

"Shall the People Rule? is the Overwhelming Issue." Dem. Nat. Platform, 1908

Federation of Democratic Precinct Clubs

By United States Senator Robert L. Owen, Chairman Organizing Committee

THE PRESIDENCY
IN 1912
LET US
ORGANIZE

The Commoner urges democrats everywhere to organize Democratic Precinct clubs. Literature and club constitutions for distributing among your neighbors will be mailed upon request to the national headquarters, Washington, D. C. Ten or more members can make a start. The president of the club is its representative on the city council (committee) and county council of the city federation and county federation. Each member is entitled to use the postal vote on issues within the entire federation. Write a postal card and ask for the supplies. Do it now, and your name will be reported in *The Commoner* and a democratic state paper.

The Federation of Democratic Precinct clubs of the United States of America is an organization chartered under the District of Columbia, so framed as to be self-governing by the members, self-sustaining and incapable of being diverted to the uses of machine politics.

Its purpose is to enable the members of the party to control the party organization from the precinct to the national convention and to promote the legitimate organization of the democracy and to overthrow corrupt machine politics within the party lines; to establish the rule of the people by providing the mechanism necessary to its establishment as a fact; to enable the people to rule honestly by putting an end to corrupt practices in primaries and elections; to enable the people to rule intelligently, by a system of complete publicity; to nominate and elect only those candidates to party position and for public office who are absolutely known to believe in the wisdom, honesty and the benevolence of the people, and who are known to be democratic from principle, who are identified with the progressive movement, and courageous enough to lead the fight in the endeavor to bring the government closer to the people and make it more responsive to the peoples' will; to question candidates in the precinct, in the city, in the county, in the state and in the nation, ascertain their views, records, affiliations and environment of candidates for party place or public office, and by this system of questioning candidates and getting publicity, to nominate and elect men who are in sympathy with the people and pledged to their interest.

The Federation of Democratic Precinct clubs will be in the control of the members of the party and will not be in the control of the leaders, excepting so far as they really represent the wishes of the body of the party. The control of the organization by the membership is provided by the initiative, the referendum, the recall, the postal ballot, an economical, quick and democratic method of governing the organization.

We propose to organize an army of a million men at the precinct, pledged to make effective the rule of the people through the party in city, county, state and nation.

We thoroughly understand the crafty character and insidious processes by which privilege has governed the United States through the connivance of the republican machine politicians. We also thoroughly understand that these commercial, selfish, privilege-seeking classes are just as willing and anxious to use the democratic party as they have been to use the republican party. We are aware that in some of the states, because of the defective character of the democratic organization, the democrats have been betrayed by leaders carrying the democratic flags, who in reality were not democrats in principle, but merely self-seeking mercenaries, using the organization and the party machinery and the powers of the party for private profit.

We call upon good democrats, democrats from principle, democrats who want nothing except good government—to organize precinct clubs and join the federation, so that we may cooperate in establishing purity in politics, integrity of government, equality of rights and

the overthrow of privilege. The time has come for this new development in the American republic when the people shall go into the governing business and first—by taking control of the democratic party from the precinct to the national convention. We propose to nominate a democrat who believes in the peoples' rule, who is a progressive at heart, and who has the courage to stand firmly for the principles of fundamental democracy and who will not connive with the agents of privilege.

The Federation of the Democratic Precinct clubs invites all good democrats into this organization. Its doctrines are purely democratic. The real political contest in this country is between the people and the holders of privilege, the special interests, the system, the beneficiaries of privilege—existing in ten thousand forms.

This country has been governed through party organizations, and privilege has for years controlled the regular national republican organization, and through it have controlled the national government and many of the state governments. This regular republican organization—the stand-pat machine—is about to be driven out of power by the people who have elected a progressive democratic house in congress and who now partially control the senate through the democratic senators and the revolting progressive republican senators. It is obvious that the democratic party is about to come in control of the government in 1913 and the great danger of the democracy is that the advocates and holders of privilege will rush into the bosom of democracy for shelter, with protestations of party loyalty and zeal and urgent advice as to the party policy and choice of presidential and other candidates.

Already the agents of privilege are making secret efforts throughout the nation to control the regular democratic organization and will endeavor to guide the choice of democratic nominees. For this reason the people must control the precinct, the primaries, the convention, the nominations, the elections, and the men elected, and in their own interests. In this contest the advocates of privilege have unlimited funds, an army of skilled workers and strikers, a powerful press, a host of beneficiaries, and will under cover contest the field from end to end, while the people are comparatively unorganized. The present regular democratic organization, consisting of national, state, county, city, township, ward and precinct committees and office holders, has no right and no duty as an organization to take sides to determine the nomination and the election of their successors in office. This work of nominating party committeemen, party delegates and officials and public office holders, and electing them, must be done by the people. The work of the regular democratic party committees begins after they have been selected by the members of the democratic party and after the democratic candidates for public office shall have been nominated by the people. Where the primary system does not exist the nomination of candidates for public office are made by caucuses and conventions, beginning at the precinct, which makes all the more important the control of the precinct by the members of the party.

It clearly follows that the need of the hour is the organization of the people themselves for self defense in the governing business, and first of all in the governing business is the selection of the regular party organization, city, county and state committees and delegates from the precinct up to the national convention. The democratic party should be safeguarded in every precinct, and from the precinct to the national convention, so that the party may nominate a progressive democrat for the presidency and nominate an absolutely trustworthy man for every party and public place. We should have an organized army of a million precinct men able, willing and anxious to elect a democrat president in 1912.

Let every progressive democrat organize a club in his own precinct and send for literature to distribute to democrats of like mind who will co-operate with him in establishing a precinct club and joining the federation. There is much to be done and said before the dele-

gates to the democratic national convention are chosen.

The time for action is at hand and we appeal to progressive democrats to immediately write for copies of the constitution, by-laws, organization blanks, and literature for use in organizing local clubs that will affiliate with the state and national federation of precinct clubs in an effort and determination to have the democratic platforms declare for progressive principles and to nominate candidates who are in sympathy with and who will wage a fight in behalf of the principles set forth in the platform. Address

FEDERATION OF DEMOCRATIC PRECINCT CLUBS, George H. Shibley, Sec., Bliss Bldg., Washington, D. C.

OPERA BOUFFE

Portland, Me., Oct. 24, 1911.—Some gigantic monopoly which has been permitted to grow up unopposed, in the very shadow of the law, by throttling its competitors and making them walk the plank to destruction, is now declared to exist in "unreasonable" restraint of trade, whereupon it proceeds to break up into fractions which for all intents and purposes are yet parts of one great whole.

The whole thing reminds me of a king who in order to destroy the swine, decreed that all the sows should have pigs.

Each great trust is another swine, and the supreme court plays the part of the king by whose decree each trust found to be "unreasonable" is made to give birth to a numerous litter, each one of which knows its mother's voice and has an inborn instinct to act in harmony with the ideals emanating from the paternal pigpen.

The same court seems inclined to the belief that it would be "unreasonable" to impound the old sow, and that the ends of justice and the intent of the law are satisfied and the public welfare conserved by letting her remain at large, with the admonition that she must forthwith multiply and replenish the breed.

Is this enforcing the law made for the protection of the public? Is this the acme of statesmanship and of judicial wisdom? Or is it simply opera bouffe? F. D. CUMMINGS.

THE REAL DEMOCRATIC LEADER IN CONGRESS

From *Colliers' Weekly*: These words were spoken some months ago by the leader of the republicans in congress, Hon. James R. Mann:

"Oscar W. Underwood is not only the leader of the democratic majority; he is the majority. He is not only the chairman of the ways and means committee; he is the ways and means committee. The speaker used to be high mogul in the house. Today the speaker is the servant, not the master."

This expression looks interesting from several angles. For one, Mr. Mann, one year ago, together with every other republican congressman except nineteen insurgents, was solemnly assuring the country that the speaker must be a boss, that no practicable change in the rules was possible whereby the speaker could be made the mere umpire that he ought to be. Again, this expression from Mr. Mann is interesting as information to those who are supporting Champ Clark for the presidency because they think he is the democratic leader in congress. Champ Clark has many excellent qualities, but he doesn't bear the same relation to his party in congress that Cannon used to.

AN OPEN LETTER

State Line, Miss., October 18, 1911.—To the Attorney General of the United States, Washington, D. C., Sir: If press reports be correct, then the acts of the supreme court of a great nation, and those of your department in entering the commercial field and showing the "big interests" how to organize in order to dodge an act of congress, constitutes such a travesty on jurisprudence as makes the thinking man blush. Yours, etc., D. B. BALLARD.

A Retired Lawyer.