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Ramsey, Donnelly, and the CONGRESSIONAL CAMPAIGN of 1868

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THE SECOND DISTRICT Congressional campaign of 1868 was "more bitter than any political contest before or since in the state." Such, at least, was the opinion of one long-time observer of Minnesota politics, reminiscing at the turn of the century. "Never again," he recalled, "has blood been at such fever heat in Minnesota." It was a battle to remember, though it was a contest of personalities rather than principles. The real issue was control of the Republican party organization in Minnesota.¹

When Alexander Ramsey was elected first Republican governor of the state in 1859, his running mate was Ignatius Donnelly, a young newcomer to Minnesota politics. In 1863 Ramsey resigned as governor to take a seat in the United States Senate. A few months earlier, Donnelly had successfully parlayed the office of lieutenant governor into that of representative from the second of Minnesota's two Congressional districts. This step was not accomplished without making certain compromising promises to Ramsey's rival for the Senate seat, and the result was a smoldering feud between Donnelly and Ramsey.²

During the succeeding five years the battle lines were slowly formed. Ramsey consolidated his control of the Republican state organization, secured the firm support of the party organ, the *St. Paul Press*,

and filled state offices with his political friends. In this program he was aided by his control of the federal patronage, and here history played into his hands. The fierce antagonism between President Andrew Johnson and Congress deprived Republican Congressmen of their normal share of influence over federal appointments. The Senate was less affected than the House because the former's veto power over presidential appointments was constitutionally guaranteed.³

By uniting shrewdly the various disappointed and discontented elements, by giving untiring attention to individual constituents, and by exploiting his persuasive genius as a public speaker, Donnelly succeeded in building a devoted personal following among the party rank and file. This enabled him to secure two Congressional renominations over the tacit opposition of Ramsey. By 1868 he felt ready to openly

¹ H. P. Hall, *Observations: Being More or Less a History of Political Contests in Minnesota From 1849 to 1904*, 78 (St. Paul, 1904); William W. Folwell, *A History of Minnesota*, 3:15 (St. Paul, 1926).

² Donnelly to Cyrus Aldrich (copy), March 20, 1862; Aldrich to Donnelly, May 11, June 15, 1862, Donnelly Papers; Stephen Miller to Ramsey, May 27, June 4, 1862, Ramsey Papers. Both collections are owned by the Minnesota Historical Society.

³ Hall, *Observations*, 56; *St. Paul Press*, March 20, 1868.

challenge Ramsey, whose Senate term expired the following spring. Donnelly never publicly declared himself a candidate for the Senate, but it was well understood that his eye was on the office.⁴ It was also understood that his election to another term in Congress over Ramsey's opposition would improve his Senatorial chances. The Ramsey organization was forced to meet the challenge head on. It was a war for political existence.

THE STARTING POINT of the campaign proper is difficult to date. Newspaper hostilities had been open and fierce for months. The leading voices of the Ramsey interests were the *St. Paul Press* and the *Minneapolis Tribune*, followed by a scattering of smaller papers throughout the state. Donnelly's most vigorous support came from the *Hastings Gazette*, the *St. Cloud Journal*, the *Mankato Record*, and numerous other rural papers. The absence of a Donnelly paper in St. Paul was a keenly felt disadvantage, and in late February, 1868, a group of young Republicans combined to bring out a small daily, the *St. Paul Dispatch*, which within a few months became the chief spokesman for the Donnelly faction. It was a pygmy beside the *Press*, however, which claimed at the time to be the largest paper in Minnesota.⁵

Among the prominent men in the Ramsey camp was William D. Washburn, a wealthy Minneapolis millowner and lum-

berman. Politics ran in his family: three of his brothers and one cousin had been members of Congress. For five years he had maneuvered without success to unseat Donnelly and secure for himself the Second District Republican nomination.⁶ His dislike of Donnelly was matched by that of his more prominent brother, Elihu B. Washburne of Galena, Illinois, a long-time member of the House of Representatives. Washburne was famous at the time as "the watchdog of the treasury" and for carrying U. S. Grant, his Galena neighbor, in his hip pocket. The latter boast was attributed to him by the opposition press because of his close friendship with Grant, the number one prospect for the presidency. Washburne had clashed with Donnelly on more than one occasion. As an opponent of excessive federal spending and as a particularly bitter enemy of railroad corporations, his course was bound to conflict with that of the ordinary Western Congressman. Ironically, in view of his future as an anti-monopolist, Donnelly had at this date a reputation as a special pleader for railroad land grants and as a promoter of free and easy spending on internal improvements. In this he was little different from most other Midwestern Representatives, who favored the rapid development of the frontier at any cost. His hostility to Washburne was shared by a majority of the House.⁷

In March, 1868, Donnelly wrote a letter to a constituent in which he reported that a particular land grant bill failed as a result of Washburne's opposition, and attacked his tight-fisted stand on land grants and appropriations.⁸ In hope of embarrassing the Congressman's Minneapolis brother, Donnelly saw that the letter was copied and circulated widely in Minnesota.

The reaction was thunderous. In an answer published in the *Press* on April 19, Congressman Washburne attacked Donnelly in the bitterest personal terms, not only accusing him of official corruption, but implying that he had a criminal past. No one was ever quicker to resent a personal

⁴ *Press*, June 17, 1868; Eugene V. Smalley, *A History of the Republican Party*, 182 (St. Paul, 1896); John D. Hicks, "The Political Career of Ignatius Donnelly," in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 8:85 (June-September, 1921).

⁵ Hall, *Observations*, 79; *Press*, June 17, 1868.

⁶ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 3:328.

⁷ Hicks, in *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, 8:84; *New York Tribune*, as quoted in the *Press*, May 8, 1868. E. B. Washburne was the only one of his family to use the final "e" in the spelling of his surname, following English rather than American usage. See Gaillard Hunt, *Israel, Elihu and Cadwallader Washburn, a Chapter in American Biography*, 155 (New York, 1925).

⁸ Donnelly to W. H. C. Folsom, in *St. Paul Dispatch*, April 1, 1868.



SENATOR *Alexander Ramsey*

slur than Donnelly. Upon the subject of his reputation in business matters, he had already proved himself abnormally sensitive.⁹

There followed two weeks of ominous silence, broken only by an announcement in the *Dispatch* that Donnelly intended to reply to Washburne upon the floor of the House as soon as President Johnson's impeachment trial was over and regular sessions were resumed. On May 2 the time arrived. In a blistering hour-long speech, Donnelly earned himself a national reputation as a mudslinger.

He began by refuting Washburne's specific charges and reading several testimonials of character; then he went to work with his sharpest weapons—his ready tongue and his Irish wit. Taking on the entire Washburn clan, he jeered, in a passage that became one of the classics of the campaign, that "every young male of the gentleman's family is born into the world with 'M. C.' franked across his broadest part. The great calamity seems to be that God, in his infinite wisdom, did not make any of them broad enough for the letters 'U. S. S.'" Ridiculing Washburne's reputa-

tion for purity in an age of broad-minded politicians, he asked feelingly, "What if God, in a moment of enthusiasm at one of the gentleman's speeches, were to pluck him to his bosom and leave this wretched nation staggering on in darkness to ruin! . . . I fancy the gentleman haranguing the assembled hosts of heaven. . . . How he would sail into them. . . . And how he would declare for economy, and urge that the wheels of the universe must be stopped because they consumed too much grease!" With a sympathetic audience, many of whom had known the sting of Washburne's accusations, Donnelly felt no restraint and gave full swing to his powers of graphic description. Three times the speaker called him to order and three times Washburne, with icy fury, urged that he be allowed to go on. His allotted hour ran out, but the House unanimously consented to extend his time. At last, in a climax of abuse, he declared: "If there be in our midst one low, sordid, vulgar soul . . . one tongue leprous with slander; one mouth which is like unto a den of foul beasts giving forth deadly odors; if there be one character which, while blotched and spotted all over, yet raves and rants and blackguards like a prostitute; if there be here one bold, bad, empty, bellowing demagogue, it is the gentleman from Illinois."¹⁰

Opinions varied as to whether Donnelly had justified or condemned himself. Upon motion of William Windom, Donnelly's colleague from Minnesota, an investigating committee was appointed to look into the accusations contained in Washburne's letter. The charges of dishonorable conduct as a private citizen were dismissed as not being within the jurisdiction of the House, while the accusations of bribery and corruption in Congress were withdrawn by Washburne himself.¹¹ The question of the

⁹ *Press*, October 25, 27, 1865.

¹⁰ *Congressional Globe*, 40 Congress, 2 session, p. 2348-2353.

¹¹ *Congressional Globe*, 40 Congress, 2 session, p. 2756.

propriety of Donnelly's language was immediately seized upon by his enemies. "The scurrility, indecency and profanity of this speech has been the means of disgracing this Congressional district throughout the nation," fumed the *Press*. The Chicago papers, faithful to Washburne, described the speech as "a stream of billingsgate as filthy as has ever polluted the halls of Congress," and Donnelly as "the nastiest and most foul-mouthed wretch who ever had a seat in the American Congress."¹² The Democratic *St. Paul Pioneer* of May 8 went them all one better by prefacing its complete printing of the speech with a paragraph from the Minnesota statute against obscene publications and pleading that its journalistic obligations must excuse the infraction of the law.

The suspicion arises that after such a build-up, reading the complete speech was a letdown to Donnelly's constituents. The editors of the *Press* must have been aware of some such reaction, because three days after publishing the speech they charged that the official copy had been extensively expurgated and gave no real idea of Donnelly's vulgarity upon the floor of the House.¹³ Claiming to have seen a "true" report, they still refrained from printing any examples—out of delicacy, no doubt.

WHILE in Minnesota the opposing groups maneuvered for position in the coming battle, the Congressional session dragged on far into the summer. The Republican national convention was held in Chicago on May 20, and Grant's nomination surprised no one. On July 4 the Democratic national convention opened in New York and closed four days later with the nomination of Horatio Seymour of New York and Francis P. Blair of Missouri.

In Minnesota's Second District the is-



CONGRESSMAN Ignatius Donnelly

suces of the presidential campaign seemed pallid beside the bitterness of the contest for the Congressional nomination. Through the months of June and July the battle continued at an increasing tempo as reflected in the newspapers. The *Dispatch* directed most of its attacks against Washburn and a somewhat vague entity which it called "the *Press* clique." It carefully avoided direct assaults on Ramsey. Like Donnelly, Ramsey was held in Washington by the duties of his office, and so far as the public was concerned, he remained rigidly aloof from the affair. The *Press*, however, did not hesitate to emphasize his stake in the outcome, and it lost no chance of pointing out that the real battle was between Donnelly and Ramsey.¹⁴

The power of this argument became clear in late July, when the *Minnesota Staats Zeitung*, speaking for an influential section of the German community, abandoned a long record of support for Donnelly with the statement that, "Mr. Donnelly is a candidate for the House, *not*, when nominated and elected by the people, to serve

¹² *Press*, May 6, 9, 1868. The earlier issue quotes the *Chicago Tribune* and the *Chicago Post*.

¹³ *Press*, May 12, 1868.

¹⁴ *Dispatch*, August 3, 1868; *Press*, July 16, 24, August 6, 1868.

it in that position, as the people have a right to expect, but to use the influence of that position for the purpose of securing to himself the election by our next legislature as senator to the United States." The paper went on to eulogize Ramsey as "the subject of reverence of the best and most valuable citizens in the country."¹⁵

On July 28 Donnelly arrived at his home in Nininger and the following afternoon he went on to St. Paul. It was a long-awaited day. The city was braced for political fireworks, and even nature co-operated in noticing the arrival of Minnesota's "little giant." He registered at the Merchants' Hotel in the midst of a furious summer thunderstorm, and minutes later the building was struck by lightning and its chimney knocked off.¹⁶

Several factors combined to make St. Paul the main arena of the campaign. It was the state's capital and largest city, as well as the home of Senator Ramsey and his chief lieutenant, Governor William R. Marshall. Nevertheless, the Donnelly following was stronger there than in Minneapolis and better organized than in the rural areas. St. Paul's large Irish population, though strongly Democratic, was presumed to be sympathetic to Donnelly, and had given the city a long-standing reputation for turbulent politics.

A meeting had been arranged in Ingersoll Hall, the city's largest auditorium, for the evening of August 1. The affair was to be Donnelly's homecoming, vindication, and opening salvo rolled into one. The building was jammed to the doors with a seething, cheering mob, and when, after a brief introduction, Donnelly stepped forward and bowed, hand on heart, "hats, caps, and everything else flew into the air," according to the *Pioneer's* reporter. When the crowd had quieted, Donnelly reviewed at length his Congressional record and denied the many charges against him. Speaking specifically of Washburne's letter, he accused the *Press* of refusing to report or acknowledge the withdrawal of the charges it con-

tained. At this point, Joseph A. Wheelock, coeditor and partner of the *Press*, rose to shout, "I pronounce that assertion a falsehood!" Excitement filled the hall, but as cries of "Put him out" rose, Donnelly restored order with the remark, "This [platform] is my newspaper. I am running it and will insert all articles presented." He then proceeded to skewer the *Press* and its editors with merciless ridicule, to the accompaniment of howls, stamping, and wild applause. The *Pioneer's* reporter, at a loss for words, concluded, "There is no possible way to present the scene to our readers."¹⁷

Donnelly's friends in St. Paul capitalized on the frenzy of enthusiasm by organizing a Grant and Colfax club among the young Republicans. Nominally it was open to all, but since the overwhelming majority were Donnelly men, the *Press* called on "regular" Republicans to boycott the group. This club remained the only effective Republican campaign organization in St. Paul, despite several efforts to form rival groups. With characteristic canniness, Ramsey himself accepted an invitation to speak on national issues at one of its meetings, thus appearing to transcend the bitter personal rivalries of the campaign. He remained throughout the reserved, high-minded statesman, unwilling to soil his hands in the mud of vilification that filled the newspapers, and most notably his own organ, the *Press*.

In the meantime, Donnelly was stumping his district, carrying his case to the ordinary voters and begging that they send Donnelly-pledged delegates to the nominating convention. Clearwater, St. Cloud, Chaska, Stillwater, Taylors Falls, Hastings, Wabasha — everywhere he was the darling of the crowd, with his personal charm, his skill at debate, his incisive wit, and his off-color but keenly pointed stories. Had the decision rested with a modern direct pri-

¹⁵ The translation is quoted from the *Press*, July 22, 1868.

¹⁶ *Press*, July 30, 1868.

¹⁷ *St. Paul Pioneer*, August 2, 1868.

mary, he would have had no rival; between the cheering crowds and the nomination, however, was many a ward caucus, county convention, and committee chairman.

THE RAMSEY COUNTY Republican convention to elect delegates to the district convention was held on August 29. Two days earlier, there were primary meetings in the towns and in the various wards of St. Paul. Normally these would have been small gatherings of party regulars organizing themselves into meetings and electing four or five delegates to the county convention. But this year excitement was at such a pitch, mutual distrust so great, and each vote so crucial, that the Republican county committee felt it necessary to appoint judges to oversee the balloting. Since the county committee, like the rest of the party organization, was controlled by the Ramsey faction, it surprised no one that two of the three judges appointed to each ward were well known as anti-Donnelly men. The Donnelly faction denounced the entire plan as a usurpation of power and declared that it would have nothing to do with the appointed judges.¹⁸

By the evening of August 27, each group was so suspicious of the other that joint voting was impossible. Official meeting places had been announced in advance and the regular ballot boxes were in custody of the sheriff. Both groups plotted to seize control of these symbols of party regularity. Early in the morning Donnelly men secured the ballot boxes from the sheriff, who was a Democrat, and guarded them through the day. The meetings were scheduled for seven o'clock. That in the First Ward was marked by a pitched battle for possession of the polling place. Led by Governor Marshall in person, the anti-

Donnelly group succeeded in driving out the Donnellyites, but theirs was a hollow victory. The floor of the room collapsed during the struggle, and the beaten Donnelly forces organized their own poll on the sidewalk in front of the building, hooting and cursing at Governor Marshall as he solicited votes through the window.¹⁹

In the Second Ward, though there was no fighting, a shouting contest developed between the opposing groups. Elsewhere the voting was quieter, but most of the towns and wards in Ramsey County had double primaries. Though neither side would recognize the votes taken by the other, there was little question that the Donnelly faction, by one means or another, had collected the larger number. Assuming victory, his followers gathered at Armory Hall, cheered while Donnelly spoke briefly, and then adjourned for a celebration. Beer and whisky flowed freely, and one group paraded the streets until a late hour, singing "Old Governor Marshall went out to hunt for clams" to the tune of "John Brown's Body." The *Pioneer* noted next day that "it was near morning before the usual quiet was restored to the city."²⁰

Since it was contested, the election decided nothing, and the issue was merely postponed to the floor of the county convention two days later. There the same thing happened. Each group of delegates was determined to organize the convention and declare itself legitimate. The result was two simultaneous conventions in the same room and a howling pandemonium that was not stopped even when the floor settled three inches, scaring out many of the spectators. So Ramsey County sent two delegations to the district convention on September 3, each claiming to have been regularly elected.²¹

THOUGH LESS colorful than in St. Paul, events followed the same pattern in many other parts of the district. In Hennepin County, as in Ramsey, the primaries were accompanied by violence, but there the

¹⁸ *Press*, August 22, 1868; *Dispatch*, August 22, 1868.

¹⁹ Hall, *Observations*, 80-83; *Pioneer*, August 28, 1868.

²⁰ *Pioneer*, August 28, 1868.

²¹ Hall, *Observations*, 84.



INGERSOLL Hall, St. Paul,
a center of Republican
political activity in 1868

anti-Donnelly forces, supported by the police, easily held the upper hand. Washburn delegates received a majority of the votes counted, but Donnelly's supporters claimed there had been fraud, and the result was another contested delegation.²²

Contests in the rural areas varied in bitterness. Anoka, Stearns, and Douglas counties were closely divided and the results were open to question. The populous southern counties were strongly for Donnelly, with the exception of Goodhue, which sent a delegation instructed to vote for General Lucius B. Hubbard of Red Wing, with the understanding that should his nomination fail, the delegates would be free to vote for Donnelly as a second choice.²³ The thinly settled frontier counties of the north and west were generally claimed by both sides. In these areas, where communication was difficult and a handful of men meeting in a store or tavern comprised a convention, the question of legitimate representation was almost insoluble.

Quite clearly, the nomination of a candidate would go to the side which succeeded in seizing control of the district convention and appointing a committee on credentials to seat its own set of delegates. From the temper of the contestants, it was equally clear that the ousted side would withdraw and hold its own convention.

Here, again, the control of a party committee was crucial, and the anti-Donnelly faction held the majority. The convention was to meet on September 3 in Ingersoll Hall, but "to avoid confusion," the district committee voted to admit only persons holding tickets signed by its secretary. Being a Ramsey man, that official refused to sign tickets for the contested Donnelly delegates, and to preserve order and prevent the hall from being filled by "a mob," he enlisted the aid of the St. Paul police force, whose chief also was a Ramsey man. The Donnelly delegates without tickets were turned away at the door, and the remaining Donnelly forces had no choice but to withdraw completely and hold their own convention in another hall. Donnelly had been outgeneraled and was marked as a party "bolter," while the "regular" convention went on to nominate General Hubbard.²⁴

Hubbard's nomination followed the withdrawal from the contest of Washburn, who had an easy majority of the delegates at Ingersoll Hall. The facts that Donnelly was certain to run and that he would undoubtedly draw a large proportion of the Re-

²² *Dispatch*, August 10, 1868.

²³ *Red Wing Argus*, August 27, 1868.

²⁴ Hall, *Observations*, 84-87; *Pioneer*, September 4, 1868.

publican vote made the election of the "regular" Republican candidate dubious, if not impossible. Washburn, relatively sure of another chance, had the political sagacity to wait.²⁵

Within three weeks it appeared that General Hubbard also had begun to doubt the wisdom of having accepted the nomination. In a speech at Red Wing, he proposed that both he and Donnelly withdraw in favor of a compromise candidate. There being nothing to compromise but himself, Donnelly refused. Then Hubbard suggested that a committee of five be agreed upon to arbitrate the differences between the candidates and to decide "which of us, regarded in the light of all the facts connected with the Conventions and the canvass preliminary thereto, is the choice of a majority of the Republicans of the District." This proposition Donnelly accepted. Each selected two representatives to serve on the arbitrating committee, these four to meet in Winona and select the crucial fifth member. After some difficulty, they agreed upon F. E. Shandrew of Winona, who was at once labeled a Donnelly man by both the *Press* and the *Pioneer*. But the sympathies of the committee proved immaterial. Hubbard's negotiations were publicly repudiated by his own party, and the Democratic papers began speculating cynically on how much it had taken to buy him off. Realizing, no doubt, that Donnelly's defeat and not his own election was the primary aim of his backers, Hubbard withdrew.²⁶

The soundness of Hubbard's conclusion was demonstrated when the district Republican committee issued a call for the convention of September 3 to meet once more and nominate another "regular" candidate. On October 8 the Ingersoll Hall delegates reconvened and named General

Christopher Columbus Andrews of St. Cloud as their candidate for Congress. To induce him to make the hopeless race, the committee raised a "campaign fund" of staggering size for the time and place. It has been estimated at from five to seven thousand dollars.²⁷

MEANWHILE, sniffing the chance of victory, the Democrats were conducting an active campaign. At a lively convention held in St. Paul on September 9, they nominated Eugene M. Wilson of Minneapolis. Young, a good speaker, and a Sioux War veteran, he was considered a strong candidate.²⁸

The contest lost none of its turbulence in becoming three-cornered. On September 7 a meeting to organize a pro-Hubbard campaign club in St. Paul was invaded and taken over by a large crowd of Donnellyites. Lights were extinguished, furniture broken, clothing torn, and dignity lost. Reporting the incident next day, the *Pioneer* concluded that "a radical [Republican] meeting cannot be held in the City unless armed bands of police are in attendance for the preservation of the peace." Minneapolis had no such problem; there the peace was maintained at anti-Donnelly meetings by gangs of burly lumberjacks recruited from Washburn's sawmills.²⁹

The emotion and pageantry which accompanied the politics of the era is suggested by a typical celebration at Red Wing. Donnelly, scheduled to arrive in the afternoon, was met several miles from town by a procession of two hundred people on horseback and in carriages, complete with brass band and flying banners. Thus he was escorted into the city to the tune of "Hail to the Chief." In the evening bonfires were lighted all along the main street, and the town's largest hall was filled to overflowing for the principal meeting. Donnelly's speech lasted two hours and was so moving that many of the ladies in the audience gave way to tears. At its conclusion, he toured the town with a torchlight procession which

²⁵ Folwell, *Minnesota*, 3:15.

²⁶ *Dispatch*, September 22, 29, 1868.

²⁷ Hall, *Observations*, 89; Everett W. Fish, *Donnelliana*, 80 (Chicago, 1892).

²⁸ *Press*, September 10, 1868.

²⁹ *Pioneer*, September 8, October 2, 25, 1868.

ended in a serenade by the band and "nine cheers and a tiger" in front of his hotel.³⁰

As a matter of course, each Republican faction accused the other of negotiating with the Democrats and angling for Democratic votes. There was some basis in the charge that Donnelly hoped to gain a part of the normally Democratic Irish vote. It was his only real chance for victory, and his popularity with the Irish was undeniable. Even the Democratic *Pioneer* acknowledged that "Mr. Donnelly has a vein of rich Irish humor and loquacity in his public addresses which his countrymen are fond of hearing. For that reason they throng his meetings." But it went on to declare stoutly, "At the polls every Irish Democrat . . . will support his own party candidate." Six weeks later, the *Pioneer* reported rumors around St. Paul that Donnelly had made arrangements with certain influential ward politicians to "buy the Irish vote." It scorned the possibility, but added, "If any money is to be made out of Donnelly, we advise the boys to make it. Take all he will pay you, then go and vote quietly for Wilson."³¹ The *Press* had its own delicate means of influencing the Irish vote. On election day, November 3, it published what purported to be a letter signed by "An Irish Catholic" in which Donnelly was attacked for abandoning the Catholic faith and dropping the second half of his baptismal name, "Ignatius Loyola."

JUST HOW MANY Democrats voted for Donnelly on November 3 was a subject of much post-mortem debate. Whatever the number, it was not large enough. The final returns stood: Wilson, 13,506; Donnelly, 11,265; Andrews, 8,598. So a Democrat went to Congress from a district which had an overwhelming Republican majority. St. Paul was the only bright spot for Donnelly. In that Democratic stronghold he had a four to one vote over Andrews and lagged only two hundred votes behind Wilson.³² Party lines evidently had wavered there.

Donnelly's weakness was most apparent

in the north. The "regular" Republican candidate carried Chisago, Pine, Isanti, Mille Lacs, Otter Tail, Meeker, and Kandiyohi counties. There the Scandinavian vote was strong, and its loyalty was to the party rather than the man. "Scandinavia has beaten us," observed one of Donnelly's supporters.³³ This, together with the devotion of many German voters to Ramsey, offset Donnelly's huge popularity with the Yankee farmers of the south.

The election marked the end of Donnelly's career as a Republican and the beginning of his drift toward reformist causes and third-party groups. He had campaigned entirely on the basis of his personal record, in and out of Congress. As the *Chicago Post* had sharply observed, "His candidate is I. Donnelly . . . his platform is I, Donnelly, and his speeches, I—Donnelly."³⁴ Although his later campaigns were no less fiery, they were never again so lacking in basic issues.

Another outcome of the campaign was the confirmation of Ramsey's power over the Republican party in Minnesota. He still faced a sharp battle for another term in the Senate, but the most dangerous insurgent had been put down. Donnelly's supporters in the party had generally been the younger men—members of the restless and experimental element.³⁵ Ramsey drew his backing from the experienced politicians—men whose age and vested interest in the party tended to make them conservative in outlook. Though the issues of the day played no direct part in the contest, Ramsey's victory represented one more step along the road to conservatism.

³⁰ *Argus*, September 24, 1868; *Pioneer*, September 27, 1868.

³¹ *Pioneer*, September 18, October 29, 1868.

³² *Minnesota Legislative Manual*, 1869, p. 93; *Press*, November 5, 1868.

³³ *Press*, November 17, 1868; H. T. Johns to Donnelly, November 11, 1868; V. P. Kennedy to Donnelly, November 15, 1868, Donnelly Papers.

³⁴ *Chicago Post*, quoted in *St. Paul Press*, August 7, 1868.

³⁵ Hall, *Observations*, 78; *Pioneer*, November 6, 1868.



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