

The Political Arena

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We Must Fight for Principle and Reform—To Vote for a Half-Breed Ticket will be Suicidal—Editor J.Z. Green Takes Up the Bat.

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In replying to Mr. Kestler's article in last week's PROGRESSIVE FARMER, I do so in the best of humor, believing as I do that he is prompted by honest motives. I have been connected with him in the newspaper work for two years, and our relationship has been, and is yet of the most pleasant nature. We are both working as Populists to accomplish the great work for which the reform movement was inaugurated, but we differ widely as to methods. The present political condition in North Carolina politics is no surprise to me, and in anticipation of it, I said editorially immediately after the adjournment of the last legislature that Republican Populist fusion was not an assured fact in 1896, as Populists would never consent to vote any part of a ticket for a monopoly serving goldbug President, and if Chairman Buder should undertake to make a campaign with one half the ticket pledged to a Tory President and the other half to a Populist President, he would place himself and his followers in the most inconsistent and indefensible position ever seen in American politics. It is not, however, the purpose of this article to discuss this subject in detail, but to show where Mr. Kestler's argument mutually [sic] answers itself. He starts out by saying:

"My recent letter to the Charlotte Observer, in which I advocated complete co-operation this year between the Populists and the Republicans as the wisest course, seems to have met popular favor all over the State, not for anything that I said, but because of the fact that the people had already decided the matter."

But before he concludes his article he seems to doubt whether his position has met with "popular favor," and is constrained to quote the following poem:

"I feel like one
Who treads alone
Some banquet hall deserted,
Whose lights are fled,
Whose garlands dead,
And all but he departed."

He says further that the position of himself and all true blue Populists is this:
"They believe in nailing silver at the head of our Populist banner and nailing our other great demands just below it and going to the people and asking for their support and demanding their support by the justice of our demands and in the name of the great Populist party of America."

And he proposes to get support by the *justice of our demands* by surrendering half our forces to the enemy under the motto:

"For Complete Co-operation of Populists and Republicans."

And then he turns the other side up again in the following language:

"Let no half-breeds sit in our convention from now on, and listen not to the voice of the non-partisan charmers, for their music is the music of sinners."

What better "half-breeds" do you want than men who desire to cast half their votes for the common people and the other half for the householders and monopolists?

Mr. Kestler says again:

“All we ask is for all to stand true to our principles and to our party.”

This is exactly what Mr. Butler is advocating, but Mr. Kestler is speaking of Butler’s plan, forgetting that *principles* are eternal, and comments in this manner:

“The result would be, in case his plan was not successful, that the two old parties, having a stronger hold, would, eventually, absorb the weaker party and it would be blotted from the face of the earth.”

Apply this same logic to the real condition confronting us and it would stand thus: If we make a square fight for principle this year and are not successful, we will be wiped from the face of the earth. If this kind of reasoning had proved true from practical experience no “weaker party” could have made another campaign after being defeated, and the Populist party would have died immediately after Cleveland’s election in ’92, but we are glad to know I didn’t die, and it *never will die* until the causes which produced its existence are removed, and they will never be removed as long as we help the enemy by giving them half our strength.

Mr. Kestler never presented a more self-evident truth than when he penned the following:

“The People’s party will declare for free silver; the other parties will not; then if the silver men in the other parties are honest they, of necessity, must come to us.”

But if we show ourselves to be dishonest by pledging half our strength to the Republican party, which according to his own statement, will not declare for free silver, can he expect any honest free silver Democrat to come to us? Actions are more eloquent than words. Those who are in favor of free coinage of silver will not vote for a goldbug of any stripe. But immediately following the last quotation from Mr. Kestler’s article in the following question:

“Then why should we, Mr. Populist, throw our party away when its hopes are so bright and when it is the only true exponent of the people’s interests?”

Who is trying to throw it away? Certainly not our State Chairman, who is asking that co-operation be made on *principle* alone. Throw away the principles of our party, and the party itself will die. When a woman loses her virtue she loses all. When the Populist party loses its principles it loses all. Mr. Butler is truly ware of this fact when he refuses to surrender any part of our ticket to the enemy.

But we quote again:

“If the Populists had a majority in the State, it might be foolish to fuse with any party, but as we have it we greatly strengthen and perpetuate the principles we hold dear.”

If all parties that are not in the majority should act on this principle, wouldn’t it be a sweet time for the country? Neither of the three parties in this State have a majority. If they carry out Mr. Kestler’s idea expressed in last quotation, they will all fuse! Then he speaks of our party’s greatness in the following language:

“I am proud to boast of my party’s greatness—great in principles, great in nobleness of its votes, great in all that tends to elevate mankind and establishes the brotherhood of man everywhere.”

“Follow the wishes of the people, and we send six Populist electoral votes to St. Louis. Are they not better than none?”

He didn't say what would become of the other five electoral votes, which of course, would go to help elect a goldbug President. Should the Populists accept such a trade, it would be possible for such a condition to arise that those five electoral votes would elect a goldbug President. So, then, it would be the Populist party that elected the goldbug President. Instead of standing by the great principles of Populism that Mr. Kestler speaks of, we would be standing by and electing a goldbug candidate for President!

Mr. Kestler again hits the nail on the head as follows:

"I love my party. I have spent the best years of my life working for it because I have faith in what the People's part can do. I have written books on books in its defense and submitted to insult after insult for its good, and I cannot I will not—give it up without a struggle. Today we see it in splendid [sic] condition, in marching order—ready and eager for the fray—with victory almost in sight, and surely a few men—men paid to stand by it—should not, by one stroke, obliterate our party identity, destroy our hope of good, blast all future prospects and make all past duties and sacrifices only a name and nothing more!"

Then, brethren, in the name of the oppressed millions, let us not give half our strength in this State to the enemy when we have victory "almost in sight."

We endorse the following from Mr. Kestler:

"I beg all Populists to stand by the St. Louis—the Omaha—platform until the people in their regular convention, change that platform."

So far as we know the rank and the file of the party are standing by its platform, and we have seen but very few Populist papers that have denounced that platform. But does Mr. Kestler suppose that the next regular convention will declare in favor of giving half its strength to the Republicans? Could its candidates go on the stump under such circumstances and defend the platform when it was known that those very candidates would vote half a ticket for the very men and system that they had denounced? We don't believe Mr. Kestler thinks this would be a good plan, otherwise he would not have been prompted to pen the following:

"Let us stand by our guns, stand by our party, stand by our principles, and if they are just and right (and we think they are) the people must come to us."

But he don't stay on the same line long before he turns the other side up and proceeds after this manner:

"Let a Democrat and a fusion ticket be up and the latter will get the earth and the fullness thereof. And when you find a Populist trying to prevent this fusion, you find a Democrat in sheep clothing."

Apply this principle in States where Republicans are in the majority and a Populist who refused to fuse with the Democrats would be a Republican in sheep's clothing. If it is true in one case, it is necessarily true in the other. But he continues:

"If every Southern and Northern State will put a little common sense in their politics and co-operate with some thing this year our party could have a representation at Washington that would amount to something—a rep representation that could demand laws for the people's good and get them. They, also, could have in the electoral college strength enough to guarantee us the President in 1990. And while they are doing this they are gradually absorbing the old parties and in a few years more they could be independent of both."

This is a complete contradiction of Mr. Kestler's foregoing statement that the weaker party is likely to be absorbed by the stronger. If both of his theories should prove true; the "absorbing" business would go on till there would be no strong party or weak party either. His theories don't harmonize "worth a cent."

Mr. Kestler sees in the non-partisan movement destructive results by discovering this in his history:

"History tells us that when the greenback party was gaining great importance some years back that a non-partisan movement—similar to the one that now confronts us—was hatched up North, and that said movement did more to retard, and really demolished the greenback party."

He must have learned this lately, for he says:

"Some time since I helped to organize a Young Men's Reform Club of North Carolina. I have not pushed the organization of clubs, because it seemed that our leaders were against our helping the reform movement in any substantial manner; and because, also, there is now enough non-partisan talk without starting up other clubs of like tenor."

Yet he turns another side up and the very next sentence reads:

"I trust we shall yet get the young of the State interested in these clubs and I know they can be benefited by them."

He then turns another summersault and in the next paragraph we find the following language:

"Now see the means these non-partisans are using to force the people into their belief. Almost every reform paper in North Carolina is hoodwinked into shouting against true Populists."

Then it makes us feel sad to see Mr. Kestler takes the side of the goldbugs in the following language:

"There are free silver men who are national bankers, monopolists, etc—men opposed to everything else that would benefit the laboring people—men who would not speak to an humble toiler, and yet by this new movement, these men would soon be our masters."

This certainly does not harmonize with his foregoing statement that he believes in "nailing silver at the head of our Populist banner," etc.

In conclusion, permit me to say that the foregoing extracts are clipped from Mr. Kestler's article not for the purpose of commenting at length, but to show some inconsistencies therein, which nearly every reader will readily understand. Mr. Kestler defends his position as ably, perhaps, as any writer could defend the same position. In my opinion, he takes a very untenable position and one that cannot be successfully defended by anybody.

The position assumed by our State Executive Committee, of which Senator Butler is Chairman, is a plain proposition to cooperate with not only the Republicans, but with the reform element of all parties, not for "spoils" but for *principle*. It can be defended by patriots of all parties anywhere and against all odds. By the movement we incubate the principles promulgated by the Farmers' Alliance and show to the work that we put principles above mere party success.

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