

1896 presidential elections without direction while the Republicans were anxiously awaiting the role of favorite.

The Republican nomination was probably decided in the 1894 elections as the Governor of Ohio, William McKinley, himself a Congressman from 1877 to 1891, campaigned for Republican candidates throughout the country. He and his principal lieutenant and fundraiser, Mark Hanna, spared no effort in building alliances which resulted in a comfortable first ballot nomination at the Republican National Convention held in early June 1896 in St. Louis. The Republicans straddled the raging gold-silver debate by supporting the maintenance of the gold standard until such time as the leading commercial nations in the world agreed to a standard including the use of silver.

The Democrats were essentially leaderless by the time of their nominating convention in July. The controlling and divisive issue of the quadrennial conclave was the issue of currency and virtually every convention vote was premised on where each delegate stood on this economic question. The party was split generally between eastern delegates who favored the current gold standard and southern and western delegates who supported the unlimited coinage of silver. Fourteen individuals received votes for the Democratic nomination on the first ballot with silver candidates Congressman Richard P. Bland of Missouri (235) and William Jennings Bryan of Nebraska (137) and gold standard support, Robert E. Pattison, former Pennsylvania Governor, (97), leading the voting. On the fifth ballot, William Jennings Bryan became the youngest major party candidate for President, in part because of his famous "Cross of Gold" speech delivered on the currency platform debate.<sup>21</sup> The Maryland delegation was split in favor of the minority gold position and Bryan had but four of the state's 16 votes on the final nominating ballot.

The currency issue and economic unrest spawned and strengthened third parties in 1896.<sup>22</sup> The gold standard Democrats who had lost at the national party convention held a September meeting in Indianapolis where they nominated John N. Palmer to run under the label of "National Democrat" or "Gold Democrat." In Maryland, the Palmer slate was designated "Sound Money Democrat." The Populists or People's party, Silver Republicans and National Silver parties all endorsed Bryan for President but differed on candidates for Vice President and platforms. The Socialist-Labor party attracted votes in 20 states and made its first appearance in Maryland. The temperance movement had two party banners, the National Prohibition, and the regular Prohibition party whose presidential nominee, Joshua Levering, was a native Marylander.<sup>23</sup>

The general elections presented a contrast in campaign styles, personalities and resources. While the youthful Bryan criss-crossed the country making 600 speeches, the more seasoned McKinley campaigned from his home state inviting representatives of important interest groups to visit him and discuss his proposed policies. The Democratic in-fighting left it with much fewer financial resources than in previous presidential contests while McKinley's aide, Mark Hanna, was proving himself to be a persuasive and successful fundraiser in business circles.<sup>24</sup> While the regular Democratic ticket relied on going to the voters the Republicans made the first