

# The Santiam News

Politically Independent

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## "SHALL THE PEOPLE RULE"

It ought to be quite plain to the people what their duty is at the coming election. The only question of transcendental importance is "Shall the people rule?"

It is evident that the people who oppose this principle are the people who are boosting the assembly proposition. If they were content to abide the will of the majority, they would, through a regular and orderly manner, seek to repeal the law which they claim is objectionable. Let us set this matter right by listing the laws which the assembly would have repealed:

They want Statement No. 1 done away with.

They want the nominating election feature of the direct primary law repealed;

They want the initiative method of enacting laws abandoned;

They want the referendum repealed and

They want the recall and corrupt practices laws erased from our statute books.

Now they dare not ask for the direct repeal of these measures for they know that a vast majority of the people would be against them, if the question of repeal should be submitted as a square issue. So these assemblyites, who oppose the rule of the people, seek to accomplish by a political trick what they know would be an ignominious failure, if the fight was made in the open.

The assemblyites feel certain that they can win out in nominating republican assembly candidates. But they are extremely uncertain how anti-assembly electors will vote at the general election later on. This is the disturbing element in the spirit of their dreams.

In the old convention days, politicians could organize their machines, lay their wires and the people were, comparatively, helpless. There were the republican machine candidates and the democratic machine candidates, from which the people could make choice. In either case, the people were compelled to vote for a machine candidate. No wonder many electors formed the habit of staying at home on election day. They knew a machine candidate would be elected whether they voted or not. The people had no other option than to vote for one or the other machine candidates.

By the adoption of our direct primary nominating law, the political machine has been put out of business. Now, the elector has the privilege of helping to select the candidate as well as to vote for or against him at the general election later on. True, electors may make a mistake in voting for nominations of candidates, and unfit men be selected; but this is no more than was frequently done in the old convention days. In those days the NEWS has known candidates to be nominated by conventions who were incompetent, or who were known to be dishonest, or who had a personally shady record. A direct primary may select a candidate who, afterwards, proves to be incompetent, or who may develop into a grafter; but it is highly improbable that a candidate of this character will win out at the election. A convention of delegates can be manipulated and combinations in the interests of favorite candidates be effected, etc. In fact, most any voter, who has participated in the conventions of the past, knows that such things were frequently done. The NEWS editor has known convention work to be completely mapped out by a few delegates on the evening prior to the day of the convention. An entire electorate cannot be manipulated. Trades and combinations cannot be effected, unless the entire people are parties thereto when, of course, a majority of the people rule and that is just what all of our reform election laws are calculated to accomplish. With our present laws, the political wire puller can exercise no more influence than the most inconsequential elector. Conventions have been known to nominate unfit and undesired candidates, just to prevent the nomination of a candidate whom the people really did desire. A mistake of this character cannot be made at a primary election under our present laws.

Forty years ago, Oregon elections were conducted under the viva voce system. The elector simply selected his ballot, handed it to the chairman of the election board and who immediately read the names of the candidates thereon and clerks recorded the same upon the tally sheets. This system allowed political suffrage to become a mere commercial commodity. Soon the secret ballot law was adopted to be followed after some years with the Australian ballot. Under these laws the rascally buying of votes almost ceased. While it made the buying, sale and delivery of votes almost impossible, it did not reach the main cause or root of political corruption. The convention system had generated a lot of pastmasters in the art of political trickery, whose work was done at or about the convention. The delegate slate maker

and the convention manipulator were as yet, undisturbed. The direct primary law was enacted to correct this evil and it has done so. Else why are the old machine politicians resorting to the assembly in the effort to restore the old order of things political?

But even these safeguards were found insufficient to correct all of the political evils. Men who had money and were willing to spend it, could and did canvas the county or state, prior to the primary election and effect combinations among the people which had a strong influence over the nominating election. Men of moderate financial means could not do this; consequently, were at disadvantage in that regard. To cure this evil, the corrupt practices law was enacted (two years ago,) which limits the amount of money a candidate may expend as election expenses. It is believed that this law will do much towards removing the dissatisfaction which, heretofore, has existed with the primary law.

Now the abuse of our elections systems created the necessity for all of these reform laws. Had men been honest and fair in their efforts to secure office, the old viva voce system would, doubtless, yet maintain. But our political system had become badly diseased. A cure had to be provided and a preventative must be found. And, the NEWS believes, the efforts in this direction have been reasonably successful.

If one will only notice who are the main instigators and who will be the main directors of the assembly, he will find them composed, largely, of the old time convention manipulators, slate makers, etc. This fact ought to cause every voter, who believes that the people should rule, to be on his guard. He knows that these old timers are bitterly opposed to the direct primary and that they can, hardly be expected to propose a plan by which its aims would be carried out more perfectly. So anything which emanates from the camp of the enemy, should be looked upon with suspicion. When we remember that these convention manipulators, candidate fixers and slate makers, created the necessity for reform legislation, we can expect nothing other than hostile acts from them. These people, if they could, would repeal every law that throws protection about the ballot. They cannot do so by fighting in the open. Hence the covert and subtle assembly is proposed. Let the assembly win a complete victory and the road opens to the erasure of every reform law from our statute books and to place the old or a new political machine in the saddle.

No doubt reform laws are taken advantage of by unscrupulous politicians. The weak places are sought out wherever a possible breach may be made. But as most laws are violated occasionally, we may expect no different treatment for reform laws. But the weak places can be made strong, so that eventually, the selection and election of an official will be the real choice of the people. This can be done, only, in holding fast to the progress we have already made and by the enactment of further reform laws as necessity develops.

## AN OLD TIME PRINTER PASSES AWAY

Coll Van Cleve died at St. Josephs Home in Portland, last Friday, aged 77 years.

This simple announcement chronicles the passing of a veteran Linn county editor and publisher. For many years he edited and published the Albany Register. During President Arthur's administration, the Yaquina Customs district was established and Mr. Van Cleve was appointed the first collector. Wishing to have something to do, he established the Yaquina Bay Post, the initial number being printed at Newport, which was the first newspaper printed in what is now Lincoln county. When his term as collector expired, he returned to Albany and soon thereafter established the Scio Press in this city. Disposing of this paper in 1890, he returned to the bay country and soon thereafter revived the Yaquina Bay Post but the place of publication was changed to Toledo, the present county seat of Lincoln county.

Mr. Van Cleve was a soldier of the civil war, coming to Oregon during the closing years of the war. He was mainly instrumental in the organization of McPherson Post of the G. A. R. at Albany.

Mr. Van Cleve was an excellent printer of the old school variety, and had the extravagant habits usual to most journeymen printers and, though he had earned much money during his lifetime, his only support during the last years of his life, was the pension paid him for his army service.

When Mr. Bryan returned from a trip around the world in a public address he pronounced himself in favor of government ownership of railroads. He was ridiculed and called visionary. He could see that the government must control the railroads, sooner or later, or they would control the government, and he thought ownership a necessary preliminary to control. It now seems that Mr. Bryan could see further into the future than could his critics. President Ripley, of the Santa Fee railroad system and President Willard, of the Baltimore & Ohio railroad have both lately stated that government ownership of the railroads was a surety in the near future. President Ripley says within five years. When men who own and operate railway lines and who are supposed to not talk in their hats, give such opinions they can hardly be called visionary. Certainly, if the present effort at railroad control proves a failure, ownership by the government is the only alternative. For, in any event, the people must control transportation lines and compel them to work at a reasonable charge. Mr. Bryan had reasoned the question out, but made the mistake of giving his opinion too soon. The people were not ready for the idea. By the time control without ownership proves a failure, the people will be ready for ownership. The railroads must be servants of the people rather than the people servants of the railroads.

Most people understand the purpose and intent of the old time machine politicians in their efforts to bring back the old order of things political, but the machine politicians do not seem to understand the temper of the people. If these old timers, those that are not in the penitentiary, will be content to move along in the capacity of private citizens, well and good. The people will let them alone and enact no more drastic election laws. But the proposed assembly method of selection of candidates, have a tendency to arouse all of the combattiveness of the people, which was becoming dormant. The old gang is out of business and the people are determined to keep them out. It is a good plan not to arouse a sleeping lion.

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