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NOMINATIONS BY THE PEOPLE

It is safe to predict that the incoming legislature will enact a primary election law, providing that the candidates for all important offices in the state and the subdivisions thereof shall hereafter be nominated by the direct votes of the people, in the same manner as they are now cast in regular elections. This will mean the end of the caucus-convention system of nominations, the dethronement of political bosses and the annihilation of the corrupt political machinery that has dominated party politics in the past. Under the new system each voter will have a voice in naming the candidates of his respective party, and aspirants for office will no longer be able to secure nominations through corrupt trade and dicker with each other for votes in conventions. The change is a good one and is in accord with the principles underlying popular government.

The caucus-convention system has proved to be a failure. Under it special interests have been able to control nominations in all parties, thus giving the people no alternative but to elect one or the other of their tools to office. While it is possible for the people to control nominations under the present system, and while in some instances this has been done, yet the system itself is replete with opportunities for trickery and manipulation which have been taken advantage of by corrupt, self seeking, politicians in combination with special interests who sought the enactment of laws to enable them to plunder the people. Delegates to conventions, invested with the sovereignty of constituencies, commonly enter into bargain and dicker with parties interested in the control of nominations and corruptly barter for personal ends the trust they bear from the people. Those who dem-

onstrate their ability to secure their own appointment as delegates to conventions from year to year soon become recognized as the men with whom the interests have to deal who profit by the control of the government of state and the nation. The leader who is able to deliver delegations from his county or district becomes an object of interest to, and the recipient of of consideration and favors from the agents of the corporations and special interests who have conspired to corruptly control the government for private ends.

That a system of making political nominations and controlling party politics affording such opportunities for manipulation has resulted in government by and for special interests, instead of a government protecting the rights of the people is not surprising in view of the fact that it begets a set of petty party bosses in every neighborhood who freely assume control of party affairs, and who commonly receive instructions and financial assistance from the big bosses in whose interest they work. The system, through the corrupt methods it has engendered has cast a stigma upon politics generally, and subjected persons actively engaged therein to the suspicion of seeking personal ends, instead of the public good. Caucuses, particularly in large towns and cities, are not infrequently scenes of criminality, disgraceful conflict and sometimes violence, disgusting to all self respecting persons. State conventions are often scenes of the basest betrayal of trust and other corrupt practices, the immorality of which is shocking in the extreme. All of which has tended to lessen the interest of decent men in politics and to give the corrupt and criminal element a free hand therein, until the term politician is by many regarded as synonymous with crookedness.

The corruption and debauchery of politics having reached the limit, the demand for the adoption of a system of making nominations that will be free from the abuses of the caucus-convention system is general among all classes except the politicians themselves, and they find themselves unable to successfully interpose obstacles to a reform that is so palpably righteous and universally demanded. All of the conventions in Nebraska last year declared for direct nominations, and all of the members of the incoming legislature are pledged to the enactment of a primary law.

In view of the fact, therefore, that a primary law is sure to be enacted by the incoming legislature the provisions to be contained in such law become a matter of supreme importance to the voters of the state. The safe-guarding of party integrity by having the primaries of all parties held on the same day and the names of all candidates printed on the same ballot is a matter that will undoubtedly be provided for. But there is another matter that is vital to good government that ought to be insisted upon, namely, the penalizing of non-voting. The state has a right to compel its subjects to participate in the nomination and election of its officers the same as it commands of them military service or service as jurors. In difference to the welfare of the state

in matters pertaining to the government thereof is abhorrent to a self-governing people. And as the participation of the whole people in the government is necessary to insure a perfect balance of the moral forces of the state, such participation becomes necessary to the best interests of the state, and is, therefore, a subject over which the state may well exercise its sovereign power of self defense.

The caucus-convention system tends to discourage participation in party caucuses, alienates the interest of voters in party nominations and thus minimize the power of the people in their government. This has begotten a widespread habit of indifference in political matters, and a consequent evasion of political responsibilities and neglect of political duties upon the part of a large class of citizens, all of which has inured to the benefit of the enemies of honest government.

Therefore, the new system will find many unprepared for the intelligent exercise of the duties it imposes, and will require of all voters a larger and more enlightened interest in politics than ever before. The new system, by compelling the voters to assume the responsibility of selecting candidates, imposes upon them the duty of informing themselves regarding the merits and demerits of aspirants for office, and while destroying the power of the old political machines to rig the game, confers added power upon the party press, the intelligence and honesty of which becomes a matter of the highest consideration.

The new system will greatly augment the power of the newspaper in politics. It will make necessary state party organs whose duty it will be to discuss candidates and policies with the broadest intelligence and the utmost freedom. Party newspapers of state circulation will become necessary to such a unity of thought and action as will enable the voters of the state to select candidates by a majority vote under the primary system.

It must be borne in mind that in order to prevent two or three of the larger cities of the state from combining to control the government of the state, that two features are essential to be incorporated in a primary law, namely, compulsory voting, and nominations only by a majority of the votes cast. To permit of nominations by a plurality would put the government of the state into the hands of Omaha and Lincoln permanently. To do which either temporarily or permanently would prove to be a most disastrous blunder.

GETTING THEIR EYES OPEN

The failure of the caucus-convention system to give the people an honest and just government is forcing them into the abandonment of that system and the substitution in its stead of a system of making nominations by primaries in which all of the voters directly participate. The change of systems has already been adopted by several states and is about to be adopted by several others. This move is made necessary because under the system in vogue predatory corpora-

tions have been able to control the governments of states and nation and plunder the people, apparently, with impunity. This they could not do if the people exercised intelligence and diligence in the discharge of their duties as citizens. This they have failed to do. The fact is patent to all. In it is found the necessity for a change.

In view of the fact that self interest is recognized as the mainspring of human action, it would seem as though the people of Nebraska who are especially the victims of railroad extortion, being robbed annually of a sum approximating \$20,000,000 through excessive freight charges, beyond what is just and responsible for the service rendered ought to arise in their might and throw off the incubus of railroad government. Why have they not done this? The only reason that can be given is the lack of intelligence. Why have they remained ignorant of a matter of such vital concern to them? The reason is, traditional slavery to political parties, whose leaders have been corrupt.

These leaders could not have been ignorant of the fact that the producers of the state have been plundered outright. They have had all the railroad passes they wanted for themselves and families for, lo, these many years. The lawyers, bankers and editors who were able to ride free, themselves, and secure railroad passes for their friends as well, constituted the leaders of their respective parties. If they were not party leaders they could not have enjoyed free rides over the railroads. The plain every day voter could not obtain a free ride.

Was it not then the free ride and the political support of the railroads and of the free pass brigades in caucuses, conventions and at the polls that made them insensible or indifferent to the wrongs that were being inflicted upon the people by the railroads?

These leaders were not ignorant of the facts. But their poor party blind followers were ignorant of them. And a system of political management under which party leaders can succeed in maintaining a following and keeping them blind, while selling them out to the railroads for passes for themselves and their friends is a pernicious system utterly devoid of a redeeming feature.

Through the slip of a cog in the railroad political machine two years ago George W. Berge became the candidate for governor on the democratic and populist tickets. A memorable campaign followed during which Mr. Berge succeeded in convincing the voters of the state that the reason why no progress had been made by the people in the way of relief from railroad extortion was that the leaders in all parties had been unfaithful to them, through falling under the hypnotic spell of the railroad pass distributors. He told them that the free pass was an insidious bribe, and was the means employed by the railroads to influence and control party leaders and cause them to forget the interests of the people. The people caught the idea. They believed that Mr. Berge had told them the truth and they rallied to his support in surprising numbers, nearly landing him in the