

**THE WARD BOSS**

**A Former New Yorker Speaks a Good Word for That Much Abused Individual**

Editor Independent: Many persons have been astonished to learn that Mayor Low's reform administration in New York city is worse if anything than the rule of Tammany, and they have vaguely wondered why. Rail against it and preach against it as we may, the boss and the machine are permanent fixtures in American politics, and always will be until the initiative and referendum and nominations by primary come more generally in vogue. Many republicans and not a few democrats and populists believe that direct legislation is doomed to be a flat failure, and they point to the defeat of so many constitutional amendments in Nebraska as proof of their claims.

The experience with constitutional amendments here proves but little one way or the other. The framers of the constitution of 1875 believed in making the constitution very difficult to amend—and they succeeded admirably. They followed the Hamiltonian idea of keeping the government as far away from the people as possible. Nothing short of a sweeping popular uprising will ever amend the constitution of Nebraska, because of our form of ballot and method of submission. All over the state this year, in various counties, smaller questions were submitted to the voters, and these were carried or defeated by an intelligent active vote, and not decided by the inactive or passive voter who said "no" by saying nothing.

Until direct legislation comes, then, the ward boss is a permanent fixture, whether we like it or not. Some of the reasons are well stated by the late Paul Leicester Ford in his admirable novel, "The Honorable Peter Stirling." (Henry Holt & Co., New York., 43rd edition, 1901.)

"Broadly speaking," says the Honorable Peter (who was a Tammany ward boss), "all persons of sound mind are entitled to vote on the men and the laws which are to govern them. Aside from this, every ounce of brain or experience you can add to the ballot, makes it more certain. Suppose you say that half the people are too ignorant to vote sensibly. Don't you see that there is an even chance, at least, that they will vote rightly, and if the wrong half carries the election, it is because more intelligent people have voted wrongly, have not voted, or have not taken the trouble to try and show the people the right way, but have left them to the mercies of the demagogue. . . . A government of the 'best' men is not an American government. That is the aristocratic idea. That the better element, so-called, shall compel the masses to be good, whether they wish it or no. Just as one makes a child behave without regard to its own desires. With grown men, such a system only results in widening the distance between the classes and masses, making the latter more dependent and unthinking. Whereas, if we make every man vote he must think a little for himself because different people advise him contrarily, and thus we bring him nearer to the more educated. He even educates himself by his own mistakes; for every bad man elected, and every bad law passed, make him suffer the results, and he can only blame himself. Of course we don't get as good a government or laws, but then we have other off-setting advantages.

"We get men and laws which are the wish of the majority. Such are almost self-supporting and self-administering. It is not a mere combination of words, printing ink and white paper which makes a law. It is the popular sentiment back of it which enforces it, and unless a law is the wish of a majority of the people who are governed by it, it is either a dead letter, or must be enforced by elaborate police systems, supported oftentimes with great armies. Even then it does not succeed, if the people choose to resist. Look at the attempt to govern Ireland by force, in the face of popular sentiment. Then, too, we get a stability almost unknown in governments which do not conform to the people."

"Look at it as a contest," he continued, speaking of reform movements, "without regard to the merit of the cause. On one side we have bosses, who know and understand the men in their wards, have usually made themselves popular, are in politics for a living, have made it a life-study, and by dear experience have learned that they must surrender their own opinions in order to produce harmony and a solid vote. The reformer, on the contrary, is usually a man who has other occupations, and, if I may say

so, has usually met with only partial success in them. By that I mean that the really successful merchant, or banker, or professional man cannot take time to work in politics, and so only the less successful try. Each reformer, too, is sure that he himself is right, and as his bread and butter is not in the issue, he quarrels to his heart's content with his associates, so that they can rarely unite all their force. Most of the reform movements in this city have been attempted in a way that is simply laughable. What should we say if a hundred busy men were to get together tomorrow and decide that they would open a great bank, to fight the clearing-house banks of New York? Yet this in effect is what the reformers have done over and over again in politics. They say to the men who have been kept in power for years by the people, 'You are scoundrels. The people who elected you are ignorant. We know how to do it better. Now we'll turn you out.' In short, they tell the majority they are fools, but ask their votes. The average reformer indorses thoroughly the theory 'that every man is as good as another, and a little better.' And he himself is always the better man. The people won't stand that. The 'holier than thou' will defeat a man quicker in this country than will any rascality he may have done."

We may not wholly agree with the Honorable Peter Stirling in all he says, but there is so much truth in most of it that whether we like it or not we cannot shut our eyes to the fact. One great difficulty with the populist party as a political organization has been that its members expected to accomplish too much in a short time, and then pouted because the world wasn't reformed in a day, forgetting that it takes years to accomplish substantial results.

Nebraska is a case in point. Starting out with a platform stating the grand fundamental truths upon which the party hoped to win, the people's independent party, aided by the democrats and some republicans, did finally win. The officers elected were not omniscient; they were not infallible; but they gave the state the best administration it ever had. Of course the ousted party went about it systematically to create discord and dissensions in the populist ranks. Every little mistake was magnified and harped upon as an enormous crime—and strange to say, or perhaps not strange, after all—thousands of populists fell into the trap and joined in the clamor against the very men they had elevated to office. It is Peter Stirling's ward boss against the reformer as he knew him.

Starting out with a general declaration in favor of public ownership of the railroads, and strict control until that time came, the populist platform continued until 1898. By that time the insidious work of the republican press and ward boss had had its effect, and the whole railroad question was dropped to take up a mere wrangle over the pass question. Apparently it was expected that if eight state officers would eschew the use of passes, not only would that evil be abolished, but also the whole railroad question would be settled in short order. It was the ward boss against the reformer—and the ward boss finally won. Two thousand shrewd republican ward bosses riding the length and breadth of the land without money and without price—and some people believed they could defeat them permanently by an army of men on foot!

Nobody defends the pass system—but it will never be abolished by the tactics in vogue since 1898 as the result of populists and democrats drawing their political inspiration from republican newspapers. If instead of throwing away a useful weapon in fighting the enemy, the populists and democrats had said to the railroad companies, "We demand a free pass for our people to offset every one you issue to the republicans," and enacted a law compelling railroad companies to file reports of all passes issued, doubtless today there would not be one-tenth as many issued—and certainly no more than there are today.

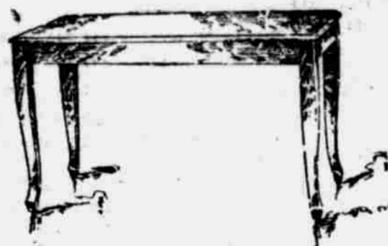
The Honorable Peter Stirling believed in accomplishing all the good he could with the means at hand, and was too practical to defeat himself by Pharisaical ranting. I would recommend that book to Nebraska reformers.

**Abolish the Senate**

Editor Independent: There seems to be a great demand by democrats and populists to have our constitution so changed that senators shall be elected by a direct vote of the people. Bryan and other leaders have strongly advocated it.

I cannot see why we could not go a

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step further and change the constitution so as to abolish the senate and senators, both state and national. The senate is neither more nor less than the house of lords idea. True, we have no house of lords, but we do have an equivalent of aristocracy in the wealth and plutocracy that govern and control our country to a greater extent than most of us are willing to admit, and more than a free people should permit.

We call ourselves a republic, and doubtless we are the nearest on a large scale to being a true republic of any ever formed. The best informed politicians seem to agree that after all we are only a compromise government, midway, so to speak, between a people's government and a kingly or monarchical government—a compromise between the Jeffersonian and the Hamiltonian ideas.

If we were truly a government "of the people, by the people, and for the people," what need would there be for two classes of representatives—or a lower house for the masses and an upper house for the classes, the so-called higher classes of wealth and aristocracy?

If we are all equal before the law—and only one class—what need is there for more than one set of lawmakers, appointed and selected, so to speak, to assemble and lick our necessary laws into shape, and when done send the work back to the people for their acceptance or rejection. If accepted, keep the same committee for future work. If rejected, let the people select another committee who will do the bidding of their masters, the sovereign people. We would soon have more stable laws and better government—at least as good as the people were who made the laws.

What is the use of having two branches or two sets of servants to do the people's bidding if, as we claim, we are free and equal—all sovereigns—only one class according to law? With an intelligent and free people, it would seem that one set of representatives should be ample to do all that is of vital use for such people's government. So why not wipe out our old house of lords, and let the whole people take their place? They cannot do worse, and should make an ample balance wheel to the lawmaking machinery.

J. E. R. MILLAR.  
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**Trusting of the Trusts.**

Editor Independent: The question in the minds of sober thinking people is the trusting—of the trusts. The good trusts, and the bad trusts—which? Lodge can't tell! He couldn't tell which 'twas before he "caught it," no more than could the Dutchman his twin colts—for the reason, as he said, "One looked so much like both he couldn't tell to'der from which." No more can Lodge. All the difference in them lies in the capacity of their "tentacles" and the disposition for "reaching out" in the men behind them. The latent power in them may "sleep," but it is there.

These holders and venders of our commercial wealth force at their own option, by secret lines and methods of

control, a regulated supply—as may best count for their own interests—upon the necessitated patronage of the people. And the people thus far have not been able through their own government to obtain any relief from this arbitrary state of things. Senator Lodge has arithmetically figured the trusts into two classes, the ratio of which, as he states it, is—so far as indicating the evil involved—a libel on plain truth-telling. As "collateral" evidence of this—"in a way"—I give the opinion of "Patrick" on the trusts—bearing on this same point—as he told it to "Michael":

"Now about thim thrusts, Moike," said Pat, "I ra'son this way: Whim th' divil makes one thrust that bates a man, that, be a good thrust for the divil, but a bad thrust for the man! So whin the divil and the thrusts go pards—by me logic I proves the same as Siniter Dodger be tellin' whin he says 'there be nointy-foive good thrusts to ivery foive bad thrusts.' See! Moike!—me truth-tellin' be e'kal to Siniter Dodger's truth-tellin'—ony-way!"

Michael: "I see yer p'int, Pat; yer mighty near bein' a shatesman!"  
FRANCIS KEYES.  
Longmeadow, Mass.

**Was Silver Demonetized?**

Editor Independent: In your article headed "Is Silver a Legal Tender," you say "the silver dollars never was demonetized." That is true of the coined silver, but not of the uncoined silver money which was just as good as the coined silver for the payment of debt. The coined silver of the United States was but a small part of the whole amount of silver in the world and it was all good money of the United States for it could be made so if the owner was willing to have it so.

If the uncoined silver was not now demonetized, prices would be much higher and it would be much easier and perfectly fair to the creditors to pay all old debts of the nation, the state and the individual.

The democratic national platform of 1896 says: "We demand the free and unlimited coinage of both silver and gold at the present legal ratio of 16 to 1 without waiting for the aid or consent of any other nation."

J. H. NEWMAN.  
Charlevoix, Mich.

(It is customary to say that the act of 1873 "demonetized silver," although the real facts are that it simply prevented further monetization of the white metal—that is, it dropped out the silver dollar from the list of coins which might be minted. Uncoined silver is not money, consequently it could not, strictly speaking, be demonetized; but it could be prevented from ever becoming money in this country at least—and that is what the "crime of '73" did.—Ed. Ind.)

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