

The Columbian.



J. E. Howell, Editor.

BLOOMSBURG, PA.

FRIDAY, JULY 16, 1886.

Democratic State Convention.

The Democratic State Convention of the Opera House, in the City of Harrisburg, at 10 a. m., on Wednesday, August 18, to nominate candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Auditor General, Sec'y of Internal Affairs, Congressman at Large.

The Convention will consist of 350 Representative Delegates, selected under the rules of the party from the respective Assembly Districts.

W. U. HENSEL, Chairman Dem. State Committee.

J. B. LUCY, Sec'y.

BUCKALEW IN DANVILLE.

From notes taken by S. N. Walker Court Reporter, we give below the main parts of Senator Buckalew's address, delivered at the Court House, Danville, on last Saturday evening July 10th.

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT.

I have been long of the opinion, and that opinion has deepened and strengthened with the course of years, that it is absolutely necessary to introduce into the government of these United States, and into the fundamental law by which that government is created a few radical and far-reaching changes of system; for, with the progress of time, and the changes that have preceded us in the history of the world, in course of time various forms of abuse have arisen to trouble and vex us, and it is necessary that we should erect guards against them, take the amplest securities against their increase, and against their deleterious operation.

Under our present system, we choose the great officer of the government, the president, through a form of electoral colleges, chosen and assembling in each state, the number of members in a college being equal to the total of representatives and senators from that state.

Upon their meeting at the seat of government, each college in its own state, they vote by ballot for candidates for president and vice-president, and report their votes to Washington, where they are counted.

This machinery, which was intended by those who framed the constitution of the United States to be a salutary and effectual arrangement for the choice of a president by men of great wisdom and merit in each state, has utterly failed of its original purpose.

The choice of electors, the mode of expressing their opinions in a presidential election, they intend to vote for A or B, or C for president of the United States; they are obliged to express themselves through this cumbersome, useless, and in some respects dangerous, arrangement.

What may be proposed as a substitute for it? This question may be answered in few words. Allow the people to vote directly, each man for himself, for the candidate of his choice for the office of president, and provide that the votes of each state shall be reported to the seat of government in the state precisely as the votes for governor and chief justice of the state shall receive the returns, and assign to each candidate a proportionate share of the electoral votes of the state, exactly in ratio to the popular vote which will be given him; the result of which will be that in each state each candidate for the presidential office will get an electoral vote exactly according to public opinion in that state, and the will of the people will be transmitted to Washington, and will there be duly pronounced.

What are the special advantages of this change of system? I will mention but one, although there are several. It is the most certain and assured method of electing both fair and pure, and of good repute. Now a fraudulent, corrupt, or otherwise sinister vote of five or ten thousand in Pennsylvania or New York may control the whole electoral vote of the state at any election; it may be the balance-of-power, and determine the result. Take our own state. Suppose that at the next presidential election each party has about 400,000 votes, and can poll them and take the necessary steps for that purpose. About an equal number are ranged under each of the great banners of political party, and there is a corrupt or influenced vote in the great centers of population and of human life of five or ten thousand, what is the result? That the thirty electoral votes of Pennsylvania for president may be transferred from one party and given to the other, making a change of sixty electoral votes in the choice of president, and you can't help it. Four hundred thousand men may struggle during a long election campaign; exerting themselves to the utmost, expending their means, time and labor, their utmost energies honestly in behalf of what they believe to be principles of importance to the government of the country, and in behalf of a candidate fit for the high office for which they support him; and yet all their labor, exertion and patriotism may be wasted because a corrupt or managed vote in Philadelphia or Pittsburgh is cast into the opposing scale, by which they will not only lose their votes in the election, but by which all their just share of power will be transferred to the other side. Say that the opposite party was entitled to fifteen electoral

votes, because they had about half the votes in the state, that the party virtually disfranchised was entitled to the other fifteen, because they had the other half. Do you not see that, under our present system, these five or ten thousand bad votes, bought up in the corruption-market, or otherwise obtained by illegitimate means, control the vote of the state and disfranchise half of the honest voters therein?

You may preach against electoral corruption until you become blind and gray-headed, and you won't stop it; it is increasing in this country, and it must increase as the country grows richer, as the number of offices to be filled shall become greater. Preaching against it will not accomplish your purpose; you may check the evil a little, but you cannot destroy it, as long as human nature remains what it is, and men—even in our stage of civilization—can be illegitimately influenced in public elections. You know all this very well.

But, by allowing each voter to vote for his candidate for president, with the certainty that his vote will be reported as votes for governors are reported, and that his candidate will get his complete share of the electoral vote, the honest voters of the popular vote given him, what is the result? That is what I propose to point out to you. Observe, if you divide the popular vote of this state, the 800,000 votes, by 30, you have about 27,000 popular votes for one electoral vote, that would be what is called "the ratio," 27,000. It would now require about that number of votes in Pennsylvania, under this plan, to secure one electoral vote at Washington, sent there from the returns at Harrisburg; and, as our population increases, the ratio for an elector will increase, and so on.

Under the present system, we choose the great officer of the government, the president, through a form of electoral colleges, chosen and assembling in each state, the number of members in a college being equal to the total of representatives and senators from that state.

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Klots ran as the regular candidate; and, though the vote of the majority party of the district was distributed among the three, the vote of the majority of the three getting nearly two thousand votes, the regular nominee was elected, having a clear majority over General Albright, the Republican candidate. In this district, the Republican vote was vitally obliterated by the action of the Republican legislature which passed the bill. The legislative majority aided to their political friends in this district. "You must submit to extinguishment for ten years, you can elect nobody, but we will take all the Democratic majorities in Pike, Monroe, Carbon, Luzerne, Columbia and Montour, and pile them into one huge mass, and then they won't do any mischief in neighboring districts." That is the way the bill was made. It was a very unnatural district; very little social intercourse between the people of the eastern end of the district and those of the western, and very little of business relations between the two sections—almost as widely separated as if the main chain of the Allegheny mountains lay between as a line of division.

What has been the history of this district? For the first four years a representative in Congress was chosen from the Lackawanna division of the district; for the second four years, the representative was chosen from Carbon county; for the third four years, the representative has been chosen from the county of Monroe; so that for twelve years the congressman has been chosen from the eastern side of the district. The constitutional duration of the apportionment would be ten years; but, as the legislature and the governor did not agree about a new bill of apportionment, the old bill continues, and another election must be held under it before a new apportionment can be made.

Now let us go back into a little local history of our own. The county of Columbia was erected at the sessions of 1812-13; it has, therefore, had an existence about seventy-four years. Montour county was formed from it in 1830, but has always remained a part of that time in the same congressional district. From the year 1812 down to the present time, the county of Columbia within its present territory, has furnished a representative in Congress for barely two years. Dr. Leib, of Catawissa, was elected for a single term, in 1844. He was beaten for reelection by the vote of Luzerne county. This is the record of Columbia county as now bounded. Montour county had Dr. Petriken as representative in Congress; that is the territory now comprising Montour—was divided into a separate county—was represented by Dr. Petriken from 1834 to 1838. And again, in 1856, John G. Montgomery, a distinguished member of your bar, and a reputable and able citizen of Danville, was elected to Congress, and he died before he had begun, of the National Hotel disease at Washington, and Mr. Leidy of your town was chosen to fill out his two years' term. Since that time when we were connected with Bradford, the election of Strawbridge, a Republican congressman, took place; which with Democrats, I believe, does not count. This is the record.

Neither county has been locally represented during the last twelve years while we have been with the counties on the Lehigh and the Delaware; and before that time, throughout this long period since Columbia county was erected—three-fourths of a century—has had Dr. Leib one term of two years, and the town of Danville a Democrat representative barely six years. This is the record of the past.

In 1856, when Montour county named Mr. Montour for representative to Congress, what was done in Columbia county? He had served the winter before in the House at Harrisburg, while I was in the Senate. I knew him to be a man of thorough integrity; his whole course while he was a member of the House was a fair and honest one. He had a high reputation, his record was clear and able. Although there were between our two counties remains of old local feeling which did me in Columbia do? Get up a candidate there against Montour? Allow anybody to come out in Columbia as a candidate against him? No, we went to work among our people, and said to them "This man is to be trusted; he is fit for the place; he will do himself honor and will do you honor, if you agree to send him to Congress. Accordingly, upon consideration, our people joined Montour, united our strength with him, and we went up to a conference with Luzerne and Wyoming united. What was the result? Mr. Montgomery was nominated and elected. Afterward, when his death opened a vacancy, Mr. Leidy was named to succeed him; the same united action was taken, and he was elected and served. We have not had any nomination in this congressional district for twelve years, because our two counties have been separate, pulling different ways; and we shall get no representative for the remaining part of the term.

In what manner should this district be secured is not for me to say; it is your own matter; you are to decide it for yourselves, and I am content to abide by your judgment. But I desire to say to you that, if at any time I shall represent any portion of the people of Pennsylvania in the Congress of the United States, I shall go there for earnest work, and one purpose will be to take up the Maish amendment of 1877 and see if it cannot be passed and sent down to the people for adoption.

We ought, in connection with it, to reform our system of selecting members of Congress. This vicious practice of gerrymandering states ought to be cut up by the roots; there is a very simple way of doing it. No such district as this in which we now stand should be permitted to be made. Does not every one know that, while the Democratic party of this state is entitled by numbers to thirteen members of Congress, it has but eight? That result is produced by gerrymandering, by an unscrupulous legislature's cutting up the state into improper districts. That ought to be stopped. There is no reason why it should not be stopped. It only requires that Congress shall withdraw the act which commands the states to divide their territory up into single districts by their legislatures every two years, and that there be substituted for that act a perfectly plain and simple, by which each division of the people in every state will

get its proper share of members of Congress. I cannot, however, go into that subject to-night.

Change in Rules.

The Rules of the Democratic party as amended last year made a change in the manner of voting for delegates. Heretofore the cumulative system has been in use, but that is abolished and the rule is as follows: "Voters at delegate elections may cast as many votes as there are delegates to be elected, but not more than one vote for any one delegate. And in the case of the vote between delegates, this question shall be decided by drawing lots a tie upon instructions from a district by dividing the vote."

Colonel Norris' Blunder.

From the Pittsburg Post. Colonel Quay's candidate for Auditor General, Major Norris, is getting into his water. At Gettysburg the other day he spoke, but because he could not get his feet on the ground, he was furious against the "Third Army Corps and upon General Sickles, who with his friends has replied in person giving Norris the lie. They go further and say Norris knew he was mistaken as to alleged facts related before his speech, but because he could not get his feet on the ground, he was furious against the "Third Army Corps and upon General Sickles, who with his friends has replied in person giving Norris the lie. They go further and say Norris knew he was mistaken as to alleged facts related before his speech, but because he could not get his feet on the ground, he was furious against the "Third Army Corps and upon General Sickles, who with his friends has replied in person giving Norris the lie. 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