Dolliver As a Campaigner

Geo. M. Titus
as any heart that ever beat, failed him and he died at the zenith of his power. Today he is a great memory, and I think a gentle one.

DOLLIVER AS A CAMPAIGNER

By Sen. Geo. M. Titus

Senator Dolliver was the most efficient and influential campaigner that I ever knew while he was a member of the house and afterwards a member of the senate. In all campaigns our local committees in Muscatine county, my home county, always made a great effort to secure at least one speech from Senator Dolliver during the campaign.

Being deeply interested in politics myself, I made it a point every time that Senator Dolliver visited Muscatine to entertain him at my home inviting several local politicians as guests at the same time for evening dinner. It was our custom on such occasions to gather in the living room and just listen to Senator Dolliver tell us about his experiences in politics and about the public men he had met in Washington.

I remember on one occasion a good deal of what the senator told us. He said Secretary of State Blaine was a great politician, but that he made many promises to his political friends but was not always able to redeem all of those promises. To illustrate Blaine’s characteristics Dolliver told us of a friend by the name of Emler who was quite a campaigner, and after he had finished the campaign he, Emler, came to Dolliver, then a member of the house and said, “Now, Dolliver, I am through with the campaign and haven’t anything to do. I wonder if you would go with me to see Secretary of State Blaine and see if he would give me a job.” “I eagerly went with Emler on the appointment to see Blaine,” said Dolliver. “I remember how cordially Blaine received us. He
put his arm around Emler and complimented him on the work of the campaign and asked him what he could do for him.” “Well”, Emler responded, “I am out of a job, I didn’t get much pay in the campaign and I hoped you would have a place for me.” Blaine’s response was, “Now, Emler, you know in the political game we have a certain number of holes and a certain number of pegs for each hole, I know how deserving you are, Emler, and I am going to save one of those holes for you.” “In about three months I met Emler and inquired how he was getting along.” “Well,” he said, “Dolliver, I have nothing to do.” “Didn’t Blaine do anything for you?” “Well, he said he was going to save one of those holes for me and by Gosh! I have been in one ever since. Nothing done by Blaine.”

**MCKINLEY SLOW TO ACT**

In Dolliver’s comments about McKinley’s character he said McKinley was directly the opposite of Blaine. He was slow to make a promise and after he gave you an appointment he made you feel that you were entitled to something better and doubtless expressed regret that he could not do more for you.

I remember about President McKinley in 1898 during the agitation about a declaration of war against Spain by this country. McKinley remained absolutely silent and stubbornly refused to support a declaration of war against Spain. For that delay and stubbornness he was greatly criticized by the politicians, statesmen and newspaper editors in all parts of the country.

Dolliver said that McKinley told some of the Republican members of the house, who were critical of him for not yielding to the demands for the declaration of war against Spain, “Why don’t you get the Democrats of the house and senate to appoint a committee to call on the president and put him in the hole on the Spanish American War question.” The Republican members made this suggestion to their Democratic friends and a committee of
Democrats was promptly appointed to find out why McKinley did not favor a Spanish American war. Dolliver told us who those men were, that he knew them very well. After a certain length of time Dolliver met one of this committee and he inquired of him, “Well, how did you come out with President McKinley on the Spanish American war question?” The response was, “O, Hell! we are with McKinley.” “Well, what happened?” “I will tell you, Dolliver, our committee called on the president, he listened to us, John talked, Bill talked, and I talked. When we were through the president said, “Now, gentlemen, I am going to tell you something that you didn’t know. You didn’t know that we haven’t ammunition enough for one round on land and sea. We are running our arsenals and munition factories night and day and Sunday, and I haven’t thought it was a good thing to advertise our weakness. What do you think?” This man said to Dolliver, “I felt like a colt that had been tickled under the fetlocks, I wanted to kick but didn’t know in what direction.” “Now,” McKinley said, “If you will just wait until we are ready you can have all the war you want.”

THE SOIL IN NEW ENGLAND

I remember one campaign speech by Dolliver in Muscatine in his effort to make the Iowa farmers feel proud of their state. Dolliver said to them, “How many of you Iowa farmers ever visited New England? I was down there last summer for the first time. To speak plainly I don’t see how they live. The soil is poor, largely covered with rocks, and I don’t see how they raise anything. While in one town in Vermont I took a little walk out to the edge of the town and passed by a cemetery where I saw a sexton digging a grave. I just thought I would step in and see what the soil looked like five or six feet down. I looked in that grave and found that the deeper down it was the thinner the soil and I said to the sexton, “How do you raise anything in this country.” The response was, “We fertilize, we use a great deal of fertilizer
on the soil, we even fertilize the cemeteries.” Dolliver said, “Fertilize the cemeteries! What do you do that for?” His response was, “We thought it might help out in the resurrection.”

DOLLIVER’S NEW ALIGNMENT

By Sen. Addison Parker

It was a mid-western senator who on an important occasion literally drove Aldrich from the floor of the senate. That occurred in one of the most famous and tense debates heard in the United States senate—not excepting those of the days of Webster and Calhoun—and the mid-western senator was Jonathan P. Dolliver of Iowa.

President Taft himself had repeatedly stated in the campaign his belief that the party pledge meant a revision downward. Speaking in Des Moines, he said: “It is my judgment that a revision of the tariff in accordance with the pledge of the Republican platform will be on the whole a substantial revision downward.”

President Taft, shortly after his inaugural on March 4, 1909, had summoned the congress in extra session to redeem his party’s campaign pledge for a revision of the tariff . . . The president’s brief message however, contained no recommendation and its silence was ominous . . . The answer to the message was the Payne-Aldrich bill—introduced immediately after the speaker’s gavel fell—and instead of revising the tariff downward revised it substantially upward . . . The expected support from the White House did not materialize.

And one day Dolliver, “with his face as white as that of a dead man and trembling with excitement and anger,” came to Beveridge and told him that he had learned that Taft had turned against the insurgents and said that he “would not have anything to do with such an irresponsible set of fellows.”