

# The Independent.

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## Probing Election Frauds

One highly useful result will be obtained by the investigation of New York election frauds. The many and devious devices by which the bosses and their confederates steal elections will be revealed. Since 1896 honest voters have suspected that the Australian ballot system was not impregnable to the assaults of those who make it their business to defeat the will of the people.

From time to time new methods of corrupting the ballot come to light. At first the repeating system found favor and is still in use. Thousands of names are registered falsely and repeaters vote under these names thus fraudulently recorded. But false registration can be detected if the machine has strong and determined opposition. In Philadelphia 44,000 names were stricken from the registration lists, and the reform ticket was elected by a plurality that could have been overturned had these names remained on the lists.

In 1896 the "campaign of education" disclosed the false registration scheme in all its perfection. In that year the system reached its highest usefulness. Thousands of men were rushed across state lines to vote under falsely recorded names. In Ohio, where the crafty Marcus Aurelius Hanna lived, the results were immensely gratifying to that king of bosses. But there has lurked in the minds of many the suspicion that the political resourcefulness of 1896 did not end with the "campaign of education," splendid organization and false registration.

If there are superior methods of defeating the ballot they are known in New York. The district leaders of Tammany undoubtedly are familiar with the most approved ways of stuffing the ballot boxes and of falsifying returns. It is reported that 30,000 Hearst voters discovered when they went to the polls that votes had already been cast in their names. To be appreciated this trick needs only

to be seen. But there are also means of transforming a triumphant candidate into a defeated candidate after the polls have closed. The final touch is left to the corrupt election judges and clerks. To secure such judges and clerks requires the finest kind of work by the machine, but success often crowns the efforts of the bosses.

The investigation in New York will be backed by the Hearst millions and by the money of other rich men who demand a square deal. If there has been extensive fraud it will probably be revealed. The revelations will show how the campaign contributions of corporations have been employed to make our elections futile. The investigation will differ from the life insurance investigation in one important particular. It will be undertaken with a determined purpose on the part of Mr. Hearst and his friends to send the perpetrators of the election frauds to the penitentiary. This being one of the main objects of the inquisition, it is not likely that the bosses and their henchmen will crowd to the office of District Attorney Jerome to confess their misdeeds in the hope of immunity from punishment. It will be more difficult, therefore, to get at the truth, but there will be some timid ward-healers who will seek to obtain immunity for themselves by turning state's evidence. It is a black business, but it is a business that Governor Folk of Missouri had to deal with. He did not hesitate to use the "stool-pigeon" in his hunt for bigger game. He bagged the game and has earned condemnation as well as praise. Investigator Hughes in New York has invited the big game to come and sit with him and thus escape harm. Which is the better method?

This is a day of evil disclosures. For a time the miasmatic emanations from the marshes of commercial and political corruption will offend our nostrils and obscure the sun, but in the end the moral atmosphere will be purified and there will be a healthier condition in the political and business world.

## Senator Millard's Perplexity

Senator Millard seems to hold the balance of power in the senate's committee on interstate commerce. This committee is to frame a bill for the regulation of railways. The indications now are that there will be a majority and a minority report. The committee is evenly divided, Senator Millard's views being in doubt. This situation has attracted the attention of newspaper correspondents and Senator Millard is reported to be antagonistic to the president's plan for railway regulation. The senator, however, denies the impeachment, expressing the hope that the committee will be able to frame a bill that will please the president.

The words used by Senator Millard, however, do not clarify the situation. He does not explain what kind of a bill he favors. He ought not to find much difficulty in determining whether he is for or against the president's plan. The president has stated his ideas clearly and if Senator Millard is not for the Roosevelt plan he is against it. Time was when President Roosevelt was rather obscure in his references to railway regulation, but on his southern trip he said that he was in favor of giving the interstate commerce commission the power to fix reasonable rates on complaint and after a full investigation. He did not say that the rates should go into effect immediately, and herein his plan is weak, but he believed that the rates should be made effective as soon as practicable. He also recommended that the administrative body be given power to examine the books and records of transportation companies so that the government might be able to destroy the rebate system. All members of the senate committee on interstate commerce know

whether they are for or against the president's plan. But Senator Millard hesitates to declare himself.

Senator Millard may be in the same quandary that besets some of the railway officials. Senator Knox's speech at Pittsburg has given these officials some hope. They are gravely informed by Senator Knox that the power to fix a rate is not such a terrifying weapon in the hands of the administrative body after all, that in an independent action the railways can restrain the administrative body from enforcing its decisions until they are passed upon by the courts. If by means of injunctions the railways can prevent rates and regulations from becoming effective until the courts have legislative legislation the railways need not urge their plan, which provides for the establishment of a special court to deal with railway matters, for the same object can be attained by the use of restraining orders. As was done in Nebraska, the railways can secure an order preventing the enforcement of certain rates on the ground that to enforce them would be unconstitutional because it would be confiscating property without due process of law. It looks very much as though Senator Knox made his speech for the purpose of giving the railways a "tip."

Perhaps Senator Millard thinks that the senate committee can agree on a bill which will follow the general outlines of the president's plan and at the same time have little real regulative power. There is no doubt, however, as to the light in which President Roose-