

leader of Democracy for the Presidency last fall, it lay in his restraint from utterance of slogan or shibboleth, and his modest substitution of an unobtrusive question: "Shall the people rule?" The immediate decision of the people that they would not, must of course be gratifying evidence of popular complaisance, when free from the influence of subversive assertion and deceptive declarations.

ETHELBERT W. GRABILL.

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## EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

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### THE SINGLE TAX MAYOR OF BELLEVILLE.

For several days I have been in Belleville, Illinois, where Fred J. Kern, a disciple of Henry George, is Mayor. While serving his first term, in 1904, Mr. Kern was a delegate to the national Democratic convention at St. Louis. On this occasion he said to some single tax friends that every disciple of Henry George owed it to the cause to take an active part in politics and to stand for public office, particularly municipal office, whenever opportunity offered, and if elected to apply as much of his principles at once as present laws permit. "No other field," said he, "offers such great opportunities for the application of our ideas as the municipality." As he has now been Mayor six years, an account of some of the achievements of his administration may be of general interest.

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Belleville is the seat of St. Clair county, which in the fertility of its soil and the immense deposit of its coal beds, is one of the richest counties in Illinois. With the exception of East St. Louis, the people of the county are nearly all German or of German extraction. A large number of the German students who participated in the revolution of 1848-49 came to this place and neighborhood. Those who took to the cultivation of the soil, were referred to as the "Latin farmers" because they could carry on their controversies in Latin quite as well as in German.

It was here that Colonel Frederick Hecker came, he whose eloquence in 1848 set the hearts of his fellow countrymen afire with democratic ideals. He went to the Civil War from here, and here he died. And so of Governor Koerner. Descendants of both are still living in Belleville. The same element of German democracy settled in near-by St. Louis, where they organized Turner societies, supported the cause of William Lloyd Garrison, were the friends of Lincoln, and when the Civil War broke out kept the slave State of Missouri in the Union.

Germans had been coming to America for more than two hundred years. They cleared the forests, cultivated the soil, planted orchards, worked as mechanics, entered business, reared churches and school houses, and in all the higher fields of the arts and sciences contributed to the greatness of our country. But at no time in our country's history, did this people rise to such heights of devotion to the cause of freedom, or exercise so potent an influence

in the shaping of our future, as under the leadership of those German students of 1848, who, having fought for the liberty of their fatherland and failed, found asylum in America, where they supported the cause of anti-slavery and the Union.

So thoroughly German is Belleville, that twenty years ago it was the general custom to address strangers in German. If the stranger could not understand, which was indeed seldom, it was considered not improper to speak to him in English. The only Negro I ever knew to speak a perfect German was born and raised in Belleville.

It was while living here, that the noted jurist and statesman, Lyman Trumbull, was elected to the United States Senate. This is also the native place of Judge Barnum of Chicago. Ex-Congressman "Horizontal Bill" Morrison, now 84 years old, still lives in a nearby-village, where he finds the time and energy to visit the sick, attend funerals, and otherwise comfort unfortunate neighbors.

The people are industrious and frugal, and while beer drinking is general among them, German like, they do not as a rule drink to excess.

Springing from such a people and developing amidst such surroundings, Fred J. Kern has been truly representative. He was elected Mayor in 1903, has been successively re-elected twice, and is now nominated for a fourth term. His triumph in April is considered a foregone conclusion. When he was first elected, the population of Belleville was 17,000. It is now 27,000.

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The first thing Mayor Kern did was to call the police force together and request them to show him their guns. He found that they were all antiquated and of different make. "You must have regulation revolvers," he said, "and of the best make; and above all you must learn to shoot straight, so that when you are obliged to shoot you shall hit the man you are aiming at instead of a by-stander. And don't use your guns at all, except as a last alternative."

He had three medals struck—one of gold, one of silver and one of bronze,—and told the policemen that they must have target practice at stated times, when the most successful marksman should receive the gold medal, the next the silver, and the third the bronze. These medals were to be the property of the municipality, the possessors to wear them only so long as they were able to hold them by superior marksmanship. Mayor Kern says that this had not only the effect of making good marksmen of the police force, but it was soon discovered that those who won the medals were men of steady nerve, from temperate habits.

The Mayor found a volunteer fire-department inadequate to the demands and needs of the growing city; so he supplanted it with a modern department which has all the skill and efficiency of any of the fire departments of our larger cities.

He found the city with about one mile of street paving. He has paved twenty miles of street with vitrified brick, which in a city like this ought to give service for thirty years.

He found the sewer system extending very little beyond the paved zone. He has constructed thirty

miles of sewer, five miles of which is a large intercepting sewer into which all the others discharge. It is provided with a septic tank by which the sewage is purified.

The city has also been substituting cement sidewalks for the old plank walks, and extending them as rapidly as possible. This work is all paid for by special assessment, a system of collecting revenues for public improvements which assesses abutting property, vacant and improved alike, and therefore, crude though it is, approaches nearer the single tax than any other system of taxation.

Such vast improvements at the expense of abutting property owners got all the old fogies and "knockers" on the firing line. For a while they made Mayor Kern's life miserable. Even some of his friends began to suspect that perhaps his enthusiasm for improvements was due to his friendship for contractors. "Schilling," said he, "if I hadn't been a single taxer, feeling the support of a great ideal, I should have dropped my work in despair." But unpopular as his policy was for a time, when the improvements were in, and the better health and convenience of the city evident, the pendulum swung forward again, and the "knockers" and "croakers" became his friends.

As new industries were established, new mines opened, and a new interurban line began operating to East St. Louis, Mayor Kern saw that these developments were conferring immense values on land outside of the city limits, due entirely to the population of Belleville. These lands were rapidly changing from farms to building sites, and he determined that they should become a part of the city, thereby increasing its revenues and enabling the administration to carry forward greater improvements. He therefore marked out a strip of ground two thousand feet wide and nearly seven miles in length, extending westward from the city limits to Edgmont. The necessary signatures of property owners within this territory were obtained and the strip formally annexed. This annexation, with some minor ones east of the city, increased the area of Belleville from three to six square miles.

The interurban line had charged ten cents from Belleville to Edgmont; but after annexation the city government reduced the fare to five cents, on the principle of "one city, one fare." This reduction has now been in operation for three years.

Running through the annexed territory was an old toll road. Mayor Kern is a free trader, and does not believe in placing an embargo upon commerce. So he at once took steps to rid the community of this obstruction to trade. Legal proceedings were instituted on the basis as a precedent of the case of the Snell toll road on Milwaukee avenue in Chicago, which the Supreme Court had decided in favor of the people. But by some slip of a cog, the Supreme Court decided in favor of the toll road at Belleville. Had Mayor Kern and his associates been less aggressive they might have allowed the company to collect toll indefinitely. But they found that the charter originally granted to the toll road company required it to keep the road paved up to a certain standard. This it had neglected to do. It was nothing but a mud road. The city administration of

Belleville therefore moved to force it to macadamize. As this would have involved an outlay of \$80,000, the company imitated the wandering Arab of the desert, who folded his tent in the night and silently stole away. No more tolls are exacted.

Perhaps Mayor Kern's greatest achievement was his extermination of small-pox. This pest infested the city early in his first term. As many as a hundred and thirty cases were scattered through it. To quarantine thoroughly under such conditions was impossible. From one to four deaths occurred daily. The business interests of the community were being paralyzed. The currents of activity ceased, and the city life became stagnant. Mayor Kern saw that segregation was necessary. As the city had no pest house, he resorted to tents. Able nurses were provided, medical skill was procured, baths and wholesome food were furnished. The medical profession urged him on, pledging their support. He requested them to be public spirited enough to give their services gratis, for vaccinating all of the people desiring to be vaccinated, the city to furnish the vaccine free of cost, and to this they agreed. For days long lines of men, women and children were at the city hall waiting their turn, until 15,000 had been vaccinated. The greatest difficulty encountered was the opposition of many of the people to the removal of their loved ones from home to the tents. But Mayor Kern never faltered. When all had been segregated, the death rate dropped from 45% to 5%.

The city afterward purchased fourteen acres of ground and a two-story building, which has been the pest house of Belleville ever since. Small pox is prevalent just now in southern Illinois and in parts of Missouri. But the people of Belleville have no fear. They know that their city is perfectly sanitary, and that should cases develop by reason of infection from other cities, their municipal government can cope with the situation successfully.

To review the work of this aggressive disciple of the Prophet of San Francisco, when first elected Mayor of Belleville he found its people slow, and he breathed into them the spirit of progress.

Finding its streets unpaved, he paved them.

Finding its sewer system inadequate and the city in an unsanitary condition, he built thirty miles of sewers on a unified plan, thereby ridding the city of stench and disease-breeding pools.

Finding the city overwhelmed with a pest, he stamped it out.

Finding lands lying around Belleville rising in price equal to the value of city lots, he annexed them and placed them on the tax list for the city's good.

Finding that the justice courts punished no one for drunkenness but the poor, he ordered that the drunkard be taken home to his family if he had not broken the peace; or, if he had no home, that he be taken to the City Hall and given a chance to sober up. This abolished the graft formerly collected as fines; and it ended the hardship and suffering of the wives and children whose husbands and fathers who gave way to drink, lost their wages either in fines or by imprisonment.

Finding a toll road hampering the growth and freedom of the city, he discovered a way to abolish it despite the decision in its favor of the Supreme Court of the State.

There was need for a kindergarten school, but there was no room. He made room by converting the chamber of the City Council, which only meets twice a month, into a kindergarten where little boys and girls are in charge of expert kindergarten teachers.

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Like all other disciples of George, Mayor Kern believes in the emancipation of the city from legislative restraints. A Democrat in politics and a democrat in principle, he is however not wedded to the doctrine of States' rights. He believes that as time goes on, it will be necessary to confer greater and greater powers upon the national government; and that if this can be done throughout the nation concurrently with the emancipation of the city, we shall be all the better for it. No tears need be shed, he thinks, over the diminishing power and final extinction of the State, provided the principle of home rule is extended to the municipality.

GEORGE A. SCHILLING.

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### FISCAL HOME RULE IN NEW JERSEY.

Passaic, N. J., March 1.—The Blauvelt bill for home rule in taxation (pp. 153, 218) has been put to sleep in the House of Assembly at Trenton, as the advocates of the measure knew it would be. Last week the House committee on judiciary unanimously reported the bill adversely. Mr. Blauvelt made a strenuous effort to have the bill advanced to second reading, despite the committee's action, but was defeated by a vote of 42 to 12. The friends of reform in taxation in New Jersey feel, however, that they have won a partial victory in bringing the issue thus squarely to the attention of the people of the State. Already there has been much newspaper criticism favorable to the bill, and it will certainly be introduced again next year. Students of taxation here are most hopeful of making home rule in taxation a leading issue in politics before the next legislature convenes.

CORNELIUS W. KIEVIT.

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### SECOND BALLOT IN NEW ZEALAND.

Dunedin, New Zealand, January 5.—New Zealand has had its first practical trial of the second ballot, which was grafted on to our system by the recently-expired Parliament during its last session. In that Parliament there were 15 members in a House of 80 who had not received an absolute majority of the votes recorded in their constituencies. To ensure majority representation the second ballot law was enacted. It was passed by substantial majorities, but it is known that some members of the Cabinet were opposed to it and many members of Parliament voted for it simply on party lines.

This law was passed primarily to secure majority representation. We had 23 second ballot contests at the November elections and there were

over 5,000 fewer voters than at the first ballot. A cabinet minister was returned at the second ballot with a lesser total than he polled on the first ballot, despite the fact that one candidate was weeded out by the first poll.

Our plan compels all but the first and second candidates to retire from the second ballot. This resulted in one case in the dominant political party being excluded from the second ballot. An Opposition candidate headed the poll with 2,412 votes, an Independent Labor man was second with 1,746, and two Government candidates scored 2,381. They were excluded from the second ballot, which was won by the Labor candidate with 3,446 votes against the Opposition man's total of 3,019.

Some remarkable changes of political color occurred at the second ballot polls. In one electorate at the first ballot a Government candidate polled 1,552 votes, an Opposition candidate secured 1,453, whilst a second Government candidate polled 1,301. Seven days later the Opposition man polled 2,478 and the Government candidate 1,781. In another constituency two Government candidates polled 3,816 votes against an Opposition man's total of 3,066. Seven days later the Government majority of 750 had developed into a minority of six votes. It will be seen here that there were 124 fewer voters at the second ballot than at the first and they were the deciding factor. In a third case two Government candidates polled 3,701 votes against an Opposition candidate's total of 2,824. At the second ballot a week later the Government's majority of 867 had disappeared and it was in a minority of 800.

J. T. PAUL.

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## INCIDENTAL SUGGESTIONS

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### AN OBJECTION TO THE SECOND BALLOT.

Dunedin, New Zealand, January 5.—To the student of the second ballot, every thing happened at the recent New Zealand election pretty much as expected. Fewer voters exercised the franchise on the second ballot; arrangements were attempted if not carried out and some of them resembled what M. Yves Guyot called "detestable bargainings"; the second ballot only ensures that a candidate shall be returned by a majority of those who vote; it impinges the principle of secrecy of the ballot by placing the voter at the second ballot in a favored position; it conduces towards lightning changes of political principles without sufficient justification; and, of course, majority representation could be more easily and more safely accomplished by a system of preferential voting. Majority representation, however, is unscientific and undemocratic. The most influential daily paper supporting the Government wrote on the morning after the elections that "the second ballot had its first trial in New Zealand yesterday, and probably its last." Many other leading dailies oppose it. Our experiment has been wholly unsatisfactory. Some members lost their seats because of their support of the bill. Whether it will be repealed or not it is impossible to say. Many firm friends of the Government urge that a system