

drawals the great majority of the unions still elect to come under the Act,—still believe that argument is better than force. In the minds of the New Zealand public on this point, there is no doubt whatever; and even the employers have come to believe in arbitration, to which at first they were bitterly opposed.

STANLEY BOWMAR.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

COMMISSION GOVERNMENT FOR NEW ORLEANS.

New Orleans, June 19.

There is but one party in control in Louisiana—the Democratic party, which is made up of the New Orleans ward bosses, and the so-called “owners” of the various counties, which in Louisiana are called parishes. Up to the time of the recent general election, held this spring, these men had met with practically no serious opposition. They had, consequently, continued to perpetuate themselves in power, dividing the spoils as they wished.

Previous to the last election, however, one of the leading cotton factors of New Orleans, Mr. John M. Parker, a public spirited citizen who was prompted solely by the desperateness of the situation, organized the “Good Government League.” Many citizens who had never before taken an interest in politics joined this reform movement, and under Mr. Parker’s determined and energetic leadership the entire State was canvassed and a campaign such as has never before been witnessed here was inaugurated.

The reform platform embraced most prominently the adoption of the Recall, Commission Government for all the cities in the State that desired it, anti-lobbying, anti-dual-office-holding laws, and a complete revision of the existing farcical primary and election laws. The result was that the League’s candidate for Governor, Judge Luther E. Hall, was elected, as were also a fair majority of the candidates for the legislature. However, the New Orleans ring proved too strong locally and all but one of the “regular” candidates for the legislature from this city were elected.

But a mass meeting of the citizens of New Orleans was called and a demand made upon the legislature to grant this city a charter embracing the essential features of Commission Government, the same to be submitted to the local electorate for adoption or rejection. A Commission Government committee was appointed, with Mr. John M. Parker as chairman, to draft the measure, and in the early part of this month it was presented to the legislature—now in session.

The bill (introduced by Mr. Sere) follows the lines of the old charter as far as practicable, but contains many of the provisions of the charters of Des Moines and Grand Junction. It provides for the complete centralization and concentration of all power and responsibility in a Council of five members for elections at large, for the appointment of all administrative officials, for a civil service commission to pass upon the qualifications of all subordinate officials (reserving the power of removal to the Council); for

the Initiative, Referendum and Recall, and for non-partisan elections with the preferential method of balloting.

In appointing its committees the legislature, following a long established procedure, selected all New Orleans legislators as members of the committee on “City Affairs.” As before stated the city delegation, with one exception, were all “ringsters,” the most rabid member being the “boss” of the “red light” district, hence the proposed measure met its first rebuff when it was referred to committee. Of course, it was fully expected that an unfavorable report would be returned, but this committee went further and refused to allow certain amendments which were of little real importance, but which were necessary in order to retain the support of the “country.”

It was at this juncture—June 14th—that an editorial appeared in the Times-Democrat, giving an excellent view of the matter as it then stood, and from which I quote:

By a vote of 15 to 2, the Committee on City Affairs yesterday reported unfavorably the bill introduced by Mr. Sere of this city providing for a commission form of government for New Orleans. Mr. Sere of the Twelfth Ward and Manion of the Fourteenth (a regular) voted for a favorable report. The adverse majority of fifteen included thirteen ringsters and two Aswell-Ewing men, while eight of the ringsters failed to vote. The Aswell-Ewing representatives declared that they were in favor of a commission form of government, but do not like the bill in its present shape. Other Representatives are on record as having expressed themselves in favor of the Commission system for New Orleans, but they weakened before the pressure and threats of the bosses, and surrendered their convictions. The ring threw off all disguise, showed clearly its purpose at any hazard and by any trick known to politics to prevent the legislature from voting on this question and the people of this city from enjoying the advantages of a more economical and efficient government such as Shreveport possesses, Monroe is soon to get, and New Iberia has just voted for. . . . A majority of the people of New Orleans want a commission form of government and demand the right to vote that way; the ring is anxious to prevent such vote, and defeat this desire of the voters. It remains with the members of the House to determine whether they will permit this outrage on the city electorate, and become a party to a conspiracy to deny the people of New Orleans a chance to establish good government, a chance to escape the tyranny and oppression of a horde of hungry politicians.

Two courses lay open to the friends of the bill—first, to amend it on the floor of the House; or, second, to withdraw the bill, making the necessary changes and reintroduce. In deference to the wishes of the League’s floor leaders the second course was adopted, and on the 17th the bill was introduced in its amended form in the Senate.

Every inch of the way will be fought by the “ring,” which stands solid in its opposition, and which is making a strong appeal to the country members to vote against the bill, submitting to them, as “Democrats,” that the non-partisan election feature would disrupt the Democratic party.

We are advised that this senseless argument is having a decided effect on the country members. But rather than eliminate the non-partisanship feature we are willing to suffer defeat; for the election and primary laws have not been changed, notwithstanding the fact that it was part of the platform of the “Good Government League,” and under the existing election

laws Commission Government would not have a fair chance. I think it quite safe to say, however, that even if we are defeated, the cause has been greatly advanced, and it is only a question of time when the new method of administration will obtain in this city.

CHAS. E. FENNER.

INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

ANOTHER MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP "FAILURE."

Ceylon, Sask., Canada.

Your recital of the Manitoba telephone failure* suggests another government-ownership "failure" in Manitoba—the elevator system; a like effect, from similar causes. The moral of it all is to employ more trusty guards than a fox for your henhouse. Two years ago western grain growers in Canada were earnestly demanding government elevators as means of relief from extortion, but the most sanguine among them scarcely hoped to convince any Government without a vigorous and perhaps lengthy campaign. Imagine, then, the surprise of the Manitoba farmers in convention when they were called on by a member of the Roblin cabinet with a proposal to cooperate in the formulation of a plan for the Province to acquire a line of local elevators. The Grain Growers responded with suggestions embodying the results of their years of experience and study; but the Government had ideas of its own. The farmers soon saw that what Roblin wanted was not their suggestions, but their "O. K."

The bill finally brought down had a number of objectionable features, among the rest the power it gave the Government to interfere with the work of the Elevator Commission and to appoint or remove members on its own motion. Much time was spent and expense incurred in laboring with the Premier, but the bill was passed substantially in its original form, the grain growers' organization, however, declining to assume any responsibility for its success.

Though deeply disappointed, the organized farmers yet consented to nominate men for the Commission, on the promise that their work should not be interfered with. A very satisfactory Commission was chosen, and they proceeded at once to purchase and build elevators with judgment and economy. Then, with the farmers' mouths stopped, Roblin called an election and went back into power with tremendous majorities!

Once again safely incysted away from the troublesome voters, the Government took the purchasing of elevators into its own hands. It not only paid higher prices, but bought many that were antiquated, out of repair and badly located. In this way over \$1,000,000 was expended, and 174 elevators were acquired at about 100 points. These were used solely for shipping grain in car lots, as funds were not available to buy grain. So the chief sufferer, the small farmer with the wagon load, not only got no benefit, but in many cases his convenient elevator was taken from him and he compelled to haul to a more distant market. Good and experienced men

resigned from the Commission, and the system smelled of politics.

With this load to carry, is it surprising that the Commission complained of lack of support from the farmers and that the books showed a negative balance of \$125,000 in the two years of operation? The Premier conveniently blames the Grain Growers whose earnestly proffered advice he spurned at the beginning, but can he sidestep his own responsibility? It is a question whether his is a case of "after us, the deluge," or "whom the gods would destroy they first make mad." It is at least worth noting that it is in Manitoba that the Initiative, Referendum and Recall have made the greatest progress in Canada.

By way of contrast, those who point to "failures" of public ownership in Manitoba should consider the public telephone system of the adjoining Province—Saskatchewan.

GEORGE W. ATKINSON.

NEWS NARRATIVE

The figures in brackets at the ends of paragraphs refer to volumes and pages of *The Public* for earlier information on the same subject.

Week ending Monday, July 1, 1912.

The Democratic Convention.

After forty-two balloting for President of the United States, the Democratic convention has not yet made a nomination. Neither has a platform been yet reported to the convention. The unusual procedure of making nominations before adopting the platform was in response to the advice of Mr. Bryan, who explained—

that the candidate for President should be nominated before the platform is adopted, the convention being of unusual importance and the Democratic hope of victory depending upon its measuring up to the requirements of the occasion; that the platform would not amount to much unless the candidate stands squarely upon it and is able to defend it; that a joint debate between the platform and the candidate would be fatal to the prospects of the party; that by changing the order the convention would be able so to shape the platform utterances as to give force to the candidacy; that the unprecedented character of the proposal is justified by the fact that extraordinary conditions require extraordinary remedies; and that the suggestion that any candidate would be willing to stand upon a platform prepared by the convention is answered by the fact that the Democratic candidate eight years ago amended the platform by telegraph, a procedure which did not take well with the public.

[See current volume, page 608.]



When Alton B. Parker ascended the rostrum in the afternoon of the 25th to deliver the keynote

*See *The Public* of May 3, page 411.