

qualify them for passing upon his merits at the polls? Well, hardly. It puts them in fine shape to pass upon him, and it has a splendid effect upon the postmaster to know he has a boss in the people he serves rather than in some political boss who used to own him.

This same critic advocates placing the postmaster under the civil service which again leaves the appointment to the postmaster general. This simply means changing a political boss who does have a local interest, for a postoffice inspector boss to recommend the postmaster to the department who does not have. This inspector knows about as much about whom the people want, or stranger would know, and I deny that any one man knows more about whom the people want and who can serve them best than the people know themselves. To admit that such is true is to admit that our form of government is a failure and a king could serve us better. The people can change a party boss now and then when they can not stand him any longer, and get a new postmaster, but under the civil service a postmaster might be fairly capable but exceedingly offensive to the people and still hold his job in spite of them. But an elective postmaster will try to please the people he serves because he will want a re-election. Further, a clerk under him in the civil service will be more responsive to the people because the postmaster over him must be, and the postmaster has influence with the department. On the other hand, if the postmaster was under the civil service the people could rage all they pleased and the postmaster would stay on—the people be damned—and a clerk who was not utterly bad could not be disturbed.

There is another class of critics, mainly very partisan republicans, who complain because we do not permit republicans to compete as candidates. These are the last men who should complain because they took the offices of the people for sixteen years through the operation of a political boss, and now that they have lost control of the government by abusing the privilege given them they would still like to hold a portion of the offices. No fair-minded republican objects to the right of democrats to hold the offices, providing they are decent, capable men, and I feel that the rights of all the people are being safeguarded when I refer the matter for settlement to either a democratic caucus where a large percentage of the people vote, or to a primary where all the people vote. At least the people will not have thrust upon them an objectionable officer through the spoils system. The ideal method is a wide-open election without restrictions, but any man with gumption enough to have an opinion worth considering knows that to make these offices available to republicans at this time after they have hogged every office for sixteen years that rightfully belonged to the people and paid bad political debts with them, would outrage the sense of fairness of every man regardless of politics. It will be an easy matter to throw these offices open to general elections after the people once get used to this new privilege of attending to their own business, even though they must now pick the postmaster from among democrats. When politicians quit selling these offices for political services the people will be let alone to elect whom they please regardless of politics. It even strikes me as absurd now to be consulted by the towns of my district on a matter of choosing postmasters for them. Later on when they get used to picking postmasters for themselves it would cause a riot for a victorious party to undertake to again sell the people's

postoffices to the highest political bidder. The man who defends the spoils system today will be heartily ashamed of it tomorrow.

Then there is another class of critics who complain because republicans are allowed to vote upon democratic candidates. Under our rules the candidates in conjunction with the county chairman can decide whether a democratic primary or an open primary shall be held. Personally, I very much favor an open primary, but I do not wish to thrust my convictions upon those who do not believe in them. In answer to these critics I would simply offer the suggestion that possibly the democrats of these towns in which they have open primaries know what they want, and if they prefer to have their republican brothers vote with them on this subject, I don't know of any one but a political boss or these same critics who would have the nerve to interfere with their wishes. I never could find any facts to warrant the fear as charged that republicans if allowed to vote on democratic candidates would pick the worst of the list in order to embarrass the democratic party by electing a bad man to office. I have never insulted my republican brothers by considering them so devoid of patriotism and common sense and decency. The charge is a political nightmare and will pass away when the victim of the dream gets out in the sunlight. Nor do I believe republicans will vote for a milk and water democrat who has never had political convictions or been active in party politics. They will vote for the candidate that they want regardless of politics or religion. It sometimes happens that an active democrat is also an exceedingly offensive one personally, and of course he could not be elected and should not be elected. If he were appointed because of service he would be a thorn in the side of the people and a weakness to the democratic party. In one town election an active worker had the democratic indorsement of the county central committee and a portion of the state committee. He was one of five candidates and out of several hundred votes he got less than twenty. Under the spoils system he would have gotten the job and the will of the people would have been thwarted. I deny that such a man has earned a place by his party service. I deny that a man who can not command a greater support has ever been able to render a great service to his party. The chances are that his activities have annoyed the people and driven support from the party instead of bringing support to it, and he may be a good man, too, but simply unfortunate in his personal appeal.

I have tried the democratic primary or caucus, the open primary and the spoils system, and I am so strongly convinced that the primary method in one form or another is the best method for the people that I shall make no further recommendations where there is a contest without receiving my instructions from the people. Before I decided upon the elective method I recommended candidates in three towns under the old spoils system, that my critics so heartily indorse. They also point to this fact to show my inconsistency and how my rule of the people only works where I want it to. There is no doubt about my action in these three cases being wrong in principle, though I am sure I named excellent men, but I suggest that my action in these three cases be used by my critics as a horrible example of the spoils system. They need make no excuses for me such as having acted before I decided upon the election plan. I am not asking for any quarter in this contest with the bosses. Now to conclude, I make this broad assertion that there are only

two classes of people who favor the spoils system of appointing postmasters. In the first class are all who think they or their friends can profit by it in one form or another, regardless of the wishes of the people. In the other class are those who do not believe the people are competent to attend to their own business. Those in the first class always favor the spoils system until they find out I am not for their candidate; then they think a chance

with the people is better than none. Those in the second class belong to the kingly crowd and have an honest doubt of the ability of the people to govern themselves. At least their motives are not mercenary even though they are misguided. Let the people take their choice of attending to their own business or letting the bosses do it for them. I am more than pleased to submit the case to the jury.

DAN V. STEPHENS.

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