

THE COLUMBIAN AND DEMOCRAT, BLOOMSBURG, COLUMBIA COUNTY, PA.

The Columbian.
BLOOMSBURG, PA.
Friday, Feb. 23, 1872.

Democratic State Convention.

Pursuant to a resolution of the Democratic State Executive Committee this day adopted, a Democratic State Convention in numbers equal to the representation in both houses of the legislature, is hereby called to meet in Reading, Pa., on Thursday, May 30th, 1872, at 11 o'clock A.M., to nominate candidates for Governor, Judge of the Supreme Court, and (should the legislature so determine) for Auditor General and delegates at large to the Constitutional Convention, and also to form an electoral ticket and select senatorial and representative delegates to represent the state in the Democratic National Convention.

By order of the Executive Committee,
W. M. WALLACE,
Chairman,
W. M. McCLELLAND, Secy.

HARRISBURG, February 15.

Constitutional Reform.

We believe this to be the most important measure before the present Legislature, yet singularly enough it seems to attract but little attention. The people by an almost unanimous vote demanded that a convention should be held yet an unsympathetic Legislature proposed first to make it a partisan body and secondly to delay its meeting as long as possible.

The House bill as reported by the committee provided for the election of 92 delegates; two from each Senatorial District and 33 at large; no elector to vote for more than 18. This proposition was amended by speaker Elliott so as to elect 133 members, as Senators and members are now elected.

Mr. White, of Allegheny, proposes as a substitute for both bills, that the convention shall consist of 99 members, 66 of whom shall be elected from Senatorial Districts, each party to vote for one in each single district. The result would be that each party would be equally represented in each Senatorial District. The remaining 33 would be elected at large, no person to vote for more than 18. As a result the successful party in the State would only have three majority; enough for all practical purposes.

The Elliott bill not only gives a large Republican majority in the convention, but it enables no house politicians and men of small ability to secure seats in it. It would simply be a Jockey's choice of men of the same status as those who constitute our present Legislature;—here and there a good man, but not strong enough to control measures or stem corruption. We know in advance that a constitution framed by such men will be weak and will undoubtedly be repudiated by the people.

In Illinois the Constitutional Convention was successful because the minority had full representation, and the principle was embodied in their fundamental law. In New York the minority only had partial representation and a bungling constitution was the result. Singularly enough the only portion of it ratified was that which applied the principle of cumulative voting to the judges of the Courts of Appeals and if it had not been for that principle the Republicans would not have had a single judge for many years.

The Elliott bill also provides for the election of delegates at the October election—in the heat of a partisan conflict, and would result in securing politicians instead of statesmen, besides delaying the meeting of the convention until next year.

We had hoped for a spirit of fairness in this matter, but confess we see no prospect of getting fair play.

The McClure-Gray Contest.

The death of Senator Connell of the Fourth Philadelphia District made the Senate a tie politically, and the result of the special election to fill the vacancy was looked forward to with much interest. As the Republicans had about 7,000 majority in the District it was evident that the choice was between a Reform Republican and a Ring Radical.

The Democratic press and Democratic voters therefore, took sides with Col. McClure. The nomination of his opponent was accomplished by fraud, force and bribery; his alleged election was secured by the same means. A contest for the seat was inaugurated in the usual form, but at the threshold the contest was met by the declaration of a Republican Committee that although frauds might have been committed, ballot boxes studied, and voters driven from the polls, the act of 1839 regulating contested elections applied only to members elected previous to the organization of the Legislature, and therefore the contestant, whatever the merits of his case, had no right of appeal. From this position the Democrats dissented as being contrary to common sense, to the spirit and intention of the act of 1839, to precedent, to the Constitutional right of petition, and to the inherent right of each House to judge of the election and returns of its members.

And now the Republicans discovered that the method of drawing a committee is defective, and why? Because the chances, in drawing a committee to decide which of two Republicans shall occupy a seat in the Senate, are in favor of the Democrats. For over thirty years the law has been on the statute book and no fault has been found with it by the opposition. It answered their purpose in the Burn-Without ease, in that of Green vs. Short during the present session, and in numerous other cases.

The Democrats deserve credit for refusing to pass a general law to meet a special case and if the opposition refuse to allow Col. McClure the right to prove that he was duly elected as Senator from the Fourth District, on their heads lies the responsibility.

JONAH W. FORNEY has resigned the office of Collector of the Port of Philadelphia, because it interferes with his business, and his independence as a journalist. This last reason is good—in fact, the best thing we have heard lately. Forney's independence—well, well.

From the *Miners Journal* we learn that in 1871 there were 101 persons killed and 330 injured in the mines of Schuylkill county and 67 widows and 162 orphans made.

LEGISLATURE.

In the Senate on Wednesday of last week, the speaker announced that he would issue his writ for a special election to fill the vacancy in the Fifth senatorial district, to be held on March 15, the day of the spring elections.

Among the bills introduced were the following:

By Mr. Buckalew, act abolishing the Northern district of the Supreme Court.

By Mr. Decherd, act extending the competency of persons to be witnesses in certain criminal cases, as follows:

An act to extend the competency of persons to be witnesses in certain criminal cases.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted, etc.* That in the trial of any indictment, complaint or other proceeding against any person or persons charged with the commission of crimes or misdemeanors, any persons so charged shall, at his or her own request, and not otherwise, be deemed a competent witness; the credit to be given to such testimony being left solely to the jury, under the rules of evidence.

That this act shall not extend to the trial of any person or persons on an indictment charging a capital offence.

The remainder of the session was occupied in the discussion of the Gray-McClure case.

In the House a motion to adjourn itself against the attack of Senator Brownlow, and to take occasion not to blacken that gentleman but to deliver a powerful invective against the other Governors of Southern States. He said they had put forward Brownlow as a cripple and an imbecile, but that Bullock and Scott were not cripples, and he was ready to put what he had said in the House or elsewhere. Notwithstanding many interruptions, he was listened to with marked attention by a crowded House and was warmly congratulated at the close of his speech.

In the Senate on Monday after some debate on the report of the Ku-Klux Committee, the debate was continued on Sammons' French frauds resolutions, adjourning without a vote on the subject.

The bill was amended finally passed on a call of the yeas and nays.

In the Senate on Thursday of last week after the introduction of a number of bills, the Gray-McClure case was taken up and discussed at length.

In the House, on motion of Mr. Meek one thousand copies of the military bill were ordered to be printed for the use of the house.

Senate Bill No. 1, entitled a supplement to an act relative to changes of venue, was passed, as follows:

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted, etc.* That all the expenses incurred in the trial of any suits by the county to which they may be removed under the provisions of the act entitled an act relative to the change of venue, be paid out of the sum of two hundred and fourteen feet six inches in depth. When erected is created in depth.

SECTION 2. That before any appeal shall hereafter be taken from the judgment of a justice of the peace, the party appellant, his agent or attorney, shall make oath or affirmation before the justice that it is not for the purpose of delay such appeal is entered, but because he firmly believes injustice has been done, and that the justice shall enter said oath or affirmation upon his docket.

The debate in the House of Representatives was both interesting and amusing. Fernando Wood, criticizing the Committee on the Reorganization of the Civil Service, made a telling speech on moralization existing in public life national, State and municipal, predicting that the great watchword would soon be "universal purification and the elevation of the official standard."

Army Appropriation bill was reported, calling for \$29,548,000.

In the Senate on Thursday of last week, Mr. Brownlow proposed to make a personal explanation in reply to Mr. Beck's assertion in the House that Mr. Brownlow, white Governor of Tennessee, made that State a pandemonium. He was proceeding to abuse Mr. Beck in very unparliamentary language when he was checked by the Vice-President. The Senate then resumed the debate on the resolution to inquire into the sites of arms to French agents during the Franco German war. Lengthy speeches were made by Mr. Harlan, Mr. Folger, and Mr. Schurz, the last named giving his powerful aid to Mr. Summer. The Senate adjourned without reaching a vote.

There was an exciting debate in the House in committee of the whole on the Naval Appropriation bill.

The Senate on Friday last after adopting a resolution to print 25,000 copies of the American "Free" submitted before the Board of Arbitration at Geneva, took up Mr. Summer's resolutions on the French frauds, and discussed them all day.

JOHN M. SUMMER, *Author.*

Feb. 18, 1872.

By E. R. KELLEY, *Editor.*

Feb. 18, 1872.

Feb. 18, 1872.