

Governor Garvin's Speech.

Following is the address of Governor Garvin of Rhode Island, delivered at the banquet of the New Haven democratic club, January 11:

Formerly New England was half democratic; whilst Vermont, Massachusetts and Rhode Island were in the whig column, Maine, New Hampshire and Connecticut inclined to Jeffersonian democracy. At that time the population was more rural and more native—conditions which one would naturally expect to have favored whig supremacy.

Notwithstanding the increase of urban and manufacturing and foreign born population, all of which changes should count for democratic gains, New England today is solidly republican. How can such an apparent anomaly be explained? Wholly, I believe, by the increased power of money in elections, accompanied, as it has been, by the drift of nearly all men of wealth into the republican party.

The influence of money in determining the result of an election is almost unbounded. In the first place the daily newspapers of our large cities are great business enterprises, are owned by wealthy men or corporations, and find their largest profits in the advertising patronage of rich men and corporations engaged in other lines of business. Very naturally nearly all of these papers in New England are republican in their politics, or, if nominally independent or democratic, they are but half-heartedly so, having a bias, unconscious very likely, towards the views of their customers and associates of the wealthy class.

The press is an influence at work all the year round to mould public sentiment; and most persons who depend upon one daily newspaper for their knowledge of public events, inevitably are influenced by the views it inculcates.

But money has another far more direct, and no less potent, influence upon the result of an election. I refer to its power of purchasing a strong party organization. "The cohesive power of public plunder" is spoken of, but it is trifling as compared with the cohesion which is effected by an abundant supply of funds placed at the absolute disposal of a shrewd party manager. The many ways of using campaign funds I need not specify at length. Clubs are sustained, workers are hired to qualify voters and then get them to the polls, lavish advertising and spectacular public meetings are paid for, teams for getting out the vote and a multitude of other "legitimate expenses" are provided. No doubt in a large majority of New England towns the result of an election is determined beforehand by the knowledge that the republican local organization is well supplied with funds, and that the democrats are destitute.

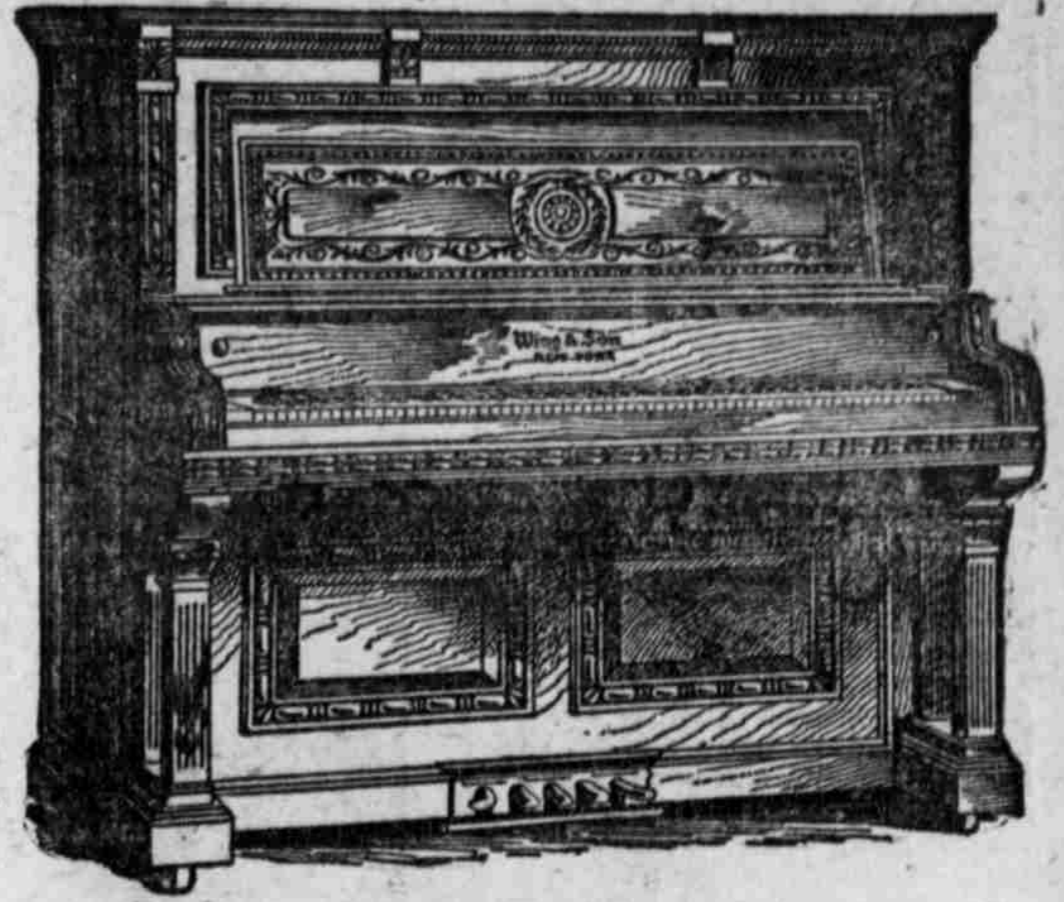
If any doubt exists in the minds of the managers of the dominant party as to the result of an election in an legislative district, then without hesitation illegitimate methods are called into use, to-wit: direct bribery, and what is more effective in populous localities, the corruption of election officials and of active members of the democratic organization.

Is it strange under these circumstances that the rich republican party has permanent control of every New England state? Only sporadically, at long intervals, by a fluke, as it were—a fluke, by the way, which has not happened in any New England state for many years—can an opposition party ever get control of the state's government.

Nevertheless, and notwithstanding its perpetual minority, the people of New England at heart are democratic. Every state, every city, nearly if not quite every town, and certainly every party, contains a majority of voters

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who believe in democratic principles.

A very large majority of the republicans of New England are in sentiment democrats. They are opposed to the policy carried out by their state governments, and regard the most important acts of legislation to be wrong. They rejoice in every veto of a party measure and wish they were more numerous.

The truth is that the moneyed men who supply the campaign funds, and they are very few when compared with the whole number of republicans, also dictate the policy of the party. They do to it that legislation is in their own interest and not in that of the rank and file of their party.

It would seem strange that, even with the unlimited use of money, a party organization hostile to the people in almost its every act, can retain permanently the support of a plurality of the voters. And yet it does so succeed, aided no doubt by race prejudice, party spirit, and a machinery of elections which invites and makes effective corrupt practices.

Whilst it is true that the democratic party need not expect permanent control of any New England state under present conditions, yet as believers in government by the people, we need not despair. John Stuart Mill held that man's will is free only

to the extent that he can change his environment. However that may be, I am convinced that the one way in which New England democracy can acquire liberty is through an alteration of its constitutional environment. Although we cannot under present conditions carry elections, we can change our state constitutions.

In order to do so, however, in such a way as effectually to change the environment, we must agree upon a single amendment sufficiently fundamental to destroy the dominance of money in elections and to substitute therefor the real will of the majority.

An amendment which will accomplish this result and which because being "in the air," is easy of attainment, is what we call in Rhode Island the constitutional initiative. By that term we mean a constitutional provision which will enable a reasonable minority of the legal voters, say 5 per cent of the total qualified electors of the state, to propose amendments to the state constitution. At present, as you are fully aware, all propositions of amendment must come through the state legislatures, which is another way of saying must meet the approval of the monopolists who furnish the campaign funds of the dominant party. But public sentiment even now is a mighty power,

and can force any legislature to do some one thing upon which it has determined. The trouble has been that public opinion has almost invariably concentrated about some minor and unimportant reform, which, when accomplished, left things very much as they were before.

At present, however, there seems to be a wide-spread wish, which ought to be stimulated, in favor of direct legislation by the people, or, as it is called in Switzerland, the initiative and referendum. For constitutional amendments we already have the referendum, it only remains, therefore, for us to amend our state constitutions so as to grant the popular initiative.

The power of money in elections is not peculiar to New England. With scarcely an exception the moneyed party is in control of every state. What has long been true of many of the states is more and more becoming true of all, and now is fast becoming true of the nation as a whole. It is a serious question, and one pregnant with grave foreboding, whether under existing conditions the democracy of the nation will ever again have a real representative in the presidential chair. In my opinion it is very doubtful.

The wealth of the country, almost