

# Who Owns Our Government?

"We Are Sure of One Thing, the People Do Not."—Theodore F. Thieme

Following is a special report to the Indiana Daily Times:

Terra Haute, Ind., Oct. 16.—The Federated Commercial clubs, convention, which convened here yesterday, is wondering what Theo. F. Thieme of Ft. Wayne handed it. No speaker will cause more comment than has followed Thieme's discussion of the movement for a new constitution for Indiana.

The Ft. Wayne manufacturer literally "burned up" machine rule in Indiana and showed conclusively that industrial freedom depended upon political freedom which in turn is only possible through radical changes in Indiana's constitution.

As the most glaring example of what the people may expect under present conditions in Indiana, Mr. Thieme held up the state public service commission, and his arraignment of that board, coming as it does from one of the most successful business men in Indiana, was easily the sensation of the convention. Mr. Thieme said "the law (public service commission law) was framed by public utility lawyers; it was passed through the legislature by public utility agents; it is executed by a commission made up of politicians and public utility lawyers. Where do you suppose the people's interests come in?"

Mr. Thieme, who is the head of the big knitting mills at Ft. Wayne, spoke as follows:

"In my work for the 'Business System of City Government' movement in this state I was frequently confronted with the statement by secretaries of commercial clubs, 'Our organization will not consider political questions.' While a majority of our business organizations did discuss, and called meetings in the interest of, a movement for better city government, others, including some of the larger organizations, would not permit its discussion.

"Nearly all articles of association of commercial clubs contain this section:

"The object of said association shall be not to promote, but to foster, protect and extend the commercial, mercantile and manufacturing interests of the city; to advance the growth, beautification and material welfare of the community."

"These clubs are organized to give expression to public sentiment, and so should become the public forum and mouthpiece of a community; they should watch over the welfare of the city and guard its privileges. And while it becomes the duty of such organizations to consider political questions, there should be no place for partisan politics; while they should assist in clearing up and destroying the ugly 'wiggles' in the muddy pool of politics, they should not plunge into the pool and become soiled and contaminated themselves. On the other hand the control of such clubs should not be allowed to get into the hands of politicians; whenever they do political questions are barred, and the real usefulness of such a club is at an end.

"I am sorry to say that the leading clubs of our state today are controlled by the 'political machine.' The purpose is not only to stifle in the club material welfare work depending on political agitation, but by keeping silent to quiet all apprehension and suspicion on the part of the public.

"What is the result? Our business and professional men, as a body, are ignorant of the simplest questions of government or political policy; they are apathetic and discouraged. The intelligent working people of the state, as a body, are statesmen, as compared with the average business man. I can vouch for this through three years of experience.

"Our commercial clubs should be civic educational centers, to teach the people the simple, sound principles of government; to investigate and report on the great political and economic questions of the day, especially those directly affecting our cities, to create enlightened citizenship and a community sense among our people, thereby establishing a healthy, progressive and sound government for all the people, as a substitute for our present destructive, unsound,

## SIGNIFICANT STATEMENTS

Here are some of the statements made to the Commercial clubs in Terre Haute, Ind., in a speech by Theo. F. Thieme of the Ft. Wayne knitting mills:

Our present system of government is rotten to the core.

Perhaps the most glaring instance of a bold raid and an utter disregard on the part of the machine for the rights of the people, and especially the working people, is found in the state public utility law passed by the same notorious legislature. Supposedly designed to protect the people and the cities from the merciless tyranny of public franchise corporations, we find this situation: The law was formed by public utility lawyers; it was passed through the legislature by public utility agents; it is executed by a commission made up of politicians and public utility lawyers. Where do you suppose the people's interests come in?

They created the position of political boss, who was made the confidential agent, the go-between, of the new capitalistic organization. Nearly every city has one of these bosses. Some are big, some little; some have been admitted to the throne room, some get their orders in the back yard. Combined, these bosses form the political machine. They are bi-partisan and control both parties. The spoils system of office furnishes the working machinery.

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Who owns our government? We are sure of one thing, the people "do not."

At most, the total cost of the constitutional convention and special elections would be about \$650,000. That looks like a large sum, but the governor of Ohio makes the statement and proves it, that the new constitution saved the state of Ohio \$4,000,000 the first year.

wasteful system for the benefit of a few. When we do that, gentlemen, our commercial and similar organizations will take on new life and accomplish wonderful things for our cities. Instead of spending our energy and money in locating questionable enterprises, let us preserve those we have, and make our cities so attractive to both capital and labor as to induce others to flock to us.

"The question may be asked, 'Why must the commercial clubs take up these questions; what are our government, our political parties, or officials for?' It is my purpose to answer this question and also show you the great political question which should command our first attention at this time, namely, a 'New Constitution for Indiana.'

### SOCIETY MADE UP OF TWO CLASSES

"Our society is made up of two classes, the 'governed' and the 'governing.' The struggle for supremacy between these two classes is as old as the centuries. All power, all wealth and privilege comes from the 'governed'—the people. The aim of the 'governed' is to secure that power and retain it for the conservation of wealth and privilege—that is democracy. On the other hand, where that power is secured by the 'governing' class, it insures them wealth and privileges of the governed—that is plutocracy. It therefore always happens that any laws designed in the interest of the 'governed' as against the interest of the 'governors' are opposed by the 'governors.'

"This struggle is universally a very unequal one, because the 'governors' are a small, compact body, thoroughly organized, whose business

and livelihood is governing, while the 'governed' (the people) are a large, unwieldy mass, without organization, whose main business is to make a living for themselves and families. This is especially true in a new, naturally rich country like the United States, with its rapidly growing population, and immensely profitable community undertakings.

"It must be clear to you then why we, the people, do not get, and must not expect, support and assistance for any political measure designed to protect us from the exploitations of the 'governors,' or give us relief from conditions which retard us in our progress, or which put unjust burdens upon us. It therefore becomes necessary for the 'governed' to have organizations for their protection, and as such our commercial clubs should take the lead and carry out the purpose of their organizations—to advance the material welfare of the people."

### WHO OWNS OUR GOVERNMENT?

"Who owns our government? We are sure of one thing, the people do not. They pay the taxes, create the wealth and furnish the votes, yet they do not own their government. Then who does? Let me briefly tell you:

"Sixty-three years ago, in the year 1851, the people of Indiana adopted a new state constitution to replace the one adopted thirty-five years prior to that, in 1816. The old instrument had been outgrown, so they brought their fundamental laws, or the 'rights of the people' up to date. We will assume that the men who composed the constitutional convention were honest, and perhaps above the average in intelligence, and that they wrote the best constitution they knew how to write and could agree upon, according to conditions existing at that time. However, they could not look into the future and so could not make provision for it. They thought so much of their work and believed in it so thoroughly that they protected it by making it practically unamendable. They provide that any proposed amendment must be passed by a majority vote of both houses of the legislature, at two successive sessions, and then be submitted to the people for a vote, and that it must secure a majority of all votes cast at the election, not a majority of the votes cast on such an amendment; and while such an amendment was pending, no other amendments could be proposed. 'A majority of all votes cast' was recently well illustrated by a speaker. He said: 'We will suppose a meeting of one hundred people. A vote is to be taken. The speaker announces, 'All in favor of the motion arise'—and fifty men rise to their feet. "Those opposed will rise"—and ten men rise. The speaker announces, "There are fifty ayes and ten nays, but as a majority of those present is fifty-one, the motion is lost." That means that those who do not vote are counted against. Nobody would consider that fair, yet that is the method prescribed in our constitution. This has proven such a handicap that although many attempts have been made in the last sixty-three years to amend our constitution, yet at no election has a majority of all votes cast been secured. At present thirty-five states have abolished this unfair provision, but Indiana still struggles along with it, and the agents of the 'governors' tell us boldly, 'We can secure all reforms by amendments—we don't need a new constitution.'

### THE CITY PROBLEM THEN AND NOW

"In 1851 the largest city in the state had a population of 8,000. We had no city problems, and these constitution makers could not foresee the modern business city with its great activities, both in its development and in its maintenance.

"And what is a city? It is the unorganized mass of the 'governed.' The assembling of this mass within a limited area makes the city, and in order to create living conditions and make it possible for this mass to 'live and let live' they themselves must provide certain things, and undertake certain functions, such as street paving, sewer construction, bridge building, public schools, fire and police departments, parks, transportation in the city, gas, electric lights, water, telephones, etc. The city has become a huge business and manufacturing corporation, with this unorganized mass as tax-paying stockholders.

"The carrying out of the functions of this 'city corporation' necessitates the letting of contracts, granting of franchises, employing of many people, buying and selling—activities involving the expenditure of millions of dollars.

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