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JOINT STATEHOOD: 1906

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THE desirability of statehood is evidenced by the intensity of feeling that Territorial citizens display when admission is granted, but in the annals of American History there exists at least one case where the blessing of statehood was dismissed because the terms for admission were unacceptable to two of the Territories in question. Such an incident occurred in the early 1900's when a plan was formulated to fuse the four remaining Western Territories and admit them as two separate and equal states.

The national election of 1900 had seen the triumph of the Republican Party. Among the many planks in that Party's platform one called for the inclusion of the remaining Territories of Arizona, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Indian Territory in the Federal Union. Preliminary to the fulfillment of this pledge, an investigating team headed by Senator Beveridge of Illinois visited these areas intent on discovering the political and economic maturation level of these Western Territories. After completing its junket in 1902, Beveridge's committee submitted the majority report calling for the immediate admission of Oklahoma and Indian Territory as one state and recommended that Arizona and New Mexico continue as Territories for an indefinite period.

This pronouncement against Arizona and New Mexico proved unacceptable to most parties and eventually a compromise proposal, which Beveridge came to look on as his own, was advanced calling for the fusion of the four Western

* Based on Leopard, *Joint Statehood: 1906*. University of New Mexico, Master of Arts Thesis in History, 1958.

Territories into two states. Although this proposal seemed satisfactory to various congressional leaders, it far from pleased the citizens of two of the Territories in question. The leading political parties of both Arizona and New Mexico went on record in opposition to the measure and much ill will toward consolidation was generated in the various Territorial newspapers. The seemingly inalterable distaste for joint statehood evidenced by the majority of sources in Arizona and New Mexico contrasts sharply with the pleased acquiescence that marked the feeling of Oklahoma and Indian Territory to a similar proposal. Eventually the policy of consolidation gained official sanction from President Theodore Roosevelt and in December 1905 joint statehood bills were introduced in both the House and Senate and were quickly referred to the Committee on Territories.

After deliberation the Committee brought forth what was known as the Hamilton Joint Statehood Bill. The Hamilton measure called for the consolidation of the four Western Territories into two states. Oklahoma and Indian Territory were to be united into one state to be named Oklahoma, its capital to be Guthrie and the new state was to receive two sections in each township and \$5,000,000 cash grant for the establishment of schools. Arizona and New Mexico were to be united as the state of Arizona with the capital located at Santa Fe. Arizona, because of the aridity of the soil, was to receive four such sections plus the \$5,000,000 for the establishment and maintenance of its schools.

The generosity of the Hamilton plan did not impress New Mexicans who felt that the location of the capital was poor compensation for the loss of the Territorial name. Republican Santa Feans looked in horror to the possibility that they might eventually lose the proposed capital site to the more favorable situated city of Albuquerque and, worse still, see the political power go to the emergent Democratic Party of that city. To the more thoughtful citizenry the fear of Democratic hegemony, the loss of the Territorial name and the internal strife and jealousy concerning the location of the capital were only incidental to the basic problems that consolidation would bring. The real issue was one of uniting an

agricultural, predominantly Spanish-speaking people with an area dedicated to mining and industrial pursuits. Some New Mexico spokesmen felt that such a marriage would mean the virtual disfranchisement of the agricultural population by the industrial interests of Arizona, while Arizona business and industrial leaders direly prophesied that such a union would make for the insecurity of property and the stifling of progress.

The two Territories' obvious dissatisfaction regarding joint statehood prompted Senator Foraker of Ohio to introduce an amendment to the Hamilton Bill. The amendment called for the unreserved unification of Oklahoma and Indian Territory, but stipulated that Arizona and New Mexico should be allowed to decide their proposed union by a popular vote. A negative pronouncement by either Territorial electorate would block consolidation for both but would not affect Oklahoma's statehood chances.

With the passage of this amendment much of the opposition was removed from the Hamilton Bill and on June 19, 1906 the plan became law. Before the passage of the Foraker Amendment the New Mexico press, along with her Arizona brethren, had bitterly fought the unification scheme, but when it became evident that the amended Hamilton Bill would be passed by Congress, an abrupt change occurred in the editorial policy of New Mexico's leading Republican newspaper.

Ample evidence exists to show that this editorial reversal instituted by the *Santa Fe New Mexican* resulted from an agreement among stockholders and leading Territorial Republican politicians that joint statehood should become a plank in that Party's platform. The sanctioning of the Hamilton proposal was unofficial since the Territorial Republican Party was on record in opposition to consolidation, but its endorsement by leading dignitaries such as Holm O. Bursum, Chairman of the New Mexican Republican Central Committee, W. H. Andrews, Republican delegate to Congress, Solomon Luna, a prominent politician and business man and Max Frost, a leading Republican figure and editor and Publisher of the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, greatly enhanced the possi-

bility of its ultimate acceptability by the bulk of the Party faithful.

In public and private articles and correspondence these supporters of joint statehood developed a series of convincing arguments to show that the plan could be a great asset to the Territory if it were accepted by New Mexico voters. The protagonists argued that joint statehood was officially endorsed and approved by the national administration, and by supporting the proposal as a Party measure New Mexico might possibly gain much needed favor from the administration. It seemed doubtful, they argued, since Arizona still actively opposed consolidation, that a union would be effected, but New Mexico's support might cause her to receive special consideration for future statehood plans while Arizona would have to bear the full onus of guilt and resulting disfavor for her refusal to loyally uphold administration policy. If, however, Arizona became reconciled to joint statehood and gave accedence to the plan at the polls, the possibility existed that the unified state could enact a constitutional provision allowing for the division of the properly consolidated state of Arizona into two separate states. This possibility was further elucidated by Bursum who argued that though Arizona and New Mexico would officially be one state, by various duplications of offices the two areas could enjoy virtual local autonomy. This system of local autonomy would greatly facilitate the division of Arizona into two separate states when it became practicable to do so.

Party funds were utilized in an attempt to advertize the necessity of supporting joint statehood. Free newspapers advocating consolidation were sent throughout New Mexico and Arizona, pamphlets and circular letters printed in Spanish and English were widely distributed and New Mexico's Republican press worked closely with those few Arizona editors who supported the Hamilton proposal. These efforts and expenditures in support of unification were insufficient to counter the well financed and widely disseminated comments against the measure that emanated from Arizona Territory. Early in the campaign, New Mexico's pro-consolidation press

stopped circulating its literature to Arizona and concentrated in winning support within the Territorial confines of New Mexico.

This was no mean task since the bulk of voters seemed apathetic to joint statehood while many prominent Territorial citizens bitterly opposed it. Thomas B. Catron, a prominent New Mexican lawyer, landowner and statesman, and Manuel A. Otero, ex-Territorial Governor were the leading Republican antagonists of the measure in the Territory. Endorsement of the Hamilton plan was further complicated by a split in Republican ranks over leadership of the Party.

H. J. Hagerman, President Theodore Roosevelt's newly appointed Governor of New Mexico, fomented Party dissent by his insistent policy of replacing appointed hold-overs from the previous Republican administration. Though acting on a *carte blanche* from the President, Hagerman created much antagonism by the manner in which he operated. He deposed Party Chairman Bursum from his position as Superintendent of the Territorial Penitentiary, and contested Bursum's leadership by instituting proceedings against him for supposed mishandling of Territorial funds while Superintendent. An investigating body exonerated Bursum of the charge, but in the interim period his position as Chairman of the Republican Central Committee was vigorously assailed by Hagerman and his supporters. This dissent complicated the issue since official Party support of the Bursum endorsed joint statehood plan was necessary in order for the various stratagems postulated to be effective. To this end the Chairman and his cohorts labored, carefully spelling out the various advantages accruing to the Territory, its municipalities and corporations that would directly or indirectly result from the espousal of the joint statehood plan. Bursum successfully weathered the assault on his leadership and received almost unanimous endorsement of his policies at the Committee convention in Albuquerque in September, 1906. By the endorsement of Bursum and Andrews, the Committee by implication at least, virtually assured that the statehood plan would be a plank in the Republican platform in the forthcoming Republican Territorial Convention.

This Convention, held in Las Vegas, New Mexico, officially endorsed joint statehood as a Party plank. The Democrats likewise favored joint statehood. With both parties in agreement on this issue, the campaign became more intensely involved in the difficult job of gaining votes for individual candidates. The race for the delegate position became one of the main topics of concern with W. H. Andrews, the Republican incumbent, vigorously opposed by O. A. Larrazola, the Democratic aspirant.

The results of the November 6th election showed the Republican Party in majority control of the federal, Territorial and local offices. In the delegate race Andrews drew 4,817 votes while Larrazola tallied 4,447 votes. The small margin of victory afforded Andrews brought a protest from the Democratic camp but contesting proceedings were eventually dropped.

As predicted the joint statehood measure was accepted by New Mexico citizens only to meet resounding defeat at the Arizona polls. Arizona citizens cast 16,265 votes against the measure and only 3,141 votes for joint statehood. In New Mexico 14,735 votes were cast against consolidation while 26,195 votes were tallied for the Hamilton plan. The northern New Mexico counties of Mora, Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, Taos and Union opposed the measure while the remaining counties loyally supported the jointure proposal.

In analyzing the statistics of the New Mexico election a disparity is noted between the vote cast for the delegate race, a total of 9,264, as compared to the 41,930 votes cast for and against joint statehood. These figures seem to belie the statements of various politically prominent people in the Territory that joint statehood was indifferently viewed by the majority of New Mexico's citizenry. The evident apathy of the voters toward the measure suggests other reasons to explain the great disparity in the total vote cast for the supposedly hotly contested delegate position and the indifferently received statehood proposal.

The election post mortem brought to light many incidents of the campaign; political treachery, armed intimidation and general malpractices were reported from various sources.

The most interesting side light concerned the joint statehood ballots. These ballots, separate from the party ballot, were to be handed to the voters with the regular ticket. In two instances election officials stated that the statehood ballots were pre-marked in favor of statehood before being passed to the voters. If the voters were indifferent to statehood perhaps the registered citizenry might have accepted such ballots without comment. This is possible since by November 6, 1906, no doubt remained that Arizona would effectively kill the statehood measure. Two instances of pre-marking do not prove that the practice was widespread but such procedure might, in part, explain the tremendous total gained for the Hamilton measure in the New Mexico Territory.

Joint statehood was only another unsuccessful attempt at securing admittance into the Union, and with its demise the two remaining Southwestern Territories renewed their efforts to secure the recognition they felt was their due. In 1912, under the auspices of Republican President William Howard Taft, Arizona and New Mexico were admitted as equal and separate states in the Federal Union.