

The Santiam News

Politically Independent

Entered at the postoffice at Scio, Oregon, as second-class mail matter.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY BY
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EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

One year in advance	\$1 25
One year, at end of year	1 50
One year, at end of 2 years	1 75
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Six months in advance	75
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HONESTY AND EFFICIENCY SHOULD BE THE LEADING TEST

WHEN MEN employ workers in private business enterprises, experience and general efficiency has much influence in the selection and the wages paid. Special knowledge and capability, which is secured through experience, is the matter first inquired about by the employer. In some lines of business physical strength is the principal requisite, while in other lines mental capability is the qualification most desired. But in any and all lines, experience is a valuable asset, and when a man is once employed, the longer the service, the more valuable he becomes to his employer, providing, of course, he possesses the other requisites.

In political life a different system seems to prevail. When the public hires an official, capability and experience is of secondary consideration. Ability to get votes is the first requisite. If the candidate is possessed of organizing ability and is an all-around-good-fellow, ability and fitness for the position is hardly thought of by the partisan voter. If a candidate properly organizes his machine, that is to say, organizes his friends in different localities into a corps of workers, all of whom have a common purpose, he is very apt to land the nomination and later on his election.

So long as the delegate convention system prevailed for the purpose of nominating candidates, the political machine could be worked most effectively. In fact, the political machine is an outgrowth of the convention system. Under this system, delegates were, as a rule, all fixed before the day of the convention. Often lists of delegates for each precinct were sent out from the county seat all of whom were generally elected at the primary convention. When Oregon adopted the direct primary law, she administered a solar plexis blow to the political machine. Even the machine manipulators, at first, did not seem to realize that their occupation had been throttled. However, after two or three elections, they awakened to the fact that they were just simply electors and nothing more. They are as powerless under the working of the direct primary law as the most obscure voter of a backwoods precinct.

It is no surprise that these dethroned bosses and schemers are making through the assembly, a death struggle to restore a system which would reinstate them into political power and prestige. And the method by which the late assembly was conducted, with its various committees, just as was the custom in the convention days, is an evidence that they will restore the convention system, if given power.

But whether candidates are dictated by an assembly and then nominated at the primary, or are selected directly by the primary voters, we should keep in view the fact, that if we are to have an efficient and honestly conducted public service, efficient and honest men must be elected. A man may be the best fellow in the world, yet not possess the knowledge and experience to conduct a particular office in a manner satisfactory to the public. If a public official demonstrates that he possesses special fitness, is honest and renders a service generally satisfactory to the public, by all means elect and reelect him, regardless of what his political sentiments may be. If his first term was satisfactory to his employers, his second term is sure to be better, for he is in possession of a knowledge and experience which no one who has not had a like advantage, can possess. It is doubtful if there could be another man in Linn county who could give the county as efficient service as Assessor McKnight can, in the office he is now serving; or that of Sheriff Smith in his office. We simply mention these instances to illustrate the point which we are discussing. It is a grave and sometimes a costly mistake to consider public office a public charity. It may seem to some people that as a public office is usually a lucrative one, it should be passed around. If we leave out of consideration efficiency, then there might be grounds upon which to base the "passing around" argument.

Voters, in a few weeks you will have the power to name almost a complete set of county and state officers. Think well before you turn down an official who has been faithful, honest and efficient, for another who is totally inexperienced. One who knows nothing about the duties of an office cannot give the public so satisfactory a service as one who fully understands what is required of him. He cannot give, no matter what his qualifications are, as satisfactory service to the public as he who has mastered the work required. For

any public position, use as much judgement in selecting the servant as you would use in hiring a man to work on your farm, your workshop or your counting room.

In the old convention days, because of party regularity and loyalty, a candidate who was an all around good fellow, was elected simply because his party could poll a majority of the votes. Because of this fact, men were often elected who were incapable of giving an efficient service. This same mistake can be made under our present law, yet the probability is much less.

It is of but little consequence whether an official is a democrat, a republican, a prohibitionist or a socialist, so long as he is faithful, honest and efficient. It is his capability and fitness for the office for which he stands which should be the test. If we will use the same care in selecting our public officials which we use in selecting a hired man for the farm, shop or counting room, we will soon note a marked improvement in our public service. It is immaterial to us what a man believes politically or religiously, whom we employ in private business undertakings. Why, then, should we be so particular about these qualities when we are employing a man for assessor or sheriff, positions which necessarily is of much less personal interest to us?

While under our present political system political parties seem to be necessary for a concert of action, we should be careful not to allow partisanship to overbalance our better judgment in the selection of our public servants. It is through partisanship that bad or incompetent men are elected to office. No man will vote for a man who is not honest, or who is incompetent for a public office, if he knows it, providing he is uninfluenced by partisanship. This fact has been true of the past and will, probably, hold good in the future.

CAN HE DO IT?

Ex-President Roosevelt is, evidently, going to attempt a political feat hitherto regarded as being impossible, and that is to ride two political horses at one and the same time which are going in different directions. Either the republican insurgents are right or they are wrong. If they are right, then standpatism is a gross wrong against the people. Mr. Roosevelt, popular as he is, cannot make a wrong against the people appear right. A vast majority of the people are insurgents and the insurgent congressmen know it and it is sheer nonsense to expect the people to return to the Cannon-Aldrich class of republicanism. Mr. Roosevelt may and doubtless is greater than his party, but he is not greater than the people. He may preach insurgency in Indiana and standpatism in Massachusetts, as he says he will, in aid of his friends, Senators Beverage and Lodge; but he cannot do so without convincing the people that he is insincere and is willing to advocate anything to advance interests of his friends or himself. Such actions can only result in discomfiture to the Rooseveltian dynasty. The people love a true friend and, even, may respect a consistent enemy, but they despise a hypocrite. Mr. Roosevelt will occupy the attitude of a hypocrite, if he attempts the gigantic straddle which press dispatches seem to indicate. But, possibly, the inventor of the Annanias club can accomplish feats hitherto regarded as being impossible. He can do so if the people have gone Rooseveltian mad; but not, if they retain their normal senses. Mr. Roosevelt cannot make black appear white. He cannot make the American people think that extreme high protection as exemplified by the Payne-Aldrich tariff measure, is just and equitable. He cannot make the American people believe it is equitable to take money from the pockets of one class of the people and give it to another class, without adequate return. A vast majority of the people believe that an extreme high tariff is a sort of legalized robbery and Mr. Roosevelt, popular as he is, cannot make them think otherwise.

Mr. Roosevelt did some very commendable things while president, which placed him upon the pinnacle of popularity in the eyes of most people. He also did some things that were not good. The people have, apparently, forgotten the bad things and remember but the good. Yet if he essays to perform this gigantic straddle, the bad things which he did as president will be resurrected and a tumble from his exalted position in the eyes of the people will result. He can have the love as well as the admiration of the people if he elects to champion their interests in a candid outspoken manner; he may have their respect if he, consistently, stands for standpatism, but they will neither love, admire or respect him, if he attempts to carry water on both shoulders. If Senator Beverage is right, Senator Lodge is wrong and it will be impossible for Mr. Roosevelt to convince the people that both are right.

Editor Dugger of the SANTIAM NEWS may be an "ordinary fool" as the Oregonian of last Tuesday states. If so, a vast majority of the people are "ordinary" fools. At least they have been fooled a great many times by the republican party and the Oregonian has assisted in the fooling. Last week, we heard a delegate to the late assembly of machine politicians in Portland state, that he favored the direct election of United States senators, but that he was bitterly opposed to Statement No. 1. Can we expect that the United States senate will ever agree to submit an amendment to the Federal constitution to the states, so long as a majority of that body is composed of members who owe their election, not to the people, but to legislatures dominated by corporate interests? Most certainly not. That body has refused, several times to submit such amendment and will continue to refuse until a majority of them owe their election directly to the people, through Statement One or some other such makeshift.

The News has received the annual catalogue of the Oregon Agricultural college for the school year just closed; It shows a total enrollment of 1,591. Of this number 546 hale from Benton county, 897 from the other counties of the state, 135 from states other than Oregon and 13 from foreign countries. There are 1,111 men and 480 women. The above includes students who attend the short winter course and those who attend the summer school, all of whom are not college students in the ordinary acceptation of the term. Those who attend through the entire year, or who are enrolled as such, number less than 1100. While O. A. C. is called an agricultural college, but a few over one-third of the students are taking the agricultural course. There are nearly as many enrolled from Benton county as are enrolled in agricultural classes. The college could be more properly called a Benton county college than an Oregon college.

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