

The Presidential Primary

The simple meaning of this heavy phrase is that the presidential nominees next year shall be named by the people at the polls, not by bosses in back rooms.—Mark Sullivan in Collier's Weekly.

These states already have the presidential primary as a formal statute: New Jersey, Wisconsin, North Dakota, Oregon, Nebraska; informally, or as a party rule, Louisiana, South Dakota, Ohio.

In these states the legislatures will meet the coming winter. In each of them the presidential primary can be adopted if the people insist on it: Massachusetts, New York, Virginia, Mississippi, South Carolina, Rhode Island, Maryland, Kentucky.

The presidential primary means just this: it gives you the right to go to the polls and say who the nominee of your party for president should be. It means that if you are a republican you can go to the polls and say whether you want Taft, La Follette, Hughes, or some one else to be the republican candidate for president; if you are a democrat you shall have the privilege of choosing among Harmon, Clark, Underwood, Wilson, Folk, or any other favorite you may have.

If you do not think you ought to have that right, this page, during the next few weeks, will not interest you—probably, indeed, it will irritate you.

THE WILSON FOLLOWERS

Arkansas was nearly the first state to adopt the direct primary for the choice of United States senator. That was in 1902; in the intervening nine years practically every other state has adopted this extension of the people's power, and through it the senate is being revolutionized. Naturally enough, Arkansas is not likely to lag in the adoption of the same system for naming presidential nominees. The Woodrow Wilson club of Little Rock has called upon the democratic state committee to adopt the presidential primary. The supporters of Wilson everywhere seem to have complete confidence in the outcome of a direct appeal to the people; the Harmon people so far have shown a disposition to place more reliance on quiet conferences with local leaders. Any candidate will prejudice himself with a heavy handicap who delays too long in accepting the presidential primary, which is the same thing as saying that he does not want the nomination unless a majority of the voters want him to have it.

HARMON

From the managing editor of the Mobile, (Ala.) Item: "My reading of the Alabama papers assures me there is a movement in this state for a presidential primary. Leading papers are urging it. The popular choice in this state, I believe, would be Underwood first and Wilson second; and it is a singular coincidence that those political leaders who desire the delegates to be named by a state convention rather than through primaries are declared Harmon advocates.—Richard Hines, Jr."

Would it not be worth while for Governor Harmon to consider whether his followers, in their apparent opposition to the presidential primary, are giving the public a truthful picture of his own position?

THE LA FOLLETTE POSITION

From the resolutions adopted by the insurgent conference at Chicago, October 16:

"We favor the choice of republican voters as to candidates for president by a direct primary vote, held in check, pursuant to the statute, and where no such statute exists, we urge that the republican state committee provide that the people be given the right to express their choice for president."

WILL SOME STANDPATTER ANSWER THIS?

If the voter is capable of choosing between Harmon and Taft (assuming them to be the two candidates), why is he not also capable of choosing between Harmon and Wilson? Between Taft and La Follette?

MASSACHUSETTS

Eben S. Draper, Dr. Henry L. Shattuck, Dr. Charles H. Cook, and several other of our friends in Massachusetts have called Collier's attention to the omission of their state from a list of those whose legislatures will meet the coming winter. We since have printed the list correctly, and we shall not fall in giving Massa-

chusetts what stimulus may come from iteration. For four months Massachusetts will have a legislature in session, completely able to give the presidential primary to the state; it has just re-elected a governor whose public promises have included all those principles of which the presidential primary is typical. Between Massachusetts and the presidential primary nothing stands except the inertia of the people.

OHIO HAS A TOOL

Walter W. Pollock of Cleveland writes to say that while Ohio has not yet got the presidential primary it has an available substitute in a statute which provides for the direct election of delegates to the national conventions. Obviously, the thing for the Ohio voter to do is to make every candidate for delegate declare what man he will vote for at the convention. Ohio is going to be an extremely interesting battle-ground next year; one result of this new primary law will be that neither of the two favorite sons, Taft and Harmon, will have solid delegations. The districts vote separately, and a district which favors La Follette or Wilson will be able so to instruct its delegate to the national convention.

SOUTH DAKOTA

The editor of the Sioux Falls "Daily Press," Mr. A. E. Beumont, writes to say that a provision of South Dakota's admirable direct primary law permits the candidates for delegate to the national convention to be grouped as "Taft delegates," "La Follette delegates," "Harmon Delegates," "Wilson delegates," and so on—a perfectly satisfactory equivalent for the presidential primary.

KANSAS

A special session of the Kansas legislature would be necessary to provide the presidential primary for that state. A large section of public opinion demands this. It would be an anomaly in modern history if Kansas should be behind Nebraska, to say nothing of New Jersey, in the use of this instrument of the people's rule.

PRESSURE ON A STANDPATER GOVERNOR

In the state of Washington the majority of the voters are progressives and very earnestly for La Follette; the governor, M. E. Hay, is a standpatter and Taft man. The progressives want Governor Hay to call a special session of the legislature so that they can get the presidential primary and so express themselves at the polls. The governor says he will not call the special session and puts his refusal on the ground of public expense. All the Taft papers and Taft people are with Hay; on the other hand, the granges, labor organizations, and women's clubs are circulating petitions demanding the special session and the primary. The progressive republican League of King county (Seattle) is working hard; and on December 6 a state-wide conference of progressives of all parties was held. One of the most capable judges in the state says that if presidential primaries are held, Washington will favor La Follette as against Taft by four to one. This seems to be a case where Taft followers are not only willing but eager to win the game by means of a stacked deck. Those persons who admire Taft most and best understand his higher qualities will be the last to believe that he would countenance what his followers in Washington are doing, and permit himself to be the beneficiary of a suppression of the opportunity for free choice.

AN ENTERPRISING COUNTY CHAIRMAN

The northwestern corner of the United States, with British Columbia on the north and Vancouver Island across the Gulf of Georgia to the west, is called Whatcom county. It has a republican central committee, and its chairman is W. P. Brown. Mr. Brown's position is this: if the state of Washington gives him a presidential primary, well and good; if not, he is going to have one anyhow for his county. He and his committee have evolved a plan; he says it might not work in very large cities, but that it is perfectly practicable for Whatcom, with seventeen thousand voters. Doubtless Mr. Brown would be glad to explain his plan to any other county chairman who finds himself in the same position—that is to say, willing to hold the presidential primary, but handicapped by the lack of a state statute. Mr. Brown's address is Bellingham, Wash., and such inquiring persons as write him ought to enclose stamps.—Mark Sullivan in Collier's Weekly.

THE SECRET CAUCUS MUST GO

Representative C. A. Lindbergh of the Sixth Minnesota district has written Mr. Bryan a letter, saying:

"I think your suggestion in regard to the opposition to secrecy of caucus rule is directly in point and very material to the American people."

On June 13th Mr. Lindbergh, who is a republican, delivered a speech in the house in which he condemned caucus dictation. On that occasion he said:

"No member has any influence on the floor of the house after the caucus has once made its decision. No act, speech, or deliberation in the house now changes the result of caucus action."

"The house has capitulated to an unofficial body at the present time known as the democratic caucus."

"It is not the first time in history that the majority membership of this house has committed treason, nor is the democratic caucus the only caucus to have committed the offense."

"I am not partisan in this consideration. I am talking against treason, and I unhesitatingly say—and I say it with the laws of the country and the constitution in mind as my guide—that any member who surrenders his action to the control of a caucus, whether it be of one party or of the other, violates his oath, is a traitor to his constituency, and commits treason against his country. I know that in this statement I am challenging the opposition of the trusts and their organs, for they will fight for the caucus system, and they will criticize me for opposing it."

"I say, destroy the caucus, and then we shall have the government that is the people's. The caucus belongs to bosses and special interests. These try to make the people believe that large bodies can not act en masse. They say that of the senate and house in my state also. Each party here has more members than the senate and house combined of the Minnesota legislature; but the same argument is made there. What would be done if the people should happen to elect all the representatives from one party?"

"It is in opposition to caucus and executive control in connection with legislation that every citizen should rise in arms. This system is in its essentiality a system of the bosses and special interests. It is the most effective way by which they can secure legislation favorable to themselves, and it has been encouraged by them at all times."

"The country has been discreetly taught to believe that the caucus is the place to settle political and legislative matters, and presidents have been encouraged to bribe, using patronage as the spoils."

"We have noticed the profound satisfaction of democratic leaders over the fact that they have now a perfect machine that controls their individual membership. They take proceedings off the floor of this house to caucuses and there pledge the members to a unit and swear over their minds with the caucus stamp in order to make them believe that they are thereby relieved from any direct responsibility to their constituents and to the country. After that is done they are brought back to the house to vote, so as to make the action of the caucus legal; but it is all the action of the caucus and not the house."

"I am against the caucus because it is the weapon of the special interests to control legislation in its own favor. I am for the initiative, referendum, and recall because under it the people have a direct control of their affairs and it enables them to direct their servants whom they elect."

"THE GOOD MEN DO"

Kansas City, Mo., Nov. 30.—An unusual display of Thanksgiving good will was witnessed in Armourdale, a small railway and packing house town across the state line in Kansas from here today. Yesterday a newspaper published the story of a woman and her five children almost destitute of clothing and food and suffering from cold, who lived in a shack that had been battered by the flood of 1903.

Today close to 1,000 persons, coming on foot, in buggies, and by motor car, literally clogged the street in front of the place in an effort to aid the family.

While some "big brothers" filled the coal bin, others piled the rooms high with clothing and food. So liberal were the offerings that finally the house could hold no more.

The overflow was distributed to other needy persons in the neighborhood.