Letter of Acceptance – 1904.

Letter of acceptance made public today by Hon. George E. Taylor. Source: Ottumwa Weekly Democrat, 15 September 1904, p1. Letters of acceptance were generally published in full for all nominees of political parties. This is the only known segment from Taylor’s letter of acceptance.


Carefully prepared even to the minutest details and dealing profoundly with the leading issues of the campaign the letter of acceptance as the presidential nominee of the National Liberty party was made public Wednesday by Hon. George E. Taylor, of this city. In his letter Mr. Taylor reviews the stand taken by both the democratic and the republican parties on the Negro question and each is found wanting. He charges the colored voters to prove their strength by supporting the national liberty party. He denounces the republican party as having sold the birthright of the Negro for the proverbial mess of pottage, and also opposes that party’s protective tariff policy as being designed for the benefit of the classes against the masses.

Mr. Taylor’s letter of acceptance is addressed to the Hon. Stanley P. Mitchell, chairman of the notification committee, Memphis, Tenn. After praising the laudable efforts in forming a party which “inserts a new leaf in the history of the race,” he opens on the issues of the campaign.

The size of the negro population in the United States is the first topic discussed. This he gives at 15,000,000, or about one-fifth of the total population, yet without a representative in any branch of the country’s government. He dwells at length upon the disfranchisement of the race by some of the southern states and closes this discussion as follows:
“The only difference I am able to discern between the Tillman\footnote{1} and Vardaman school of democrats, and the present administration [of] republicans, as to the subject of disfranchisement is that the former are scrupulously honest in expressing their determination to defeat the evolution and progress of the Negro, law or no law, constitutional amendments to the contrary notwithstanding, while the latter are most unscrupulously dishonest – trying to run with the hounds, but sop with the coons.

**REMOVE THE MASK.**

“The enormity of this disfranchisement crime becomes more apparent when it is remembered that all the states that ever sent a Negro to either house of congress, or elevated one to a governor’s chair, are included in the list quoted above. This forces the conclusion that in the disfranchisement already executed by these six southern states and confirmed by the present administration, the Supreme court and the recent republican national convention is equivalent to the practical disfranchisement of every Negro in the United States; for there is now no hope, no possibility of the election of a Negro to congress, or, in other words, we are doomed to submit to any and all measures of taxation without representation. Can the race longer be conjured to the belief that the republicans are not now and have not for years been parties to this, the most stupendous citizenship steal known to modern history?”

**URGES A PARTY VOTE**
In referring to the work of the democratic and republican parties on the Negro question Mr. Taylor finds both wanting and urges the Negroes to show their true strength by voting for the national liberty party. He says in this relation:

“I perceive that the national liberty party is purely a creature of necessity. The time has come when all Negroes admit that something must be done, and, through this movement, that something can be done. Until 1892, ninety-nine per cent of the Negroes voted the republican ticket without a protest. At the general election that year about thirty per cent of the race voted against Harrison. Since then ninety per cent of the race have voted the republican ticket in and out of season, in the hope that something would turn up in consequence. But, alas! that something has fatally turned down instead. What, the, shall we do?

REPUBLICANS SELL BIRTHRIGHT

“Have not the republicans sold our birthright for the proverbial mess of pottage? If this statement is questioned I refer the critic to that plank in the republican national platform which touches the question of disfranchisement. Analyze this plank, and the completeness of this sell-out is made visible. So, there is no longer hope for the race in our fidelity to the party which once espoused the true principles of honest, just and equitable government as taught by our immortal Lincoln and exemplified by our lamented, sturdy, honest Grant. The time was when the Negro might have gained succor by affiliating directly with the democratic party, but not now; that party has won a stronger ally in the person of the republican party. Whither then shall the race go, if not to
the national liberty party. Shall you become populists or socialists? If so, what would you gain?

**OPPOSES PROTECTIVE TARIFF**

In touching upon the tariff question Mr. Taylor opposes the protective tariff policy of the republican party and says a tariff for revenue only is the correct policy of political economy for the country to adopt. He says:

“It has for many years been my opinion that a tariff for revenue only is the correct policy of political economy for this country to adopt. I am now more strongly than ever convinced that the unsubsidized competition of all lines of commerce and industry will best serve the interests of the masses. That the masses and not the classes are entitled to the earnest consideration of congress, the administration and the courts, is fundamental to our very system of government, is too well established to require argument. The Negro has never endorsed the protective tariff policy because of its merit, but simply because it has been the policy of the republican party. Now that this party has shown ‘the cloven foot,’ we are forced to resort to that unquenchable and unconquerable resource which is inherent with all civilized humanity, namely: reason, the mother of all investigation, -- that we may measure our real interests in this or that political policy. Of all the people who comprise the vast population of this republic the Negro, it occurs to me, is the least benefited by the protective tariff policy.”

Denouncing mob law and characterizing it simply as anarchy and vitally poison, Mr. Taylor closes his letter, thanking the party for the high honor conferred upon him.
1 For more on the Second Mississippian plan that led to disfranchisement and Ben Tillman’s assertion that North Carolina and Mississippi “were the only Southern states to avoid a strong challenge from the third party,” see C. Vann Woodward, *Origins of the New South 1877-1913* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1951), chapter 12 (“The Mississippi Plan as the American Way”). Logan, *Betrayal*, 99-100, quoted U. S. Senator Benjamin Tillman (South Carolina): “We have done our level best [to disfranchise Blacks]. We have scratched our heads to find out how we could eliminate the last one of them. We stuffed ballot boxes. We shot them. We ARE NOT ASHAMED OF IT.”