

Presidential Primary: Mode of Action Suggested

(Written for The Philadelphia Public Ledger by Senator Robert L. Owen of Oklahoma, chairman of the senate committee on banking and currency.)

No man who has ever attended a democratic or republican national convention, where the party candidates for the presidential office are nominated, could fail to be impressed with the extent of intrigue, crafty manipulation, and possibly worse than craft, in bringing about the nomination of candidates for the presidency. The use of the hundreds of thousands of government employes and their influence in promoting the selection of delegates to national conventions, went so far in the last republican national convention that it tore asunder the republican party and gave birth to a new party pledge to the overthrow of corrupt practices and pledge to the establishment of popular government, that is, pledged anew to the doctrine of fundamental democracy—the rule of the people—for that is what democracy means.

The democratic national platform declared the following principle:

"The movement toward more popular government should be promoted through legislation in each state which will permit the expression of the preference of the electors for national candidates at presidential primaries."

With the further express provision in pursuance thereof, as follows:

"We direct that the national committee incorporate in the call for the next nominating convention a requirement that all expressions of preference for presidential candidates shall be given and the selection of delegates and alternates made

through a primary election conducted by the party organization in each state where such expression and election are not provided for by state law."

Obviously, under the constitution it would be difficult to frame a federal law acceptable to the states which would permit the direct nomination of presidential candidates, because under Article 2, Section 1, it is provided that the president shall be elected by electors equal to the whole number of senators and representatives to which the state may be entitled in the congress, such electors to be appointed in such manner as the legislature thereof may direct. These electors are nominated at party primaries or by party conventions and elected at the time when it is supposed that the people are voting upon the election of the president of the United States.

In actual practice the electors elected are under instruction of the people to vote for the candidate of the successful party. The democratic electors must vote for the democratic candidate nominated at the democratic national convention and their votes are merely a matter of form, acting as voting trustees under instruction.

Under the direction of the democratic national convention it will now be necessary that the democratic national committee should incorporate in the call for the next democratic national convention a requirement that all expressions of preference for presidential candidates shall be given and the selection of delegates and alternates made through a primary election conducted by the party or-

ganization in each state where such expression and election are not provided for by state law.

The party organizations can readily, through a party rule, where there is no law to the contrary, provide for the selection of delegates and alternates made through a primary election to a state convention and by placing the names of presidential candidates on the same ballot can, by rule, provide that the vote shall serve as an instruction to the con-

primaries can only be properly accomplished by the preferential ballot, allowing the first, second and other choices in the manner provided by congress in the federal reserve act, section 4; for the election of directors of the federal reserve banks."

This preferential ballot is in the following form, and each elector indicates his first, second and other choices. No elector shall vote for more than one choice for any one candidate.

OFFICIAL BALLOT, PRIMARY ELECTION, A. D. 19... (Year to be printed). Precinct No. County..... (Precinct No. and County to be printed). N. B.—Make a cross mark (X) opposite the name of the candidate of your choice and in the column indicating the choice you wish to make. (Here insert party name) PARTY PRIMARY BALLOT

Table with 4 columns: Nominations for President, First Choice, Second Choice, Other Choices. Two identical tables for Secretary of State.

(In like form as above shall be inserted the name of each office to be voted on, with proper lines providing for the various candidates and proper columns providing for first, second and other choices.)

vention, which shall then select delegates so instructed to the national convention.

Or, if the national nominating convention should follow the period fixed by law for state primaries, or if the laws of the states should be changed so as to make the state primary precede the national convention, delegates and alternates to the national convention could be chosen under like instruction of the voters, directly to the national convention, which would then merely confirm the nominations already made by the people through their instructed delegates.

There is no sound reason why, if the state primaries are held at a date previous to the national conventions, the party nominees for congress should not serve with the nominees for the senate and senators as the delegates in a party convention which should frame the party policy. This would make the party conventions more immediately responsible to public opinion, and I suggest that the state primaries should hereafter be held not later than the 10th of August and the national conventions not earlier than the 15th of August, and that the nominees for congress and the United States senate and senators should serve as delegates to party conventions, under instruction to nominate the candidates according to the vote of the people at the primaries.

I suggest also that "the expression of the preference of the electors for national candidates at presidential

Any candidate having a majority of all votes cast in the column of first choice shall be declared the nominee. If no candidate have a majority of all the votes cast in the first column, then there shall be added together the votes cast by the electors for such candidates in the second column and the votes cast for the several candidates in the first column. If any candidate then have a majority of the electors voting, by adding together the first and second choices, he shall be declared the nominee. If no candidate have a majority of electors voting when the first and second choices shall have been added, then the votes cast in the third column for other choices shall be added together in like manner, and the candidate then having the highest number of votes shall be declared the nominee.

The Common Counsel club, of Washington city, inaugurated by a number of progressive democrats for "common counsel," is now considering this question and will doubtless work out a plan which will be submitted to the states in due time for the consideration of the party organizations and the various legislatures, and this article is written with a view to calling the attention of the public to the importance of this matter in order that suggestions may be obtained by "common counsel" with the country, with a view to making party action more responsive to the public will, more economical, more direct and freed from machine politics. ROBERT L. OWEN.

The Worm Turns

A few days ago Lord Decies, while traveling in California with his wife, lost his hand bag containing his comb and brush, and had to comb his hair with his wife's comb. This interesting item of news was telegraphed all over the world by the Associated Press. Yet some people think the country papers are publishing piffle when they say that Abner Green has painted his barn or that Mrs. Kate

Kernoodle has bolts.—Montgomery County (Ill.) News.

A Willing Demonstrator

Rosemary—I wonder how it feels to be back of a funny little mustache like yours.

Thornton—I can't tell you very well, but I will cheerfully show you how it feels to be in front of it.—Judge.



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