

BALLOT REFORM ADDRESS.

UNDER date of March 21, the following address was issued by the Ballot Reform League to the electors of Oregon—

The perpetuity of our form of government depends upon the purity of our elections. Under the methods tolerated in this state, the elector, in many localities, is practically denied the right of casting his ballot for true representatives of his party or his principles. Nominating conventions rarely represent constituencies. In many instances their sole functions seem to be to publicly announce the results attained by private caucuses of political bosses. The same influences manifest themselves on election day in various unpatriotic and indecent ways, and often in total disregard of the rights of the individual voters, who resort to any and every means, legal and illegal, to advance the interests of their employers. Voters are subjected to coercion and undue influences; disorder prevails; repeating is encouraged and bribery is not infrequently resorted to. To assist in correcting these palpable and acknowledged evils and to restore the purity and freedom of the ballot is the earnest desire of all patriotic and intelligent men.

The adoption of what is generally known as the Australian ballot system will be a long step in the right direction. Its essential features conduce to enlightened and honest political action, and can be adopted by us without trenching in the least upon any provision of our constitution.

The first important feature is: Compulsory secrecy in voting. Nothing can possibly better conduce to prevent coercion and throttle corruption than a secret ballot, cast in the presence of sworn officers only, and in polling places where the voter is absolutely free from observation and beyond the reach of improper influences.

The second important feature is: An exclusively official ballot, containing the names of all candidates for all offices, printed and distributed at public expense. This cuts up by the roots one of the very worst features of our present system—the assessment of candidates for election expenses. There should be no necessary expense attending an election which should not be borne by the public at large. Under the system now prevailing, upon the pretext of collecting money for printing tickets and defraying other apparently lawful expenses, assessments are levied upon candidates, and the funds thus procured are used in any and every way, no matter how illegal, which may seem advantageous to the interests of unscrupulous political managers. Every American citizen who is ambitious to serve his country, and is worthy of the support and confidence of the people, should be by law

afforded the opportunity to become a candidate for office without being called upon to make pecuniary contributions for any purpose whatsoever.

The third important feature is that which touches the subject of the filing of certificates of nomination with some designated public officer, whether such nominations are made by conventions representing political parties, or by assemblies, or by a specified number of voters. The provisions presenting these features are calculated to insure good faith and honesty of purpose on the part of nominators and of candidates, and to prevent candidates for public office falling under the control and dictation of secret combinations of political bosses.

The object of this league is to prepare a bill containing these essential features and secure its enactment by the next legislative assembly. This state should of right take her place alongside the other states of the American union which have adopted the reformed system of balloting with marked benefit, and so put a stop to political corruption within her borders. With these essential features of the Australian method engrafted upon our electoral system, the plain and independent citizen will be able to join in nominating candidates to office, and will have an assurance that his vote will not be neutralized by the purchased suffrage of a political hireling.

A strong public sentiment demands this reform. Other reforms are impossible until this one, the greatest and most important of them all, shall have been accomplished. Through it only can untrammelled legal expression be given to popular opinion. To this one measure alone is this league committed, and its existence is determined upon by resolute men until the desired end shall have been attained.

The bill, when drafted, will be submitted for examination and criticism to representative men of all shades of political opinion and of every profession and calling. It is the determination of the league that the bill, when presented to the legislative assembly for enactment, shall represent the mature and disinterested judgment of men whose opinions are entitled to the highest degree of respect.

To all good citizens we send greeting and an invitation to enroll themselves in this league and to co-operate with us. Such information as may be desired will be cheerfully furnished by the secretary, Mr. E. W. Bingham, 74 Morrison street, Portland; and he will also, upon request, forward petitions and enrollment papers to whomsoever may desire them.

E. W. BINGHAM, Sec. C. H. WOODWARD, Ch'n.

The locks at Oregon City are now repaired, and navigation through them has been resumed. Other improvements at the falls are progressing rapidly.