

WANTING BALLOT REFORM

EFFORTS MAKING TO SECURE PURITY OF ELECTIONS.

THE WORK WHICH THE LEAGUE HAS UNDERTAKEN AND IN WHICH IT APPEALS FOR EVERY VOTER'S AID.

It is now well established that during the coming session of the Legislature at Albany every effort will be made by the politicians to kill the Saxton bill by substituting for it some measure which, while it does not materially interfere with the corrupt practices of the politicians, will appear on its face to meet the universal demand for electoral reform.

Feeling in this way and wishing to play the demagogue and stay the current of opposition on this score, the Governor sought to commit the Buffalo Convention to some sort of a ballot reform. His Secretary, Col. William G. Rice, attended the convention and took with him a ready-made platform, which was the joint work of Gov. Hill and D. Cady Herrick of Albany.

The Democratic Party now, as always, earnestly favors the preservation of the purity of elections, the protection of the ballot, and the certainty of honest returns, and believes that these conditions are essential to the permanence of our free institutions.

We favor all reasonable and practical measures which may conduce to these desirable results, and to that end we favor, under properly-guarded regulations, the furnishing of necessary ballots by the State, county, municipality, and town for all elections therein, and we approve a change in our present election laws whereby the secrecy of the ballot shall be more certainly preserved.

We approve the veto last year of the so-called Saxton Electoral bill, because it contains provisions which were grossly defective, clearly impracticable, and otherwise objectionable, and would, therefore, fail to accomplish the reforms desired.

It will be observed that no declaration was made as to how the ballots were to be furnished by the State, in what form they were to be printed, nor how they were to be distributed.

Nevertheless, vague and uncertain as the resolution was, Col. Rice and his friend, Judge Muller, were told by Mr. Croker and the representatives of the Brooklyn machine that they would not stand it.

During the last election both parties used money in unheard-of sums. The Democratic Party having been defeated by the "fat" which had been fried out of Mr. Wanamaker and Mr. Foster, there arose all along the line a cry for the passage of some measure to put an end to bribery in elections.

During the past month it is understood that a half dozen different organizations have drawn up bills with reference to the use of money, printing of ballots, and the prevention of corrupt practices.

The friends of the Saxton bill early foresaw that an effort would be made by Gov. Hill and his friends to secure the passage of some bill which would have the appearance but not the reality of reform.

"I authorize you to enroll my name among those in favor of electoral reform, and of the re-passing by the next Legislature of the so-called Saxton bill, which was passed by the last Legislature and vetoed by Gov. Hill."

In addition to this the following call for the organization of the Ballot Reform League has been signed and issued:

The undersigned believe that the public interests imperatively demand the prompt enactment of a law which will guarantee an unbribed and secret ballot, and the abolition of trading and dealing at the polls.

To this end we urge the formation of a Ballot Reform League, to inform and educate the public, and secure the passage by the Legislature of an act embodying the following principles:

First—The ballots should be printed and distributed at the public expense.

Second—The names of all candidates for the same office should be printed upon the same ballot.

Third—The ballot should be delivered to the voter within the polling place on election day by sworn public officials.

Fourth—Only ballots so delivered should be voted, the voter guaranteed absolute privacy in preparing his ballot, and the secrecy of the ballot made compulsory.

If you agree with these sentiments and are willing to aid, either by your influence, by your personal effort, or by contribution, you are requested to join in the formation of the Ballot Reform League.

Your membership will entitle you to receive documents published by the League, in explanation and advocacy of the legislation sought.

- Signed: Henry Darling, the Hamilton College. M. E. Anderson, University of Rochester. Charles Kendall Adams, Cornell University. Howard Crosby, D. D., New-York. Walter Howe, New-York. Edward M. Shepard, Brooklyn. Lyman Abbott, D. D., Brooklyn. J. Henry Harper, New-York. H. H. Boyesen, New-York. A. Jacobi, New-York. Sherman S. Rogers, Buffalo. F. O. Mason, Geneva. Charles D. Miller, Geneva. Seymour Dexter, Elmira. Matthew Hale, Albany. Charles H. Hall, D. D., Brooklyn. Henry George, New-York. Adolph L. Sanger, New-York. Charles Scribner, New-York. E. L. Burlingame, New-York. R. Underwood Johnson, New-York. A. Judd Northrup, Syracuse. E. C. Sprague, Buffalo. Wheeler H. Peckham, New-York. Francis Barlow, New-York. C. H. Parkhurst, D. D., New-York. J. H. Van Amringe, New-York. Stephen A. Walker, New-York. Daniel Magone, New-York. George C. Magun, New-York. William H. Wallace, New-York. John A. Taylor, Brooklyn. Seth Low, Brooklyn. Erwin Packard, Brooklyn. Thomas G. Shearman, Brooklyn. William J. Coombs, Brooklyn. Alfred T. White, Brooklyn. Henry L. Sprague, New-York. Henry Villard, New-York. Roswell Smith, New-York. Richard W. Gilder, New-York. H. E. Deming, New-York. E. C. Kauffman, New-York. John De W. Warner, New-York. Joseph E. Bishop, New-York. E. D. Woodward, New-York. Daniel E. Chamberlain, New-York. Russell Sturgis, New-York. E. B. Bowker, New-York. William A. Ivins, New-York, and others.

This call, accompanied with a half dozen blanks committing the signer to the principles

contained in the call, is now being circulated, with the following letter, which letter shows the progress that has already been made in behalf of this particular reform.

BALLOT REFORM LEAGUE, 33 LIBERTY-STREET, NEW-YORK CITY.

DEAR SIR: I inclose herewith an enrollment blank of the Ballot Reform League for your attention and signature. It is already signed, as you will see, by a number of representative citizens of all parties.

The principles of the league are set forth therein and also on the inclosed slips. If you approve of them, you are cordially invited to join and to enlist others who may be in sympathy with the purposes of the league.

The recent national and State elections have emphasized the importance of such a change in our election laws as shall guarantee the secrecy of the ballot and the personal independence of the voters.

A similar law is in successful operation in the city of Louisville and in the State of Wisconsin. The principles of the league have stood the test of actual operation in Australia, in the different provinces of Canada, and in Great Britain.

It is hoped that you will sign your name to the inclosed slip, and secure the signatures of others who may be willing to co-operate in the cause of ballot reform.

These slips should be promptly returned to the undersigned, addressed 33 Liberty-street, New-York City, so that complete organization may be rapidly effected.

The committee already has more than 1,000 signatures to a new enrollment, in addition to the 10,000 on the old enrollment.

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The rapidity with which the committee is pushing its work will depend in some measure upon its success in raising funds; but it reports its Treasury is already in a condition to warrant it in beginning the work and pushing it with vigor.

The enrollment signed by each voter contains among others this declaration: "We hereby authorize the enrollment of our names as members of the Ballot Reform League, and the use of our names in petition to the Legislature or otherwise in furtherance of these objects."

The League has not declared itself in favor of any particular bill. After all the bills are introduced it will be in a position to say which conforms most thoroughly to the principles it advocates and then give that particular measure its endorsement.

Independent of the Ballot Reform League above referred to, a number of other organizations, with like object in view, have sprung up during the past two or three months.

There are several Assembly District leagues already organized in this city in addition to the Commonwealth Club and the Reform Club, both of which are devoting themselves to this work.

A. C. BERNHEIM, JAMES W. PRYOR, Temporary Secretaries.

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