.

⁹Ibid., June 27 and 28, 1895.

¹⁰Ibid., July 10, 12, 13, October 5, November 7 and 8, 1895; and Hambleton Tapp, "Three Decades of Kentucky Politics: 1870-1900" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1950), pp. 421-29. Hereinafter referred to as Tapp, "Kentucky Politics: 1870-1900."

¹¹Courier-Journal, June 1-3, 1896.

¹²Ibid., June 3, 1896.

¹³Ibid., June 4, 1896; and Tapp, "Kentucky Politics: 1870-1900," pp. 441, 442.

¹⁴Ibid.; and Joseph Frazier Wall, Henry Watterson: Reconstructed Rebel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 225. Hereinafter referred to as Wall, Henry Watterson.

¹⁵C. Vann Woodward, Origins of the New South, 1877-1913, Vol. IX of A History of the South, ed. by Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter (10 vols.; Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), p. 284. Hereinafter referred to as Woodward, Origins of the New South.

¹⁶Wall, Henry Watterson, p. 225.

¹⁷As quoted in Paolo E. Coletta, William Jennings Bryan, (3 vols.; Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), I, 140, 141. Hereinafter referred to as Coletta, Bryan.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 141-47; Courier-Journal, July 10 and 11, 1896; New York Times, July 10 and 11, 1896; James Collection, Murray State University; and James Collection, Louisville Public Library.

¹⁹ Theodore Saloutos, Farmer Movements In the South 1865-1933. Bison Book edition (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), p. 145. Hereinafter referred to as Saloutos, Farmer Movements.

²⁰ Ibid.; Coletta, Bryan, I, 154-60; Paul W. Glad, The Trumpet Soundeth: William Jennings Bryan and His Democracy, 1896-1912 (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1960), pp. 54 and 57; and H. Wayne Morgan, "Populism and the Decline of Agriculture," in The Gilded Age, ed. by H. Wayne Morgan (Revised Edition; Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1970), pp. 168-70.

²¹ James Collection, Louisville Public Library; Wall, Henry Watterson, pp. 226, 227; Woodward, Origins of the New South, p. 287; and Tapp, "Kentucky Politics: 1870-1900," pp. 442-46.

²² Wall, Henry Watterson, pp. 228-32. Also see the Courier-Journal, September 2nd, thru November 2nd., 1896, for its coverage of the Gold Democrats' campaign.

²³ Saloutos, Farmer Movements, pp. 149, 150; Woodward, Origins of the New South, pp. 288, 289; Carl N. Degler, The Age of the Economic Revolution, 1876-1900, American History Series (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Co., n.d.), p. 143; and Courier-Journal, November 4-6, 1896.

²⁴ Wall, Henry Watterson, p. 232; and Courier-Journal November 5, 1896.

²⁵ George R. Leighton, "Louisville, Kentucky, An American Museum Piece," Harper's Magazine, CLXXV (September, 1937), pp. 412, 413.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 412; for a detailed account of Goebel's life and career in Kentucky politics, see Lynn McMillan Brothers, "Goebel's Kentucky" (unpublished M. A. thesis, Eastern Kentucky University, 1972).

²⁷ Ibid., p. 413; and Tapp, "Kentucky Politics: 1870-1900," pp. 456-61.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Courier-Journal, June 18, 1899; and Urey Woodson, The First New Dealer (Louisville, Kentucky: The Standard Press, 1939), pp. 141, 142. Hereinafter referred to as Woodson, The First New Dealer.

³⁰Woodson, The First New Dealer, p. 144; and Courier-Journal, June 20, 1899.

³¹Woodson, The First New Dealer, pp. 144, 145.

³²Ibid., p. 145.

³³Courier-Journal, June 21, 1899.

³⁴Woodson, The First New Dealer, pp. 146, 147.

³⁵Ibid., p. 147; and Courier-Journal, June 22, 1899.

³⁶Woodson, The First New Dealer, p. 148; and Courier-Journal, June 25, 1899.

³⁷Courier-Journal, June 23, 24, 27, 1899; and Woodson, The First New Dealer, pp. 148 and 151.

³⁸James Collection, Murray State University; James Collection, Louisville Public Library; Courier-Journal, June 25, 1899; and Woodson, The First New Dealer, pp. 154, 155.

³⁹James Collection, Murray State University; Courier-Journal, June 28, and 29, 1899; and Woodson, The First New Dealer, pp. 155, 156.

⁴⁰James Collection, Murray State University; and James Collection, Louisville Public Library.

⁴¹Woodson, The First New Dealer, pp. 185-97; and see the months of October and November, 1899, Courier-Journal and Lexington Herald for the battle between them during Goebel's campaign for governor.

⁴²Courier-Journal, November 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, December 9 and 15, 1899; James Collection, Murray State University; James Collection, Louisville Public Library; and Lexington Herald, January 21, 1900.

⁴³Woodson, The First New Dealer, pp. 3-11.

⁴⁴Ibid., pp. 73-138 *passim.*; Courier-Journal, January 3, 1900; and Lexington Herald, January 31, 1900.

⁴⁵James Collection, Murray State University; and James Collection, Louisville Public Library.

⁴⁶Ibid.

⁴⁷James Collection, Murray State University.

CHAPTER III

A Decade In The Minority

James stumped for Bryan in 1900 throughout western Kentucky, but his work proved fruitless. Bryan lost the election, even though he carried Kentucky.¹ James became a popular speaker during this campaign and evolved from a practicing lawyer into a practicing politician--much to his father's dismay.

Early in 1902, at the age of thirty-two, he decided to become a fulltime politician and seek elective office. From the time he served as a page in the Kentucky General Assembly, it had been his ambition to go to the national Congress. His urge to achieve this ambition increased as he became better acquainted with Captain William J. Stone, a former representative from the First Congressional District. James recognized that he had never held public office, but he never considered this a great handicap because he was well known throughout the area. In many ways it was an advantage because he would not have to defend a public record.²

His first opponent was Sam Crossland, a Democrat from Mayfield, but young James won the nomination of the party. His Republican rival in the November election was Cyrus H. Linn.³ James went wholeheartedly into the campaign and

and spoke all over western Kentucky from the Ohio River on the north to the Tennessee line on the south; and from the Mississippi River on the west to the Big Sandy River on the east. He emerged victoriously that November by a majority of 2912 votes despite a light voter turnout in the whole district.⁴ This was his first success as a politician, and afterward, he won re-election to four more terms in the national House of Representatives from Kentucky's First District.

His victory, however, was disappointing to his father, who had funded the campaign. If James would lose the election, his father had thought, it would cure his son's desire for an uncertain career in politics; therefore, he reasoned, his son would remain in their law firm of James & James. The plan backfired, however, when James won the congressional seat. Out of his first pay check, James repaid his father the money he had borrowed. He even insisted on adding a six per cent interest to the loan, but his father was adamant in declining the extra money. He only accepted the original amount of the loan and admitted the loss of an excellent law partner.⁵

James had planned to marry Ruth Thomas, daughter of a Methodist minister in Central City and ten years younger than he, just before the regular session of Congress met; however, when President Theodore Roosevelt called Congress to meet in an extra session to approve a reciprocal commercial treaty between the United States and Cuba in late October of 1903, his wedding plans were changed. During the congressional break between the extra and regular session of Congress, he returned to Marion and was married on the second of December.

his father gave the couple a large two-story brick home as a wedding gift. It was to remain their home the remainder of his life as a type of retreat from life in Washington.⁶

The congressional Democrats were far from being a united group when the Fifty-eight Congress convened in 1903 for the special session. The issues that had divided them over the past ten years were still quite evident. These included the tariff, currency, and the new controversy over imperialism caused by the Spanish-American War. Party leadership fights in Congress helped further divide the already disjointed party. This friction within the party was quite noticeable in the pre-caucus fight that occurred over the position of House minority floor leader. The contestants were John Sharp Williams of Mississippi, David A. DeArmond and Champ Clark, both from Missouri.⁷ Divided internally as well as being the minority faction in Congress, the Democratic party was virtually an impotent opposition element during the first eight years that James served as a representative. After the 1910 congressional elections, however, it became the majority party in the House and thus was in charge of the lower congressional body organization. By this period much of the inner strife had been overcome and, as a consequence, the party began to function as a working unit.

The special session ended on the seventh of December, 1903, and the regular session began immediately the same day. Due to the nature and shortness of the special session, James

could not give a maiden speech; therefore, when the regular session convened, he was granted an hour to speak. His subject was William Goebel, a man he had not previously supported, but later defended.

The bill he introduced at the beginning of the session concerned the extradition of fugitives in general, but it was aimed primarily at ex-Kentucky governor, William S. Taylor, who had left the Commonwealth upon his implication in the Goebel assassination. Taylor had found refuge in Indiana where Governor Winfield T. Durbin refused to honor the requisitions of Kentucky for his return to stand trial. The bill provided that in a case where a governor failed to honor a requisition request, a circuit or district judge of the United States might order complicity.⁸

The new Congressman pointed out to his colleagues that Roosevelt, a Republican, had said in his message concerning the refusal of Mexico to extradite bribe givers and bribe takers, that they should be hunted down even if it meant crossing the ocean. "Very well and good" summarized James, "but let us cross the Ohio River first and bring back the murderer to Kentucky before you do that."⁹ This drew applause from other House Democrats, so he moved on to cite another example from the Republican party to support further his bill. Congress would immediately pass such a measure, said James, if the murderer of a Republican president was free in Kentucky, and no excuses, such as the ones being given by the Indiana governor, would be tolerated. Governor Durbin's plea that Taylor would not have a fair trial in Kentucky was untrue,

said James, because Republicans had a majority in the Kentucky Court of Appeals, the highest court in the Commonwealth.¹⁰

James concluded that the conduct of Governor Durbin, when "viewed under every search light, measured by every yardstick, weighed in every balance," was such an outrage that the "English language could not properly characterize it." Representative Edgar D. Crumpacker of Indiana criticized James' address as an "unwarranted and ill-tempered attack" upon his governor, and added that it amounted to an "impassioned and vitriolic denunciation" not only of the governor but the entire state as well.¹² At this point the debate grew more heated as other representatives from Kentucky and Indiana took part. Though the same bill was re-introduced in subsequent sessions during James' many terms in the House; however, no congressional action was ever taken.

James was a member of the House during the administrations of Theodore Roosevelt and William H. Taft. As a consequence, he was a part of the early progressive movement on the national level of government and involved in reforms pointing toward greater social and economic justice in the United States. His participation in progressive ideas can be traced to Bryan and the subsequent Democratic platforms after the presidential election of 1896. He never introduced any original progressive legislation, but endorsed such measures as tariff reform, a graduated income tax and anti-trust measures. The Democratic party, being the minority most of his ten years in the House, never succeeded in having any of

its own legislation passed, but voted for progressive changes proposed by Roosevelt and Taft. The progressive tendency clearly was no longer confined to one party.

Much of the Republican progressive legislation passed during this era of Republican congressional domination had been embodied earlier in the Democratic proposals of Bryan. One such example which drew James' attention was the regulation of railroad rates. It was not the bill itself that James opposed, for the Democrats had a similar bill; it was the fact that the Republicans were taking full credit for the piece of legislation, as if they were the leaders in advocating it. When the railroad rate measure was being discussed, James pointed this out after Representative John Daizell of Pennsylvania, a Republican, stated that the Democrats had found that Roosevelt was a good man to follow because they were supporting the bill. The question James put forth for House consideration was whether Roosevelt was "leading Democracy," or whether he had "come to understand from the mutterings of discontent throughout the Republic that the Democratic party was right," and was now attempting to lead its troopers. "The truth is," James asserted to the House, "Roosevelt is leading this, but he is wearing the uniform of Democracy."¹³ In 1896, James continued in a tribute to Bryan's leadership of progressivism:

...we beheld the unmatched and brilliant Bryan standing in the wilderness, crying out to the people through his platform for this regulation by-law, for this control of these great arteries of commerce; and I charge to-day [sic] that Roosevelt has taken this plank out of the Democratic platform

that bears the bloody stain of Bryan's faith-
ful feet, and is holding it up to this Congress as
a panacea for existing woes.... And I come asking
that you shall render unto Caesar the things that
are Caesar's.'¹⁴

Thinking the bill offered by the Democratic minority was better than the Republican bill, James intended to vote for the minority bill. If it failed, however, he would vote for the administration's bill because it was a step in the right direction. Therefore, "we welcome him [Roosevelt] to the head of the column, and behind him the Democracy will walk with unfaltering step," boasted James, "whether the band plays Dixie or Yankee Doodle."¹⁵ At this point, James expanded his attention to other areas of needed legislation which the Democrats had proposed and suggested that Roosevelt should begin consideration of tariff reform, destruction of trusts, and suppression of private monopolies. "We know that the soldier of the United States followed Roosevelt gallantly when he charged San Juan Hill," James roared loudly, "but no more bravely,...then the Democrats will follow him when he charges," what the Kentuckian labeled as "the Vanderbilt--Morgan--Cossat--Harriman--Hills of wealth and greed," with planks from the platforms of his party.¹⁶ For the remainder of James' terms in the House, he never let the Republicans forget that the Democrats had originally proposed the reforms that Congress was now enacting.

James' attacks upon the trusts were never an outright thing, but evolved in connection with other consideration. For example, he once proposed an amendment to an agricultural appropriation bill which provided for entomological surveys

in connection with crop ravages. James' amendment provided that tobacco pests be included in the survey. The defense of his amendment turned into an attack on the tobacco trust which controlled the tobacco crops of Kentucky. Again using colorful expressions, he described a tobacco farmer of western Kentucky who toiled from plant to plant in the burning sun to make a meager living, only to have the price paid for his crop forced down by the tobacco trust in the area.¹⁷ Many other bills for farm relief had been passed by the House and been consistently voted down by the Senate, yet James reminded his colleagues that a subsidy for ship owners had passed easily. The farmers had no desire for a subsidy, but if so, James was confident he could make a better case for them than could be argued for the recently passed ship trust bill.

Upon the side of the farmers would be their poverty, their hungry families, their thatched roofs, their mortgaged farms, and their wretched hopes--all would be silent yet eloquent witnesses in their behalf. Those to whom the ship subsidy goes have everything that gold can buy, spend their summers in the cool breezes by the seaside, and their winters in the sunny climate of the South.¹⁸

He expressed his hopes that the Senate would pass a law removing the tax on tobacco because "half a loaf as it is" would still help to "overthrow a set of men meaner than those who gambled for Christ's raiment."¹⁹ He was extremely articulate on this subject because at this time "night rider" trouble between the tobacco growers and trusts prevailed in part of his congressional district. Therefore, the removal of the six cent tax on tobacco crops would be advantageous to many of his constituents.²⁰

James' major committee assignment throughout his career was Banking and Currency. It involved him in major issues occurring in the House. Accordingly, he voiced his opposition to Wall Street and the trusts during the debate over House Resolution 23017 (the Fowler Currency bill). The bill, he maintained, was the "making of a rag baby dollar" where bankers could borrow money without interest, while farmers, whose land was subject to frost, drought, and flood, toiled in order for this to occur. The bankers' argument for the measure was that the money aided in moving crops. "They help to move them into your hands," James agreed bitterly. "One may be a bull today, a bear tomorrow, but that he is always a hog," was the synthesis he reached about Wall Street bankers and their control over the nation's money, stock market, and banks. In a final appeal against passage of the Fowler bill, he termed it "un-American, undemocratic, and un-patriotic."²¹

Another measure, the Vreeland Currency bill, provided for the issuance of additional currency at the discretion of the Secretary of the Treasury. James attacked it as bitterly as he had denounced the Fowler proposal stating that "to give a man the power of a giant is to allow him to be a tyrant."²² His attitudes towards trusts, Wall Street, and centralized control of governmental politics and power marked him as a rural progressive similar to Bryan. The Kentuckian's efforts as a protector of the agricultural interests of his home area, as well as the whole western and southern farm region of the United States, amplified further this position.

James supported the constitutional amendment for the income tax by saying that the issue had been "put off thirteen year too long."²³ What had hurt the income tax bill in Congress was the effort by some Republicans to keep the tax off citizens made wealthy by the protective tariff. Now that the Supreme Court had ruled the act unconstitutional, James suggested that the law be re-tested and an amendment added to the Constitution. It was a just and fair law, he urged, "so righteous that it might almost be called the 'golden rule of taxation.'"²⁴ The income tax amendment was later approved by both houses of Congress, after which James went to Frankfort to speak to Kentucky Democrats on behalf of the amendment.²⁵

An attempt at tariff reduction occurred in 1909 in a special session called by President Taft, but the outcome was the splitting of the Republican party rather than a lower tariff. The tariff reduction issue and the Republican split helped the Democrats gain control of the House in the congressional elections of 1910. James' role was very minor. He did ask a large number of question during the tariff debate, but his only major comments came on behalf of a tariff reduction on lumber. This speech, again quite colorful, "created greater enthusiasm than any which has been delivered on the Democratic side since the tariff debate began," editorialized the Lexington Herald.²⁶

Another issue James became involved in was the restoration of the motto upon coins, "In God we trust." President Roosevelt had it removed because he thought that such a

sentence should be treated and uttered only with a sense of reverence. James introduced the first bill asking for the motto's restoration, which was followed by many other bills of the same nature. In speaking for the bill, James stated:

It was said that there was fun made of the motto; that some men would take a dollar up and make fun of it because it had upon it, 'In God we trust.' Two thousand years ago the Bible said there would be such men, because the fool hath said in his hear 'there is no God.'²⁸

James concluded the logic of Roosevelt's argument would lead to the removal of every church in this nation. "This trust in God," declared James, was "the one trust on this land in which the poor are stockholders." This trust, he further explained, had been our motto since Francis Scott Key wrote the "Star Spangled Banner," but if the motto was not reinstated, the song would have to be rewritten.²⁹ After this speech the House burst into a loud roar of applause and later passed the bill by a vote of 259 to 5.

When the Democrats took control of the House in 1911, they removed Republican Joseph Cannon and replaced him with Champ Clark as Speaker of the House. The Kentuckian's first speech under the new Democratic speaker dealt with the constitutional amendment for the direct election of Senators. "The Democratic national platform for many years has urges this reform," opened James. "And I am delighted now...to know that this reform for which the Democratic party was pioneer" meets with almost unanimous approval by the entire nation. The direct election of senators would reduce the opportunity for corruption of the state and national levels of government

because, as the system existed, the election of senators by state legislatures was "one of the most favored means of corrupting men."³⁰ James appealed to members of the House, in conclusion, to make the Senate what it ought to be, "a body in which the representatives of the people, elected by the people, represent truly the people."³¹

As a congressman, James had to return to the Commonwealth quite often, not only to keep in touch with his district needs, but also to seek re-election. Throughout his entire House career, Kentucky Democrats remained in factions which inevitably involved every Democrat, no matter how he may have tried to remain above the battles. The State Democratic Convention of 1904 was controlled by the Beckham administration. James nominated Beckham for temporary chairman, calling him the "young Daniel of the Kentucky Democracy," who read to Belknap and his Republican followers "the handwriting of Kentucky's indignant people upon the wall."³²

That Convention elected James as a delegate-at-large to attend the National Democratic Convention at St. Louis. He went to the national convention pledged to Bryan, but the Kentucky delegation, as a unit, was uninstructed. As the Committee on Resolution was writing the party's platform, James was appointed chairman of the committee to wait upon the Resolution Committee and to report its progress. On the third day, James announced to the convention's delegates that the report of the Resolution Committee would be unanimous. This

was good news for the convention, but bad news for Republicans who hoped that the debate over the platform would split the party.³³

The national convention, however was controlled by the conservative element of the party which had been ousted in 1896. A new split in the party seemed inevitable as old battle lines were drawn again between Bryan and Cleveland. Both had stated earlier that they did not want the nomination themselves, but it soon became clear that each wanted to control the convention and the party by having a candidate nominated that would carry out his objectives. The battle between the two political giants went off behind closed doors and the convention never fully knew what took place. The Committee on Resolutions did report unanimously, just as James had announced, but the platform was not a complete victory for either side. It showed signs of compromises between the two arch enemies.³⁴

In the end, the Bryan forces lost more ground as Alton Parker, lieutenant of Cleveland from New York, won the nomination. Parker stated that he favored the gold standard and if the convention was dissatisfied, the delegate could remove his name from the ticket. James, one of the dissatisfied delegates, appeared on almost every corner of St. Louis, according to one source, calling for Parker's removal and his replacement by "old man Bryan."³⁵ His efforts met with little success except for making him quite noticeable to the people of St. Louis.

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James sought re-election that year, and compared to his first nomination by the district's Democrats, this one, wrote a newspaper of his district, was "cheap."³⁶ There were no other aspirants for the position, and as a consequence, he did not have to announce in any of the district's newspapers, much less make an active canvass of the district. He had two opponents in the November election, Trigg Countian Populist J. H. Lackey and Republican J. C. Speight. As election day approached, James took a larger lead and successfully won the election. Parker was not as successful as James, and neither were other Democrats nationwide. The country went Rooseveltian and not Republican. The reason for this was that most Bryan Democrats as well as Socialists and Populist preferred Roosevelt to Parker.³⁷

Though factionalism was present in Kentucky in the 1906 election, it did not present itself as clearly as it would two and four years later. Beckham succeeded himself as governor in 1903 because he had not previously served a complete term by forty-five days. However, during his second term many Democrats of the State fell out with him over his promotion of a new State Capitol in south Frankfort and prohibition. James' opposition to Beckham manifested itself in the prohibition question, but it grew over a period of time because James supported the idea of local option which allowed each county to decide the prohibition question for itself.³⁸

The James' family was divided as the Commonwealth on the question of prohibition and local option. The elder James voted dry, but was willing to buy in a wet county. His elder brother, Edgar, did not drink and voted dry. The rationale for their vote was that some people of their county might neglect necessities for liquor; therefore, it was best to remove the temptation from their paths. James, though not a heavy drinker, felt the same way. Later as Senator, he personally opposed national prohibition, but said that if the people of his state wanted it, he would vote their sentiments. He preferred to leave it on a local option basis because it was better to let the people rule, "for when you do they will sustain the law; if you do not, they will violate it." To James, every community was so good as the public sentiment of its people.³⁹

The 1907 State Democratic Convention was controlled by the Beckham forces, but stiff opposition unfolded. James was mentioned as a strong candidate for governor, but sensing that factional differences would arise, he refused to let his name go before the convention. Therefore, Judge S. H. Hager won the nomination. The whole ticket devoted itself to promoting statewide prohibition while the Republicans and their nominee, Augustus E. Willson, opposed it. As a result, Willson won in November by a landslide.⁴⁰ The Republicans had benefited again from Democratic factionalism just as they had earlier done in 1895. The ramifications of the Democrats' loss was much greater

than it appeared on the surface. Besides losing control of all the state office, they also lost control of the legislature even though they managed to maintain their majority. Badly divided between anti-Beckham "wet" and pro-Beckham "dry" forces, this majority, in a year in which the State Legislature had to pick a new senator, surrendered to the Republicans a national Senate seat.

James remained in Washington during the legislative battle for the Senate seat, but he did not remain out of the struggle for long. The contest between Beckham and William O. Bradley was close. The final result would depend upon the votes of four Democrats, each of whom bolted the party separately on each ballot taken. They were State Senator H. S. McNutt of Louisville on the first ballot; State Senator Albert H. Charlton of Louisville on the second; Representative E. W. Lillard of Boyle County on the third; and representative Chris Mueller of Louisville on the fourth ballot.⁴¹ The election had remained deadlock before Mueller's defection from Democratic ranks. Louis W. Arnett, Representative from Covington, overheard some Bradley men say that they were offering \$25,000 for the needed vote. He went immediately to see Garrett Wall, a close friend of Beckham and the Frankfort representative of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad Company.

Arnett suggested that Beckham withdraw from the race and be replaced by John C. Mayo, who appeared acceptable to both sides of the divided party. Mayo was also the one candidate Mueller would vote for. However, Beckham refused to withdraw

and his manager, Percy Haly, said it would either be Beckham or a Republican.⁴² Upon this, Arnett wired James in Washington that he would nominate him for Senator. Receiving no immediate answer from James, Arnett assumed that James agreed to the last minute proposal to save the seat for a party man. James, however, did answer the telegram in a round about way. It was sent to his State Senator, P. S. Maxwell. It read,

Governor Beckham is the choice of the Democratic party in Kentucky for U. S. Senator. As such he is entitled to the loyal support of all Democrats. I sincerely trust all of my friends will support him.⁴³

Arnett, not knowing of James' telegram, nominated James the next day. Mueller voted for Mayo while other Democrats split their votes between former Governor James B. McCreary, Beckham, and James, thereby perpetuating the deadlock. The following day, Mueller went over to the Republican side and Bradley won the Senate seat for the next six years.⁴⁴

After this outright defeat for the party, a new effort was made to end the party's stifling factionalism before the next state convention four months later. The common ground for the new unity was the common enemy of the whole party-- the Republicans who controlled the State. Reformers went all out to publicize this new-found harmony. On the convention's opening day, the Courier-Journal's headlines as well as those of the Lexington Herald announced boldly that anti-Republicanism and Bryan for president in 1908 would be the rallying point for the convention. The unity did last throughout the state convention, and the delegation to the National

Democratic Convention, with James as Chairman, arrived in Denver instructed to cast Kentucky's votes for Bryan.⁴⁵

Upon his defeat in 1904, Alton Parker stated that he would not run again and with Theodore Roosevelt out of the race by his own choice, Bryan began his campaign for 1908 for years ahead of time. Of course, he did not enjoy the support of the conservative element of the national party, and the battle over the party's platform again threatened to split the national organization. Nevertheless, Bryan had enough strength to control the convention, to get the platform he wanted, and to secure for himself the nomination. The matter of a vice-president was the question that remained to be settled. Judge George Gray, of Delaware, was the favorite of many of the delegations, but he refused the position. Bryan virtually insisted on a man from the East for strengthening the ticket.⁴⁶ The delegations from Massachusetts, Connecticut and some other states stated that they would support James if he came out and made an active fight for the position, but James bowed out by agreeing with Bryan that his name would not help the ticket because he was a southerner. In fact, he was so against the thought of his name being presented to the convention that he warned if the occasion arose, he would tell the convention himself how he felt in no uncertain terms. James had his way and the position went to John W. Kern, Indiana's favorite son.⁴⁷

After the convention, speculation arose concerning James' refusal of the position. One of his area's major newspapers, the Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, explained it

by stating that his ambition was to be Speaker of the House if Bryan was elected. This, the news report claimed, was assured to be his because of his close ties to Bryan.

"Champ Clark would like to be Speaker, and so would DeArmond," the article further pointed out, but even with their entrance into the race, "James, it is figured, would win the victory."⁴⁸

James never commented upon this speculation as he stumped throughout Kentucky in behalf of Bryan. The Nebraskan again carried the Commonwealth but lost the election to William H. Taft, who had the backing of successful outgoing President Theodore Roosevelt. Again James was re-elected by the First District to the House for a fourth consecutive time.⁴⁹

Two years later James ran unopposed for a fifth term as the State's Democratic party prepared for another governor's race in 1911.⁵⁰ By January, the election campaign was in full swing, as was the factionalism within the party over prohibition. Ben Johnson, a former congressman from the Fourth District, had announced his candidacy, but he was unacceptable to the "dry" element of the party. They wanted former Governor James B. McCreary, who would be convinced without much trouble to align with their cause. To stop the lead that Johnson had built up, they interjected the issue of religion into the campaign. Johnson, a Roman Catholic, quickly saw his support melt away and finally withdrew, but only after bitterly denouncing those who opposed him on religious grounds.⁵¹

Upon his withdrawal, only McCreary, William Addams of Cythiana and Louisville's Mayor, W. O. Head, remained in contention. James, by this time, had announced his aspiration

for the Senate seat which was also available. His name, as well as that of Representative A. Owsley Stanley from the Second District, was proposed as a possible candidate in the governor's race after Johnson's withdrawal, but neither entered the race. By the July first primary, the field had only two contestants, Addams and McCreary. McCreary won easily, due to the fact that Addams was not well known throughout the State as McCreary, a former Governor. The Republicans ran Judge Edward C. O'Rear against McCreary in the November election.⁵²

At primary time, McCreary had not committed himself definitely either way on the prohibition question. The wet element of the party leadership consisted of Henry Watterson, A. Owsley Stanley, J. Campbell Cantrill, and James. They tried to convince McCreary, just before the State convention by cornering him in a hotel room, to oppose the adoption of the proposed plank to the platform endorsing the County Unit Law (local option). They attributed the party's defeat in 1907 to the prohibition issue and wanted to insure a victory in this election. McCreary's campaign, already in financial trouble, had accepted \$100,000 from the Beckham forces' chief lieutenant, Percy Haly, and as a consequence, McCreary feared that Haly's money could also be used to defeat him. As a result, he refused to bend under the pressure of James and the "west." McCreary announced his endorsement of the County Unit Law and thus the "dry" faction under Beckham leadership took complete control of the convention as well as the State's party.⁵³

Simultaneously with these events, James was deeply involved in a heated contest for the nomination for the senate seat held by Thomas H. Paynter. Paynter, also a Democrat, decided in late March to ask for the endorsement of the party again and he stated to the press that he thought he could do more for Kentucky than James in the Senate by reason of having been there for four years already. Besides this, James had served in the House for eight years and had recently been placed on the important Ways and Means Committee. He could now serve the Commonwealth more efficiently than he already had, according to Paynter's reasoning. He asserted that "by electing Mr. James Senator, Kentucky would lose an excellent man in the lower house of Congress as well as him [Paynter] in the upper." Therefore, it would be to "the advantage of the state to retain experienced men in both branches."⁵⁴ Yet such reasoning by Paynter did not cause James to withdraw.

Several days later, James announced that he would officially open his campaign at Nicholasville on the seventeenth of April and invited Paynter to debate with him on that day. James explained that he would concentrate his campaign efforts on national issues and discuss his record in the House as compared to that of Paynter's in the Senate.⁵⁵ Paynter refused to accept the invitation because he believed that the success of the party depended on "absolute harmony." In a letter released by James to the press, Paynter further stated:

As we are in accord upon the cardinal principles of the democratic party, any discussion between us, would necessarily degenerate into one of a personal character and would have a tendency to injure the common cause which we both so earnestly support. Let us be big enough to subordinate our personal ambitions to the cause of democracy and hence our country.⁵⁶

"I have nothing personal against Mr. Paynter; we are good friends," claimed James in response to the former's refusal, "but it is Senator Paynter, the official, whose record I wish to discuss and which the people are entitled to hear discussed."⁵⁷

At Nicholasville, James set the exact tone of his attack on Senator Paynter, the official and not the man, as he had promised. On that opening day, James said that his opponent was not representative of Kentucky's Democrats, charged that Paynter's record showed him to be "retrogressive, not progressive" and that his record also showed him "tainted with protectionism." Furthermore, by virtue of his high absenteeism, Kentucky had not been represented when important questions came up for vote. James read from the Congressional Record to prove his accusations. Out of 122 roll calls on the Payne-Alrich tariff, Paynter had voted only 75 times, failed to vote 47 times and was absent 38 times; thus James concluded, that the Commonwealth was represented in the Senate no more than one third of the time.⁵⁸

Paynter's rebuttal was that James had not "fairly and accurately" shown his record, but he did not elaborate. Returning to the offensive, James said he could and would prove his charges anytime, and he reissued his invitation

for a debate while he stumped the state the first half of May. Paynter consistently and wisely refused each invitation.⁵⁹ James' attacks on Paynter's records increased in intensity until on the twenty-fourth of June, before the July primary, Paynter withdrew from the race. It was a form of concession to James before the populace could choose between them.⁶⁰

Thus James had now only to wait for the State Legislature to decide between him and the Republican nominee, Edwin Porch Morrow, nephew of Republican Senator William O. Bradley.⁶¹ Winning the Senate seat by a vote of seventy-four to twenty-four in the House and by a vote of thirty-one to four in the Senate, he was to take his seat as United States Senator from Kentucky in March of the following year. In his address of acceptance before the joint session of the Legislature, he pledged himself to vote for the income tax, a reformed and reduced tariff, and to uphold the doctrine of states' rights.⁶² Thus he began his climb to greater personal fame as well as providing enhanced prestige and honor to Kentucky.

FOOTNOTES

- ¹Courier-Journal, November 7-9, 1900.
- ²James Collection, Murray State University; and James Collection, Louisville Public Library.
- ³Ibid.; and Courier-Journal, May 6, 1902.
- ⁴James Collection, Murray State University; and Courier-Journal, November 5, 1902.
- ⁵James Collection, Murray State University.
- ⁶Ibid.; Courier-Journal, October 21, 1903; and Special Historical Supplement, Crittenden Press, December 7, 1972.
- ⁷George C. Osborn, John Sharp Williams: Planter--States-Man of the Deep South (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), pp. 108-110; Hereinafter referred to as Osborn, John Sharp Williams; and Thomas Warren Ramage "Augustus Owsley Stanley" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, University of Kentucky, 1968), p. 18. Hereinafter referred to as Ramage, "Stanley."
- ⁸U. S. Congress, House, 58th Cong., 2nd sess., February 3, 1904, Congressional Record, p. 1572.
- ⁹Ibid., p. 1573.
- ¹⁰Ibid.
- ¹¹Ibid., p. 1574.
- ¹²Ibid.
- ¹³U. S. Congress, House, 58th Cong., 3rd sess., February 8, 1905, Congressional Record, p. 2094.
- ¹⁴Ibid., p. 2095.
- ¹⁵Ibid., pp. 2095 and 96.
- ¹⁶Ibid., p. 2096.
- ¹⁷U. S. Congress, House, 59th Cong., 2nd sess., January 30, 1907, Congressional Record, p. 1972.
- ¹⁸Ibid., p. 1973.
- ¹⁹Ibid., pp. 1972, 1973.

²⁰See Marie Taylor, "Night Riders in the Black Patch War" (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Kentucky, 1934); John G. Miller, The Black Patch War, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1936; James O. Nail, The Tobacco Night Riders of Kentucky and Tennessee, 1905-1909. Louisville, 1939; and Harry H. Krell, Riders in the Night. Philadelphia, 1965, all of which are detail accounts of the Black Patch War throughout western Kentucky.

²¹U. S. Congress, House, 59th Cong., 2nd sess., February 16, 1907, Congressional Record, pp. 3128-32.

²²U. S. Congress, House, 60th Cong., 1st sess., May 14, 1908, Congressional Record, p. 6253.

²³Ibid., March 25, 1909, p. 268.

²⁴Ibid., July 12, 1909, p. 4398.

²⁵Courier-Journal, January 4, 1910.

²⁶Lexington Herald, March 30, 1909.

²⁷U. S. Congress, House, 60th Cong., 1st sess., March 16, 1908, Congressional Record, p. 3385.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰U. S. Congress, House, 62nd Cong., 1st sess., April 13, 1911, Congressional Record, p. 216.

³¹Ibid.

³²Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, June 17, 1904; and Courier-Journal, June 9, 1904.

³³Courier-Journal, June 9, 1904 and July 9, 1904; and Milton W. Blumenberg, compiles, Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, 1904 (New York: Press of the publishers' Printing Company, 1904), pp. 66 and 142.

³⁴Courier-Journal, July 9, 10, 1904; New York Times, July 8, 9, 10, 1904; and Coletta, Bryan, I, 327-36, 344, 345.

³⁵Charles Willis Thompson, Presidents I've Known and Two Near Presidents (Indianapolis, Indiana: The Bobbs-Merall Company, 1929), pp. 58, 59.

³⁶Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, April 1, 1904.

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³⁷Ibid., September 30, 1904; Courier-Journal, November 9-11, 1904; New York Times, November 9, 1904; and Coletta, Bryan, I, 345.

³⁸Orval W. Baylor, J. Dan Talbott: Champion of Good Government, (Louisville, Kentucky: Kentucky Printing Corporation, 1942), pp. 56-59. Hereinafter referred to as Baylor, J. Dan Talbott. James Collection, Murray State University.

³⁹James Collection, Murray State University.

⁴⁰O. O. Stealey, 130 Pen Pictures of Live Men (Washington D. C.: n.p. 1910), pp. 233, 234. Hereinafter referred to as Stealey, 130 Pen Pictures. Baylor, J. Dan Talbott, pp. 58-62; and Courier-Journal, November 6 and 7, 1907.

⁴¹Baylor, J. Dan Talbott, pp. 64, 65; and Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, March 3, 1908.

⁴²Baylor, J. Dan Talbott, pp. 65-68.

⁴³Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, February 25, 1908.

⁴⁴Ibid., March 3, 1908; and Baylor, J. Dan Talbott, p. 68.

⁴⁵Lexington Herald, June 11, 12, 1908; Courier-Journal, June 11, 12, July 6, 1908.

⁴⁶Coletta, Bryan, I, 353, 392, and 409.

⁴⁷Ibid., 409, 410; Courier-Journal, July 7, 10, 11, 1908; Stealey, 130 Pen Pictures, p. 233.

⁴⁸Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, September 8, 1908.

⁴⁹Courier-Journal, November 4, 1908.

⁵⁰Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, October 11, 1910.

⁵¹Baylor, J. Dan Talbott, pp. 69, 70; Courier-Journal, February 4, 1911; and Lexington Herald, February 4, 1911.

⁵²Baylor, J. Dan Talbott, pp. 71-73; Courier-Journal, July 2, 3, 1911; and Lexington Herald, July 2, 3, 1911.

⁵³Baylor, J. Dan Talbott, pp. 74-77; Courier-Journal, August 14-17, 1911; Wall, Henry Watterson, pp. 267, 268, and Ramage, "Stanley," pp. 94-96.

⁵⁴Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, March 31, 1911; Lexington Herald, March 31, 1911; and Courier-Journal, March 31, 1911.

⁵⁵Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, April 11, 1911; Lexington Herald, April 10, 1911; and Courier-Journal, April 10, 1911.

⁵⁶James Collection, Murray State University (only part of Senator Paynter's letter is located in the collection); Courier-Journal, April 16, 1911; Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, April 18, 1911; and Lexington Herald, April 16, 1911.

⁵⁷Courier-Journal, April 17, 1911.

⁵⁸Ibid., April 18, 1911; Lexington Herald, April 18, 1911; and Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, April 21, 1911.

⁵⁹Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, April 25, 1911.

⁶⁰Ibid., June 27, 1911; James Collection, Louisville Public Library; and Courier-Journal, June 23, 25, 26, 1911.

⁶¹G. Glen Clif, Governors of Kentucky: 1792-1942, Kentucky Sesquicentennial Edition (Cynthiana, Kentucky: Hobson Press, 1942), p. 121.

⁶²Courier-Journal, January 10, 1912; Princeton Twice-A-Week Leader, January 12, 1912; and James Collection, Murray State University.

CHAPTER IV

The Wilson Years

After ten years of prior service in the House of Representatives, James did not have to learn the legislative ropes of Congress as most new Senators; therefore, his experience was invaluable to him. Furthermore, the start of his Senate career marked the beginning of a Democratic majority in both Houses of Congress, which would last a decade, just as their minority had done the previous decade. It also marked the beginning of Democratic party unity under its new leader, President Woodrow Wilson.

The new Senator's first committee assignments included: Civil Service and Retrenchment, Claims, Conservation of National Resources, District of Columbia, Enrolled Bills, Finance, Geological Survey, Investigate Trespassers Upon Indian Lands, Pacific Islands and Puerto Rico, and Patents, of which he was the chairman his entire term. As he gained more seniority in the Senate his committee assignments increased in prestige until he was assigned to the Rules Committee during the second session of the Sixty-fifth Congress in 1917.¹

Since early 1910, the Democrats had been increasing their majority in Congress as the Republicans had increasingly been splitting into their own factions under Taft's leadership. By 1912, Republicans were definite divided in pro-

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Taft and anti-Taft or pro-Roosevelt factions, as well as an insurgent faction within the party. Thus the presidential election of that year was of vital importance to the Democrats if they were to profit politically from the Republican plight. Bryan had remained at the head of the Democratic party since 1896 and had been its standard bearer in every presidential election, except 1904, since that time. After his defeat in 1908, he announced that he would not seek the nomination again, thus opening the way for new leadership.² Early contenders included Woodrow Wilson, progressive governor of New Jersey; Oscar W. Underwood of Alabama, pre-eminent Democratic tariff reformer and chairman of the House of Representative' Ways and Means Committee; and Champ Clark of Missouri, Speaker of the House and former native of Kentucky.

The Kentucky delegation went to the Baltimore National Democratic Convention instructed to vote for Champ Clark, but only after the State's party had gone through another inner-party factional battle. This struggle was not between supporters of Wilson and Clark, but between "wets" led by James, Henry Watterson, A. Owsley Stanley, and J. Campbell Cantrill, and "drys" led by Beckham, Percy Haly, and James B. McCreary. They differed as to which faction would control the party's machinery in the State. The "wets" had earlier suffered a shattering defeat at the 1911 State Convention and were determined this time to gain control of the party's machinery.³

When the State's Democrats met in Louisville on the twenty-sixth of May, most county delegations were for Clark. This was apparently the only unifying element of the whole convention. The "wets" wanted James as temporary chairman, but his election depended on the decision of State Central Committee Chairman, Henry Prewitt of Mt. Sterling, concerning contested delegations. Prewitt had been elected to his position through the efforts of the James, Watterson, and Stanley cliqué in 1908. They thought him at that time to be aligned with their views; however, he proved unreliable by ruling consistently in favor of the "drys" when deciding the seating of contested delegations. Sensing that their cause was lost, James nominated himself for temporary chairman. Stanley immediately seconded his nomination. James lost by a vote of 658 to 557 and so did the "wet" in their effort to gain control of the party's machinery. Nevertheless, James as well as Stanley was chosen as delegate-at-large to attend the National Democratic Convention.⁶

When the delegates arrived in Baltimore, Clark had a commanding lead over Wislom, who had lost some delegates to Underwood, also a southerner. As a consequence, the convention's organization was the crucial test for all three candidates. James, a Bryan man, was a staunch Clark backer; however, Bryan was a Wilson supporter. Bryan and Joseph P. Tumulty, fearing that convention members, impression of Wilson as a rank conservative would lose him the nomination, decided that they had to win over the various progressive elements.

Wilson was nominated for the position of permanent chairman. They had three reasons for wanting him. The first was the fact that he was both a Clark supporter and also a devoted follower of Bryan; thus, he could be relied upon to give all a fair deal. The second reason was that even if their attempt to nominate James failed, the impression would still be made upon the convention's delegates that Wilson was not a rank conservative. The third reason was that they were not afraid to trust their cause to a Clark man such as James because he had for many years been the idol of convention crowds.⁵

The Wilson forces succeeded in this move, and Bryan "jubilantly telephoned Wilson that it was 'just the thing' for it was better to have him [James] preside than act as leader of the Clark forces."⁶ Bryan's earlier defeat, during a pre-convention meeting of the Democratic National Committee over James nomination for the position of temporary chairman, made him even more jubilant over James election to the permanent chairmanship. At the pre-convention meeting James had been nominated as a compromise candidate for the temporary chairmanship of the convention between the Wilson and Clark forces. Yet Judge Alton B. Parker of New York was selected over James as the committee choice to go before the convention for election. Bryan and Clark were very bitter over this defeat since Parker was not a pronounced progressive as James was.⁷ It was important that the temporary chairman be a strong progressive because his chief function would be

to make the key-note speech to the convention, while the permanent chairman's principal duty was to preside and to oversee the business of the convention.

Overall, James' election as permanent chairman had several important ramifications. First, it showed that the progressive sentiment was rising at the convention, since the delegates knew the difference between Parker and James' attitudes' on progressivism. Secondly, it showed Wilson's chances were improving for receiving the presidential nomination, if the convention delegates were set on nominating a strong progressive.⁸ Thirdly, and perhaps most important, James' election was a shrewd and well calculated move by Bryan and Tumulty, for it eliminated one of the Clark forces' prime men who could have possibly influenced undecided delegates to come to Clark's side. This would be especially true if Underwood was eliminated or withdrew from the race, thereby freeing his delegates.

James' acceptance speech for the post of permanent chairman set the tone for the progressive platform that was to emerge. He harassed President Taft for his veto of tariff reform, as well as for his veto of bills which would have helped destroy trusts. He summed up the majority of the convention delegates' attitude on the trust question when he stated that they were not opposed to big business, as a big country had to have big business,

...but we say with all the emphasis of our souls that big business, like little business, must obey

the law.... We would strike from these trusts every character of protection. We would write a tariff law strictly for revenue only, and place the tax first upon the luxuries, and if that did not produce sufficient revenue, then upon the comforts of life, and lastly we would...lay the burden of taxation upon the necessities of life. These infant industries must be weaned.⁹

"The progressive spirit that sweeps this country now," James concluded in a tribute to Bryan was called many things included reform, "but back yonder, when a voice in the western wilderness cried out for them, they were called the vagaries of Bryan, the dreamer."¹⁰

After much give and take behind closed doors, fist fights between the Clark and Wilson forces, and vote trading and changing, Wilson was able to break Clark's lead and emerge as the victor for the presidential nomination on the forty-sixth ballot. James, later at Sea Grit, New Jersey, in the speech notifying Wilson of his nomination, said that Democrats of the Republic, now "united, aggressive and militant," pledged their "united and earnest support."¹² Again, holding true to his word, as he had done for Goebel, James went wholeheartedly into the campaign in behalf of Wilson.

Several months after the November election, James was taken into the private circle about Wilson when he received an invitation from the president-elect to come to Trenton, New Jersey, to express his views on what legislation should be taken up first. Wilson also asked James' opinion on certain cabinet position suggestions that were on Wilson's mind.¹³ Even before this invitation, James indicated that he had forgotten the conflicts of the convention. "I am interested chiefly in having the Senate pass legislation carrying out

party platform," remarked James in a Courier-Journal interview, but above all else, he wanted to uphold the aims of President Wilson.¹⁴ He became thereafter one of the administration's major spokesman in the Senate.

Wilson gratefully gave control of Kentucky's federal patronage to James and the Kentucky Democratic Congressmen, but by being the ranking Democrat of the group, he controlled most of it. Democrats throughout the Commonwealth, however, immediately became upset over his control because he would not side with one faction against the other. He further infuriated members of the State's party when he asserted that the Republicans in office who were "exceptionally efficient" and who had "devoted more time to their official duties than to fighting political battle" would not be disturbed. Actually, Republicans fitting this criteris were unknown to James, as most were members of Senator Bradley's political machine and therefore were "conspicuous more for that than for distinguished service."¹⁵

His whole patronage method was described by the Courier-Journal as cautious and slow. Carefully he searched for and tested each possible Democrat seeking a federal job in Kentucky. James' test for Democrats included one main point: they must support the party's platform and candidates. Original Wilson men in Kentucky, basing their patronage claims on the fact that they had supported the President in the pre-convention days, were even more upset with James' control of patronage for two reasons. James had not been

an original Wilson man, but a leader of the Clark forces, and therefore should not have been awarded such a dominant role. Because they had supported Wilson from the very beginning, they felt that they had the right of first choice for federal jobs in the Commonwealth. James disagreed, much to their disappointment. Only one Wilson man was named to federal office by him by the end of Wilson's first year as President.¹⁶

As a general rule, James refused to give offices to those who had campaigned for him or to allow those for whom he had campaigned to give offices, as rewards, to members of his family. Nepotism was the first and greatest of all the cardinal sins to him. The one and only time he gave a relative a job through patronage was when he appointed his older and closest brother, Edgar, as United States Marshall for the western district of Kentucky. The primary force behind the appointment of Edgar was James' father who, for all purposes, ordered Ollie to do so despite the Senator's plea that he would be criticised for it. The appointment, however, passed without criticism.¹⁷

James' first major effort for the Wilson Administration in the area of domestic legislation concerned Federal Reserve Board employees. The question turned upon whether or not the employees were to be civil servants knowing little about banking or exports. The issue evolved into a partisan debate. The Democrats wanted experts while the Republicans wanted civil servants. "I say it comes with poor grace...from our

friends," James said in defense of the Democrats' position, "to charge that we ourselves are destroying the civil service because we are seeking to get experts appointed...to administer this law."¹⁸ Along with other Democratic senators, he helped to push the measure through over the opposition's protests.

Before the Federal Reserve System was to go into effect, the regional Federal Banks cities had to be established. James had been urged by Louisville bankers to promote their city as one to be given such a bank.¹⁹ However, each national bank in a region had to vote on its first and second choice for a city within a region. These votes would also be taken into consideration by the special commission along with the arguments presented by each city. Louisville was passed over by the commission in favor of St. Louis as the district bank of the eighth district.²⁰

James' major role as a key spokesman for the Wilson Administration came in the area of foreign affairs. The National Democratic party platform had favored the exemption from tolls of American ships engaged in coastwise traffic passing through the Panama Canal, which Wilson hastily approved. Later, he saw that national honor required the repeal of this provision because it was a violation of the terms of the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty.²¹ Wilson proceeded to build support in Congress and publicly announced his plan to the press in early February. Personal pressure as well as patronage pressure was used to make reluctant House Democrats

fall into line. He used the same method again in the Senate. He encountered the usual shipping monopolies and Republican antagonism, but there was also large Democratic opposition in the Senate.²²

When the Sims Bill finally came to the floor of the Senate for debate, James was a major speaker for the bill. He supported repeal because it kept intact the Nation's honor. It also repealed a subsidy to a shipping monopoly; thus the bill, James felt, was a necessity for the administration's foreign policy program. His speech showed his support not only for Wilson, but for the public interest as well:

...I rejoice to take my stand with President Wilson. Practically all the men of that State [Kentucky], of all parties, creeds are supporting him in this battle against subsidy. I delight in the thought that no monopoly can make our President surrender the people's money to it. No fake or false cry of "surrender" can drive him from the position that a Nation's honor must be pure as the mothers' hearts who prayed, as clean as the father's hands who fought to create this great Republic to have it take its place among the nations of the earth. Mr. President, against the insolent demands of this monopoly for this subsidy I place the rights of every tax payer in this Nation;... In their interest I solemnly and emphatically insist that this great engineering feat [the Panama Canal] shall not be made the vehicle upon which greed shall raid the Public Treasury and exploit our people.²³

James evidently reversed his position on the same grounds as Wilson because when the charge was made in the Senate that repeal was against the Party's platform, he answered that those Democrats who were using this reasoning were "establishing themselves upon a very weak and very dangerous foundation."

Wilson's answer to same charge was "I feel that no promise made in a platform with regard to foreign affairs is more than half a promise. It cannot mean that if the foreign elements in the situation are beyond our control we will undertake to control them." Presumably platform promises on foreign policy could not always be honored.²⁴

Again James was chief spokesman for the Administration during the Mexican fiasco. This situation, like that of the Panama tolls, had been present earlier in the Taft Administration. Mexico was in a state of revolution, and its constitutional government had been thrown out of control. Wilson, though quite upset over the revolution, decided on a policy of "watchful waiting" and refused to recognize the government of General Victoriano Huerta. Finally in early April, 1914, the "Tampico incident," in which several American sailors were arrested by Huerta's police and taken from their ship, occurred. Admiral Mayo immediately demanded their release and a formal apology consisting of a twenty-one-gun salute to the American flag, prior to notifying Washington of his action. The sailors were released, but the apology was a written one with no salute to the flag. This proved unacceptable in Washington.²⁵

After a week of note sending and receiving, diplomatic negotiations were stalemated as each country refused to change its original position. The stalemate was broken when Wilson learned that the German ship, Ypiranga, was

about to arrive at Vera Cruz with guns and ammunition for Huerta. Wilson, foreseeing the need for action, immediately ordered Vera Cruz to be taken, without first seeking congressional approval. He later went before Congress and asked approval for further offensive operations in Mexico to enforce the demands made on Huerta. On April 20, the House honored his request by passing a joint resolution with virtually no opposition. In the Senate, however, it was a different situation.²⁶

The Republicans, led by Elihu Root and Henry Cabot Lodge, had prepared a substitute measure. Their measure approved the use of force in Mexico, but only to protect American lives and property. It approved intervention not only against Huerta, as Wilson had asked for, but in areas controlled by the revolutionaries as well. The Republican substitute had no chance of passage as the Senate was controlled by Democrats, yet Republicans had enough strength to delay action. The senators debated past midnight with no decision being reached, and events finally forced troops to intervene without Senate approval.²⁷

When James learned of the intervention at Vera Cruz, he took the floor and announced sternly:

There is no time for hair splitting. Our soldiers are upon Mexican soil. Their blood has been spilt. The flag of our country flies from the parapet of Vera Cruz's fort. It is the duty of every Senator here to uphold the glory of that flag. It is not time to play politics.

Politics ends at the Rio Grande and patriotism takes its place.²⁸

The joint resolution later passed on a straight party vote.²⁹

In October, Wilson returned to Congress to ask for emergency revenue legislation to improve the military. This was a time, however, when southerners wanted relief for cotton growers as well as for other southern products, Southern Democrats, James excluded had planned to have an amendment added to the emergency bill, but the amendment was lost. They later hoped to join with the Republicans in an effort to lay the bill on the table, after which they would take up the bill again when assurance was given that a cotton relief measure would be added. James on this occasion, not divided on the issue as other southern Senators, spoke in behalf of the administration, stating:

Up to this time the administration of the Democratic Party had been the most brilliant of any administration.... Now, here upon this lost measure, right in front of an election, you are to say what? That while the world is at war; that when the President...called upon his party to make the Treasury of the Nation secure, we were so unpatriotic as to deny it unless we could tie on to it some benefit to a particular class of our people.....

The security and safety of the United States Treasury rises above partisanship,...above mere party advantages,...above the demand of any locality. The call to us at this hour is the call of patriotism, and we should respond to it as becomes real Americans.³⁰

"The Southern Senators were practically a unite in asking for federal relief," wrote the New York Times the next day, "but when it came to delaying or killing the war tax measure many of them turned against their colleagues for attempting to jeopardize the interests of the whole country for sectional reasons."³¹ Again, Wilson met with success. The measure

was passed by the Senate, but just barely. The vote was thirty-four in favor, twenty-two against, and forty not voting or absent.³² James felt that other southern Senators had treated their Democratic colleagues unfairly because while the party caucus had been considering the war tax, they had said nothing about the amendment. In fact, the whole caucus had agreed unanimously to make the bill a party measure.³³

By 1915, the world was in a drastic state of change. World War I had spread over Europe, and the United States was desperately trying to stay at peace. But to Wilson and all Democrats, 1915 was an important year because of its political implications. To secure re-election for Wilson, it was important that the country remain out of the European conflict. In early May, the British liner Lusitania was torpedoed off the coast of Ireland and many Americans were killed. The nation was shocked that the Germans had not warned the vessel before they attacked. Many in Congress were inflamed at Germany's outright violation of the freedom of the seas doctrine, but few in or out of Congress wanted to go to war. Wilson only responded with a stiff warning to Germany.³⁴ "It is statesmanlike and patriotic," explained James to a New York Times reporter, "the President speaks for all civilization, and voices the sentiment of all neutral people in warning Germany." He concluded the interview by stating that the country would back the President's note.³⁴

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The Kentuckian was among the majority of Americans who were angry and wanted some type of redress, but also anxious to avoid hostility.

Just after the warning note was sent to Germany, James and his wife left Washington as part of a Congressional party that was to visit the Hawaiian Islands. Meanwhile, negotiations between the United States and Germany to avoid further hostilities continued. Yet each subsequent note sent to Germany became a little less conciliatory and a little sterner in tone until Bryan, Secretary of State, resigned in protest over Wilson's diplomacy. Upon James' return from Hawaii, he stated that he greatly deplored the resignation of his dear friend, "but as an American citizen, my duty is perfectly clear, I stand by the President."³⁶ When the German Ambassador in Washington informed Wilson that unresisting liners would not be sunk without warning and without provision being made for safety of passengers and crew (the Arabic pledge), James happily maintained that Wilson had "achieved a wonderful triumph in the diplomatic exchanges with Germany over the submarine policy."³⁷

Early in the next summer, during the National Democratic Convention at St. Louis, he gave his most forceful speech on the Administration policy of neutrality when he addressed the convention as its permanent chairman. At this point, he was at the height of his political career. Being a veteran campaigner, he knew how to handle a crowd and did not begin with

his climax as an earlier speaker had done.³⁸ He started, as Bryan had done in his 1896 "Cross of Gold" speech, with the general, as a lead in to the specific point of his address. "In former national contests in the last two decades our party came as a prophet; we could only point out wrong and promise remedies," he began. "But today we come with deeds, not words; with performance, not promise."³⁹ At this point he launched into a careful review of the Party's achievement under Wilson. He next moved on to international problems, the subject which the convention crowd was most excited about. He roared out into the convention hall,

When the president sent his ultimatum to Germany he was criticized by two elements--one contending that he was seeking to force the country into war, and the other that he was too cowardly to engage in conflict. There are happily two kinds of courage: The courage of the man who is willing to undertake the danger himself, and the courage of the man that sends others to the conflict. The courage of the man who wishes himself to enter the conflict may be rash, for he alone is to suffer, but the courage to take a nation into war, where millions of lives may be sacrificed, is another kind of courage.⁴⁰

This courage, according to James, had to be able to stand "bitter abuse," it also must move "slowly" and act "coolly." This courage, he further asserted, would "strike no blow as long as diplomacy" could be employed. "Woodrow Wilson has both kinds of courage," James exclaimed to the responsively approving delegates.⁴¹

James then changed his emphasis and focused on the Republican platform in an effort to control the delegates awhile longer before his climax on Wilson's diplomatic triumphs. "Four years ago the sneeringly called Woodrow

Wilson the school-teacher," he exclaimed in his build up.
"Then his class was assembled within the narrow walls of
Princeton" made up of "the young men of America," but to-
day James asserted,

...he is the world teacher, his class is made up
of kings, kaisers, czars, princes, and potentates....
The confines of the school-room circle the world....
His subject is the protection of American life and
American rights under international law....⁴³

The climax was as emotional as that of Bryan in 1896,
when James stated that the saving of neutral life and the
freedom of the seas had been maintained "without orphaning
a single American child, without widowing a single American
mother, without firing a single gun, without the shedding
of a single drop of blood." These things, James stressed,
"he wrung from the most militant spirit that ever brooded
above a battlefield an acknowledgement of American rights
and an agreement to American demands."⁴⁴

This last sentence sent the whole convention into an
uproar and delegates resounded with cries of "repeat it"
from all sides of the convention hall. James appeared to
be in a state of shock and could do no more than stand on the
podium with his mouth open and lips motionless. He stepped
to the edge of the platform and repeated the sentence,
adding to it the conjecture that Wilson had "truly demonstrated
that principle is mightier than force, that diplomacy hath
its victories no less renowned than war."⁴⁵ Thereupon, the
delegates burst into a twenty minute demonstration ending
with a parade of the States around the hall. At the close of
the St. Louis convention, Wilson was renominated by a vote

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of 1892 to 1. The one nay vote was by Robert E. Burke of Illinois who disagreed with James' ruling against his demand for a roll call vote by States. He was the only delegate to make such a demand.⁴⁶

"James for President in 1920" was discussed seriously by various delegates after his speech and later after the convention. But James saw the next presidential election as too distant and considered the possibility of his nomination as no more than gossip.⁴⁷ In the months following the convention James stumped throughout Kentucky as well as in some doubtful western states such as California, Colorado, Iowa, and Kansas. Other states that heard him speak included New York, Indiana, and Ohio. In Dayton, Ohio, he was introduced as "one of the most gifted orators the nation has ever produced," who was engaged in "spreading the epidemic of Wilsonism from coast to coast."⁴⁸

"It is really popular to be a Democrat now," James spoke in response to the introduction, but "I recall days in 1896 when I was campaigning for Bryan when they called me an anarchist and even referred to me as a longhaired polulist. At the most I could never have been accused of having long hair."⁴⁹ This brought loud applause and a roar of laughter, since James had been bald for nearly twenty-years. Wilson was re-elected in a close election over his Republican opponent, Charles Evan Hughes. "It was generous of you," Wilson wrote the Kentuckian in appreciation, "to bestir

yourself to help in so many parts of the country and I have reason to know that help was very effective indeed."⁵⁰

Wilson's campaign slogan may have been, "He kept us out of war," but the country moved steadily closer to it as the new year began. By mid-January, Wilson had developed a peace plan which he stated "would make another catastrophe virtually impossible." When questioned about the aims of the Wilson plan for a just and secure peace, James described it as the most wonderful document Wilson had ever delivered and concluded, "he is just as pro-American as he is pro-liberty."⁵¹

World conditions continued to worsen and the United States drew closer to armed conflict with Germany. The final diplomatic break with Germany occurred in early February, 1917. "All Americans know," said James on this occasion, "that the President has exhausted every resource at the command of skilled diplomacy in order to avert a break with Germany. I had hoped and prayed as I know the President had, that Germany might stand by her promise."⁵² As a consequence of the breaking of diplomatic relations, Wilson formulated the idea of armed neutrality and sought to arm merchant ships.

To break a log jam in the Senate, Wilson released the Zimmerman telegram as proof of a real need for his legislation. Some Senators, however, doubted the authenticity of the telegram, but James replied that it was not the issue in question. The Zimmerman note broke Senate opposition to preparedness, and the naval appropriations bill went through

both houses on the same day. But as Wilson's major bill, the armed merchant ship bill, came up for debate, the anti-war forces had regrouped. Senators Robert M. LaFollette of Wisconsin, George W. Norris of Nebraska, James A. Reed of Missouri, James A. O'Gorman of New York, and James K. Vardaman of Mississippi took the lead in speaking against the bill. They viewed the arming of merchant ships as not a form of neutrality, but a type of war action.⁵⁴ James immediately retorted that if a ship fired in its defense, it would not necessarily mean war on our part or Germany's. But if Germany does mean war, he concluded that

...we must protect our commerce upon the sea or get off of it....

And if Germany, by her submarine warfare, in violation of international law, makes the express declaration that she is going to sink all vessels...either neutral or belligerent, the United States has got to do one or two things: It has either got to arm its ships for their defense, or it has got to keep them at their docks and leave the high sea.⁵³

James twice reiterated the administration's point of view: Arm the merchant ships for their defense or take them off the high sea completely. The Wilson administration and James reached the same conclusion by using the same argument, yet it was not strong enough to overcome a filibuster by determined opponents. The debate carried over to the next day and through half of that night, but the anti-war forces failed to lose ground. Finally, after the late night session, Vice President Thomas Marshall declared the Senate adjourned sine-die. The bill was lost.⁵⁶

On the second of April, Wilson asked for a war resolution which both houses passed within four days. Several days later at the National Democratic Club dinner celebrating the one hundred and seventy-fourth birthday of Thomas Jefferson, James was the featured speaker. He used the occasion to explain the administration's need for the war resolution. "It was necessary for America to send her soldiers to Europe to fight," he said to the dinner guests because it was for "the preservation of Democracy." Therefore, America did not enter the war for selfish motives as other countries might have done, but to fight for democracy. He ended his speech by saying about the debate over the war resolution that there were in America no longer Democrats or Republicans--"only Americans," for war was not a partisan issue or fight.⁵⁷

James returned to Marion in early October to attend the funeral of his mother who had died of pneumonia, and later that winter a close friend also died, Senator William "Billy" Hughes of New Jersey. He and the Kentuckian had been elected to the House the same year and had also served together in the Senate. James acted as pallbearer, and the cold weather resulted in a throat infection and a severe cold.⁵⁸ Yet he continued his official duties even as his condition steadily worsened. John Sharp Williams, another of James' close friends, urged the Senator many times during that winter to arrange a pair with someone so he could leave Washington for a week or two of rest, but James refused to heed the advice.⁵⁹

The administration had . . . receiving much criticism on the working of the Nation's war machinery, and James felt it was his duty to speak out on the effect of such criticism even if it was against the wishes of those concerned for his health. Appearing on the Senate floor on Valentín's Day, 1918, and speaking for two hours on the subject of America and her national defense, he warned that criticism of not only the nation's defense system but the president as well only acted to encourage Germany in its belief that America was not united in the war. He continued, in perhaps the most dramatic and colorful speech of his whole career in politics:

President Wilson walks the tightrope--it reaches across the sea with it wrecked and dead-- he holds in his hands the richest treasure ever lodged in the keeping of one man since God said let there be light. The treasure is our very life, . . . liberty, . . . institution, . . . homes, . . . fireside, our all. Gentlemen, let me plead with you, with all Americans--do not shake the rope. Do not badger him. Do not heckle him. Do not annoy him. He will make the journey safely over this ocean of blood and peril. Keep silence! Hold your tongues! 60

James, in expressing his viewpoint, went one step further and compared Wilson's critics with those of Lincoln's during the Civil War:

The critic was in existence in Lincoln's day. . . . They thought they knew more about running the war than he did. They heckled him, they annoyed him, they shook the rope; but the flowers had not withered upon his new-made grave when the triumphant American Army marched down this Avenue. . . .

You critics, I can stand you upon each other's shoulders, and Wilson will tower above you all. . . .

The day will come in the providence of God when our victorious army, with America solidly back of them, will come back home in triumph and march down this same great avenue, panoplied with flowers and love and tears and pride of all America,

in review before Woodrow Wilson, the man whom not only America trusts, but the civilized world trusts.⁶¹

"Liberty will be safe," said the Senator loudly, and "Americanism secure." At the point the packed Senate galleries burst into wild applause.

This was his last major speech before the Senate for the Wilson administration. He began to miss days due to illness which finally forced him to enter Johns Hopkins Hospital for tests. He was released afterward, though far from well. He attempted to continue his work, but never completely regained his health. In early June, he returned to the hospital to have his tonsils and sinuses removed. After further examination this time, it was discovered that he had acute Brights' disease.⁶²

While still in the hospital, he filed for the Senate race again. Unexpectedly he had opposition from William P. Kimball of Lexington, but he won the primary that early August without even campaigning.⁶³ News of his victory delighted him as he seemed to have improved. However, it was only temporary. On the seventeenth of August he received a blood transfusion. Again his condition bettered, only to worsen again over the next few days. On the twenty-eighth of August, the last Senator to be elected by a Kentucky Legislature died.⁶⁴

FOOTNOTES

¹The Congressional Directory, 63rd Cong., 3rd sess., 1914, p. 173; 64th Cong., 2nd sess., 1917, p. 173; 65th Cong., 2nd sess., 1917, p. 175; and Courier-Journal, March 11, 22, 1913.

²Coletta, Bryan, I, 445.

³Ramage, "Stanley," p. 132.

⁴Ibid., p. 135; Courier-Journal, May 30, 1912; Lexington Herald, May 30, 1912; and James Collection, Louisville Public Library.

⁵Joseph P. Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson As I Knew Him (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1921), pp. 114-16. Hereinafter referred to as Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson. Arthur S. Link, Wilson (5 vols; Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1947-1965), I, 431-40. Hereinafter referred to as Link, Wilson.

⁶Coletta, Bryan, II, 61.

⁷Champ Clark, My Quarter Century of American Politics (2 vols.; New York: Harper and Brother Publishers, 1920), II, 403-405.

⁸Link, Wilson, I, 438, 439.

⁹Urey Woodson, compiler, Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, 1912 (Chicago: The Peterson Linotyping Company, 1912), p. 126. Hereinafter referred to as Woodson, Democratic National Convention, 1912.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 127.

¹¹Link, Wilson, I, 445-62; and Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson, pp. 117-24.

¹²Woodson, Democratic National Convention, 1912, p. 349.

¹³New York Times, January 16, 1913; and Courier-Journal, January 16, 1913.

¹⁴Courier-Journal, January 7, 1913.

¹⁵Ibid., March 12, 13, 26, 1913; and Link, Wilson, II, 161.

¹⁶Ibid.

- ¹⁷James Collection, Murray State University.
- ¹⁸U. S. Congress, Senate, 63rd Cong., 2nd sess., December 18, 1913, Congressional Record, pp. 1139-40.
- ¹⁹Courier-Journal, February 11, 1914.
- ²⁰Ibid., April 10, 1914; and U. S. Congress, Senate, 63rd Cong., 2nd sess., April 10, 1914, Congressional Record, p. 6519.
- ²¹Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson, pp. 162-68; and Link, Wilson, II, 304-308.
- ²²Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson, pp. 162-68; and Link, Wilson, II, 308-14.
- ²³U. S. Congress, Senate, 63rd Cong., 2nd sess., June 9, 1914, Congressional Record, p. 10086.
- ²⁴Ibid., p. 10082; and Link, Wilson, II, 312.
- ²⁵Robert E. Quirk, An Affair of Honor: Woodrow Wilson and the Occupation of Veracruz (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967 [1962]). pp. 1-3, 20-28, 59-71, 74-77; Link, Wilson, II, 379-99; and Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson, pp. 144-61.
- ²⁶Ibid.
- ²⁷Ibid.
- ²⁸U. S. Congress, Senate, 63rd Cong., 2nd sess., April 21, 1914, Congressional Record, pp. 6982 and 6991.
- ²⁹Ibid., p. 7014.
- ³⁰Ibid., October 17, 1914, p. 16800.
- ³¹New York Times, October 18, 1914.
- ³²U. S. Congress, Senate, 63rd Cong., 2nd sess., October 17, 1914, Congressional Record, pp. 16806 and 16807.
- ³³New York Times, October 18, 1914.
- ³⁴Ibid., May 8, 1915; and Courier-Journal, May 8, 1915.
- ³⁵New York Times, May 15, 1915.
- ³⁶James Collection, Murray State University.
- ³⁷New York Times, September 5, 1915.

³⁸Ibid., June 16, 1916. All references to Senator James' actions at the convention were taken from this news report.

³⁹J. Bruce Kremer, compiler, Official Report of the Proceedings of the Democratic National Convention, 1916 (n.p., n.d.) p. 79.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 84.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 88.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 89.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 107.

⁴⁷James Collection, Murray State University.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹New York Times, January 23, 1917; and Link, Wilson, V, 264-68.

⁵²New York Times, February 4, 1917.

⁵³Link, Wilson, V, 359; and U. S. Congress, Senate, 64th Cong., 2nd sess., March 1, 1917, Congressional Records, p. 4599.

⁵⁴U. S. Congress, Senate, 64th Cong., 2nd sess., March 2, 1917, Congressional Record, pp. 4747-4759.

⁵⁵Ibid., pp. 4747 and 4759.

⁵⁶Link, Wilson, V, 359-61.

⁵⁷New York Times, May 15, 1917.

⁵⁸James Collection, Murray State University.

⁵⁹Osborn, John Sharp Williams, pp. 432, 433.

⁶⁰U. S. Congress, Senate, 65th Cong., 2nd sess., February 14, 1918, Congressional Record, p. 2103; and New York Times, February 15, 1918.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²New York Times, June 13, 1918.

⁶³Ibid., June 26, 1918; and Courier-Journal, August 4, 1918.

⁶⁴New York Times, August 29, 1918; Courier-Journal, August 29, 1918; Lexington Herald, August 29, 1918; and Biographical Directory of American Congress, 1774-1961 (Washington D. C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1961), p. 115.

CHAPTER V

Reflections On Ollie M. James

Perhaps the words of Tennyson's "Ulysses," "I am a part of all that I have met," can best describe Ollie Murray James, for he was a part of all those whom he met. He was sincere in his words and deeds. He was a progressive before progressivism was even recognized as a reform movement. James was also an early twentieth century stump politician. Adding all of these various elements together, the one unifying theme was his loyalty to the Democratic party.

The key to his success lay in the realm of his oratorical abilities. As the nature of politics at the turn of the century in Kentucky demanded that a politician be an excellent public speaker, James found his voice well suited to this occupation. The same oratorical ability attracted James personally to Bryan. The Nebraskan's crusade throughout the West and South for free coinage of silver and other progressive reforms excited James, who, at that time, was only interested in politics. James' speeches were marked by a pointed type of witticism, well developed colorful metaphors and illustrations, aimed to appealing to partisan attitudes of congressmen as well as to common sense of the electorate.

A man, especially a politician, cannot be known by his words alone. Deeds must reflect the sincerity of his words. Merely to suggest that James' deeds as a congressman for more than fifteen years reflected his sincerity would be an understatement. His progressivism can be traced to the mid-eighteen nineties. It was manifested in two areas: Free silver coinage and anti-trust ideas. However, both involved the greater issue of who would control and dictate the ideology of the National Democratic Party. The conservative element of the party being discredited, Bryan and the rural-agrarian element gained control until Woodrow Wilson replaced the Nebraskan as leader.

As a Bryan Democrat, James worked in the House of Representatives for the regulation of railroads and monopolies, as well as for election and tariff reforms. Here James identified himself clearly with the beliefs of Bryan. He supported Republican reform legislation because Democrats since 1896 had advocated such reforms. Here emerged James' partisanship and complete dedication to party. Again the basis of such devotion was derived from his relationship to Bryan as the leader of the split Democracy. This partisan attitude stemming from his father's defeat in an election for county attorney, intensified by the Goebel affair, as well as subsequent presidential elections, reinforced his belief that party success depended upon complete and unquestioning loyalty to its cause.

Though James' relationship to Bryan was personal as well as political, Bryan's desertion of the Wilson administration over foreign policy in 1915 came as a disappointment to James. Nevertheless, the Kentuckian's loyalty to party would not allow him to disagree with the administration, no matter what close friends did. What became of the relationship between James and Bryan can only be hypothesized; however, James' devotion to party increased as the country moved closer to war.

During the Wilson years national interest shifted abroad. James reflected the same shift. Southern Democrats, long a major progressive element in Congress, continued their domination in what was not the majority party.¹ Those Democrats with long records of loyal service to the party's concern, found themselves rewarded with leadership positions. James never received that kind of reward, but Wilson recognized the Kentuckian's speaking abilities, and named him as a chief floor exponent for his administration. This was a change of role for James because he was now a defender of policy rather than a critic. Concurrently, he became closely identified with Wilson and his aims.

Even though James became involved in national politics, state politics were never neglected. Besides having to return for re-election campaigns, James was involved in several other elections as a stump speaker. This was how he made his name known throughout the Commonwealth. Kentucky's

Democracy, split by factionalism, found James many times in unusual positions. Perhaps the best example would be the struggle over prohibition. James early identified with Beckham's local option in the 1906 election, yet he later turned on Beckham when there was an attempt to make prohibition an issue in the next election. The split led to a Republican victory. Later, James supported Beckham for the senatorial seat because the latter was the choice of the party. Thus it is apparent that he was not easily identified with one special faction. Nevertheless, his loyalty to the party would not allow him to desert it, even if he disagreed with its choice. This blind devotion formed the basis for his support of William Goebel, a man earlier despised as a politician, but later defended as a martyr of the party.

James' ideas, attitudes, and positions were all developed in accordance with the platforms of the Democratic party and its leaders; therefore, he could readily change stances without really contradicting his purpose. He was as much a disciple of Bryan as he was a devoted follower of Wilson. James exhibited qualities of both men, but never forgot that his first allegiance was to the Democratic party. In the faction torn Democracy of Kentucky, he aligned himself with the group he thought best represented the electorate of the State. Thus he could oppose Henry Watterson in 1895 on the silver issue and work with him in 1911 on the prohibition question. Whether or not his faction was victorious, he still supported the party's choice because of

his faith in the majority opinion. This devotion made him an outstanding politician, not only in Kentucky, but in the Nation as well.

FOOTNOTES

¹Anne Firor Scott, "The Southern Progressive in National Politics, 1906-1916" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Radcliffe College, 1958). This was the first study to be done on southern progressives during this time period. Even though the Democrats were the minority party in Congress between 1906 and 1910, southern Democrats made up the majority of this minority. Thus by 1912, southern Democrats took over Congressional leadership when Democrats became the majority party in both Houses. This dissertation examines progressivism among southern Democrats and their cooperation with mid-western Republicans to pass legislation needed by the farmers and small business men of both sections. Their common enemy was the plutocracy of the East. Areas where this cooperation was most effective included railroad regulation (the Hepburn Act), reductions in the existing tariff schedules, the income tax amendment, the Federal Reserve System, and the direct election of Senators (which was already in use voluntarily throughout most of the South by 1903, the official date given for the origin of this idea in Wisconsin).

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