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GATE CITY JOURNAL

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IMPROVE DIRECT PRIMARY.

A constructive effort is being made by Portland Oregonian and many republicans throughout Oregon to work out an improvement on the direct primary law. This effort should receive every encouragement. Not that any good citizen desires a return to the evils of the old convention system, because no one seriously desires any such revision. What is desired is that the progressive and beneficial features of the direct primary be retained and built upon so that the will of the people may be even more completely expressed than was possible under the old convention system or than is possible today under our present direct primary law.

When the direct primary was proposed it was as a reform of the boss system of convention nominations, whereby the will of the people was often circumvented. The stand-patters of that day fought the direct primary, even as the stand-patters of today oppose any change or improvement of the direct primary law now that we have had years of experience with it. But even the stand-patters of today can hardly contend that the direct primary affords accurate expression to what is really the popular will.

As it has worked out, the direct primary has expressed the will of an office-seeker to run rather than the will of the people to choose. The office does not seek the man, but the man seeks the office. If several men seek the same office, the one who is nominated is not the candidate of the majority, but the candidate whose minority was largest. And as in Oregon the republican nomination usually means election, successful minority candidate at the primaries is the one who gets the office, not because the majority wanted him, but because there was no one else of the same party faith to vote for at the general election following. The man gets the office because he sought it, not because he was drafted into it by a party organization or by public opinion.

Among other suggestions for improving the direct primary is one that if no candidate receives a majority, the highest three or four be balloted upon by a convention. This would be some improvement over the present system of letting a minority candidate have the nomination simply because he individually obtained more votes than any other minority candidate but not enough to give him a majority. There are serious disadvantages to this method, however. If the candidate who happens to have the largest vote is a popular candidate, although not best qualified, and a less popular but better qualified aspirant is given the nomination by a convention, there would be a great uproar, so great an uproar that the method would not be permitted to survive many elections. It would be made to seem like an effort to defeat the popular will by favoring one of several unsuccessful candidates at the expense of all other unsuccessful candidates, including the popular candidate who had received the largest vote.

Of course, if a convention perfectly ratified the minority choice by nominating every popular candidate who stood at the head of the list, it would be merely a rubber stamp, and would serve no useful purpose. Rather than run the danger of incurring popular indignation, the chances are that conventions would degenerate into mere rubber stamps, changing nominations only in those rare instances where the leading candidate labored under some flagrant disqualification. This method would be helpful in such cases, and there have been such cases under the Oregon primary law, instances in which public opinion would have upheld any available method of taking a primary nomination away from a candidate who manifestly was disqualified but who had received the nomination through a similarity in name or from some other reason unrelated to his fitness for office.

But all the improvements that could come from adoption of this method would not supply what really is needed to strengthen the direct primary system—an advance call by some strong and numerous organization to a well fitted candidate to permit the use of his name as a contender at the primaries. This advance call could well be extended by a party organization, acting through a convention. The method

would be somewhat as follows:

A convention would be held in advance of the primaries, and this convention would nominate one candidate for each vacancy, that candidate's name to go on the ballot with the slogan, "Nominated by party convention subject to ratification by party voters," or words to that effect. If a convention nominated a candidate who for any reason was unacceptable, the way would still be open to enter the name of some other candidate, or candidates, and leave the final choice to the voters under the present plurality system.

This method would have the disadvantage that the final choice might be by plurality, representing a minority choice, but even so, such a choice would be made with more information than voters find available today. The party voters would know that one candidate, at least, had been vouched for by a party convention, and if a fight were being made against him, the noise of the conflict would result in much more being known about the opposing candidate or candidates.

True, the candidate name by the preprimary convention would have a great advantage. But this is as it should be. Such a convention would endeavor to nominate some acceptable men, so as not to discredit itself or its ticket generally with the mass of party voters. In some instances it might nominate men who were not nearly as popular or well-known as the incumbents whom its nominees were intended to displace, or as other candidates whose names and careers had been before the public for years. In order to triumph under such circumstances a convention would of necessity have to nominate men with excellent qualifications if it expected them to compete successfully with popular incumbents or popular candidates. It would have to draft strong and capable men or lose out at the primaries. In such method lies the hope of drafting superior men to run for offices now filled by popular officials whose popularity insures them renomination under the minority system and discourages men of far superior qualifications from filing for the same offices. Without some such method of drafting qualified men to run against popular incumbents or popular candidates, there is little or no hope for improving the quality of elective officials. Should the present direct primary law be continued indefinitely, we will gradually eliminate the best-fitted by electing and re-electing simply the popular or well-advertised candidates or incumbents.

Guidance before the primaries, with something like authoritative backing of a picked list of names, is what is needed. And the names should be picked well in advance, so as to give public opinion ample opportunity to judge of the qualifications of the convention nominees, so that if found unacceptable, competent candidates would be encouraged to enter the field with a reasonable prospect that informed public opinion, determined to defeat the convention nominee, would rally around the competing candidate who had the best chance of being nominated by party voters.

But how shall delegates for a convention be selected? Here, alas, is the great difficulty. The great mass of voters are indifferent. If ill informed as to the qualifications of the candidates for the principal offices, they will be even less informed as to the qualifications of those who seek to be convention delegates. That a few manipulators will pick names of delegates by precincts or districts and secure their election is a foregone conclusion.

Even so, there is hope that a convention constituted of hand-picked delegates, placed in their seats by petty bosses, would nominate a number of superior candidates on the ticket that it had to submit to the voters of its party. It would be on its good behavior, with the certain knowledge that if it nominated inferior men, public opinion would rise against the whole ticket and defeat it in part or entirely at the party primary, nominating other men. The primary would be the corrective. The voter himself would wield the big stick.

A new alignment of political bosses would spring up under such a system. If they fought each other, as would be likely, each boss would of necessity bring out some superior candidates in order to win. If the bosses got together, as would be possible some years, they would have to pick some superior men. The superior men could be nominated by the party voters, and the inferior men rejected. The voter, guided by an informed public opinion, would rule just as independently and with far better results than is possible under the existing method.

Another desirable effect of the pre-primary party convention would be that the recommendations for

which it stood sponsor would be adopted by open deliberative procedure. The names of every delegate, of the member of every convention official and committee, would be a matter of public record. The people would know well in advance that a convention was to be held. There would be nothing secret or invisible about it. The recommendations made would stand or fall according to their merit and the merit of the body which sponsored them. All voters would have some basis for judging as to convention, ticket and candidates. Under existing primary law, there is a premium on tickets put out by secret organizations. Surely the open method of a pre-primary convention, the acts of which are subject to correction by the party voters themselves, are more conducive to genuine popular rule and to better government, than could be the last minute recommendations of secret groups concerning which, its leaders, personnel or candidates, the public can obtain no authentic information.

Criticism of the direct primary law is wholesome. Constructive suggestion is being offered, much of it. Something good is likely to result from the discussion, unless the majority of the people are so misled by the stand-patters that they cannot endure to see their idol operated upon to save its life. The stand-patters this time, as of old, are those who profit by the existing system. They are certain newspapers, the politicians who are on the inside of the secret organizations which flourish under the existing system, and a number of office holders who feel that their chances for remaining in office for life will be jeopardized by calling into existence any body which can make a choice based on fitness and can draft men of superior qualifications into running for office.—Oregon Voter.

Printing at This Office

JUNE 10, 1922.

To the Land Owners of the Kingman Colony Drainage District:
We, the undersigned Supervisors of the Kingman Colony Drainage District, having audited the books of the Treasurer of said District, as provided by law, submit our report as follows:

TRIAL BALANCE

Close of Business June 6, 1922.

	DR.	CR.
Advertising fund	\$ 15.00	
Advertising	11.40	
Bonds outstanding		\$57,000.00
Bond coupons paid	6,420.00	
County (Drainage taxes not collected)	8,530.88	
Drainage Tax Record		15,728.51
Drainage System Construction	55,559.33	
Emergency fund	4.35	
First National Bank of Vale	184.60	
General expense	2,485.58	
Interest and discount	2,550.33	
Interest on bonds fund	923.87	
Interest on warrants fund	133.75	
Interest paid on warrants	112.25	
Maintenance fund	147.55	
Maintenance	172.15	
Material fund	85.30	
Material	14.70	
Salary and office expense fund	336.80	
Salary and office expense	215.85	
Warrants outstanding		5,179.18
	\$ 77,907.69	\$ 77,907.69

STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND EXPENDITURES FOR YEAR ENDING JUNE 6, 1922.

RECEIPTS.

Cash on hand at beginning of year June 7, 1921	\$1,043.63
Madison County (Assessments collected)	3,892.07
O. S. L. Railroad Co. claim paid	750.19
Drain tile sold	22.25
Warrants issued	3,679.18
Total receipts	\$9,387.32

EXPENDITURES.

Advertising	\$ 17.05
Construction	810.00
Equity in claim against First Nat. Bank of Vale	184.60
Interest on bonds	3,420.00
Interest on warrants	112.25
Maintenance	172.15
Material	14.70
Puckett-Hurt Construction Co.	1,159.18
Secretary and office expense	304.77
Supervisors' expense	42.00
Warrant paid	1,500.00
Total expenditures	\$7,740.70

Advertising fund	\$ 15.00
Emergency fund	4.35
Interest on bonds fund	923.87
Interest on warrants fund	133.75
Maintenance fund	147.55
Material fund	85.30
Salary and office expense fund	336.80

Cash on hand June 6, 1922 1,646.62

Respectfully submitted,
H. R. OTIS, President.
FRANK T. MORGAN, Supervisor.

CORRECT—Attest:
FRANK D. HALL, Secretary-Treasurer.

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