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The most important of all the elections of next week is not the Congressional elections, important as those are, but the local election in the State of Ohio.

This is so because the question of local municipal government is distinctly at stake in Ohio, and that is a question which touches the rights and interests of every locality in the United States and is everywhere fast becoming a burning question in American politics. It makes Congressional changes, short of a complete change in control, of secondary importance.

What is most needed in Congress at this time is not a majority of Democratic partisans, but a strong minority of able and courageous devotees of radical democracy. Such a minority could combat and expose the imperialistic tendencies of the party in power, without being in the least degree less effective in securing democratic legislation. But a Democratic majority in the lower House just now would probably prove to be much more harmful to the democratic movement than to imperialism and protectionism. It might even strengthen those twin principles of political decay. The most it could do for the movement it would represent would be to pass bills for the President to oppose and the Senate to reject or pigeon hole, thereby exciting all the prejudice without reaping for the public any of the benefits of legislation hostile to the policy of the party in power.

Suppose, for instance, that the

Democrats, having come into control of the lower House in the next Congress, were to pass a bill reforming the tariff in the direction of free trade. It would be denounced everywhere by the protected trusts and their hired men in the Republican party and their subsidized newspapers of all kinds, as a "prosperity destroyer." This tremendous pro-trust clique would "beg to remind" the people that "prosperity" is a timid thing, and that when you shy a brick at it it doesn't wait to be smashed, but dodges at once. And so, when the periodical hard times which protectionism inevitably produces came upon us, we should be told that they were caused by the free trade brick which the Democratic party in the lower House had shied at "prosperity." The very measure which if enacted would promote wholesome business conditions, in place of the alternating "booms" and "busts" which protectionism fosters, would thus be falsely made to appear to have been inimical to prosperity; and, in consequence, the barren Congressional victory of this year would serve two years hence to prevent a victory that could be turned to good account.

Let us not be misunderstood. We do not mean that democratic Democrats should vote against their principles in the Congressional elections, or refrain from voting for them, or in any other way try to prevent the return of the largest possible Democratic majority to the lower House of the next Congress. No man can see far enough into the future to vote with tact; the best that any of us can do is to vote with sincerity. The true policy of the good citizen this year is, therefore, to vote for that Congressional candidate who, being really a candidate and not merely

playing at politics, most nearly represents his political principles. This being done, responsibility for ultimate results rests elsewhere. But all that considered, let no one be too anxious for a Congressional victory which would almost certainly check the democratic tide that is now setting in.

It is different with the nominally local but really national contest that Johnson and Bigelow and their associates are making in Ohio. In that contest a moral effect may be secured of far reaching and long enduring value. For the cynical "bosses" of the Republican party in Ohio have boldly foisted upon the municipalities of the State a plan of local government which subjects them to the party in power in the State. It utterly abolishes home rule in home affairs. Not only may the governor remove any mayor whom the people have elected, but he may appoint the important officials of every city whose council does not confirm the mayor's appointments by an almost impossible two-thirds vote. The Ohio "bosses" have, therefore, raised the home rule issue squarely, and if their candidate for secretary of state should be elected by a normal Republican majority, his election would be regarded and would be in fact a popular endorsement of the policy of depriving municipalities of home rule. But should the vote for Herbert S. Bigelow, the Democratic candidate, be large enough to notably diminish the normal Republican majority, it would be a condemnation of that policy. Better yet, if Mr. Bigelow were elected, the condemnation would be so emphatic as to arouse the home rule sentiment and strengthen the home rule policy all over the United States. It is for this reason that we regard Big-

elow's Ohio contest as the most important of the year.

Next in importance to the contest in Ohio over the office of secretary of state is that in Colorado over the Bucklin constitutional amendment, and for similar reasons. If Colorado were equal in influence upon general public sentiment with Ohio, the Colorado contest might well be considered the more important of the two. For upon the fate of Bucklin's amendment depends the question of whether Colorado counties shall regulate their own taxing methods or be controlled by the party in power in the State.

If the amendment carries, every county will be at liberty once in four years to decide whether it will discourage improvements and production by taxing them or will discourage landforestalling by taxing that. A bitter fight against the amendment is being made by the land grant railroads, the Denver real estate speculators, and the large land grabbers generally. They realize that under it their ill-gotten gains would be swept away. It may be that they have deceived the working farmer of Colorado into supposing that land monopoly is a good thing because he monopolizes a little; but if the farmers of Colorado are as intelligent as they are represented to be, they will see through that "bunco" game, and by voting for Bucklin's amendment let the land rings understand that farmers know that they flourish not by land grabbing but by land using. Such a class cannot be hurt by a system of taxation which exempts the profits of land using and taxes only the profits of land grabbing.

Still, farmers are notoriously easy game for the "bunco" man, and those of Colorado may fall into the trap which the "bunco" steerers of the land grant railroads and the Denver speculators have set for them. It would be a pity should that prove to be the case, and for other reasons than the condemnation of an ideal

tax system. For after all, the issue really at stake in Colorado is not whether this system of taxation shall be adopted, but whether the counties shall decide it for themselves or be governed in their local tax affairs from the State capitol. It is sincerely to be hoped that Colorado will prove her devotion to the essentials of Jeffersonian democracy by deciding this issue in favor of home rule.

In Illinois, the question of home rule is presented in another form. Under the advisory referendum, the people are to advise the legislature by referendum vote whether they want the right to decide local questions by the popular vote of localities and State questions by the popular vote of the State. Whatever may be the result, it will not bind the legislature. But it is exceedingly important that a heavy vote be cast in favor of the proposed change. If the referendum were adopted the day of the political boss would be at an end; for then every piece of legislation would be subject to submission to popular vote, and all the work of the "boss" and of the lobby would go for nothing. Take the new Ohio charter law, for illustration. Though "Boss" Cox and Senator Foraker and Senator Hanna had fixed it up for "boss" purposes as nicely as they have done, yet if a reasonable percentage of the people could demand its submission to popular vote the expensive work of the "bosses" would be rejected; and this very fact would have prevented their cooking up such an infamous charter in the first place. It is because the referendum would enable the people to keep their hands on the legislative lever all the time, that "bosses" and franchise mongers object to it. The people of the whole country will welcome gladly a large vote in Illinois next week in favor of the referendum.

Democratic papers of the Whig variety are sadly outraged because Tom L. Johnson, when he spoke in Cincin-

nati last week, called John R. McLean and his henchmen to account. McLean runs a Republican side show in Cincinnati under Democratic banners. Between him and the Republican "boss," Cox, there exists a perfect understanding. Like an honorable political pirate, Cox divides the spoils of office with the McLean gang. Consequently the two gangs work together to despoil the people of Cincinnati, to whom it has for that reason made no difference which ticket they vote. If they vote Republican they get Cox and McLean; if they vote Democratic they get McLean and Cox. It is to Johnson's honor, therefore, that he refuses to affiliate politically with McLean. It ought to be to his credit that he exposes and defies the McLean kind of politics. In doing this Johnson shows the difference between the mere partisan and the high minded political leader. It is in entire accord with his attacks upon the tax auditors, Democrats as well as Republicans, who have sold themselves to the railroads. He thereby proves himself to be the kind of political leader whom so many good people think they want—before he appears. Now that their ideal of a leader has appeared, it remains for that class of people in Ohio to demonstrate their sincerity.

While the Cleveland Plain Dealer is accounted a Democratic paper, this reputation is quite traditional. Its news columns have, indeed, given fair reports of Johnson's meetings in the Bigelow campaign, as they have of Hanna's meetings; but the only candidate of importance whom it has editorially indorsed with any vigor at all is the Republican Congressman, Theodore Burton, who is running for reelection in the Cleveland district. We note these facts, not for purposes of criticism, but to bring out the great significance of the following editorial comment in the Plain Dealer of the 27th:

The unseemly exhibitions of Senator M. A. Hanna upon the stump in this campaign, culminating in a new

set of oral absurdities at the meeting held Saturday evening in Newburg, is absolutely a menace to Mr. Theodore Burton's return to Congress. As a newspaper firmly established in the belief that it is a public duty to indorse and support Mr. Burton in his candidacy, the Plain Dealer enters earnest protest against the Hanna forms of canvassing votes so far as the Twenty-first district is concerned.

The knowledge that Senator Hanna was one of the strongest factors behind the detested scheme of board rule to supplant the federal system in Cleveland was in itself sufficient provocation for his rebuke at the polls next week as a leader of his party in this State. When Mr. Hanna takes the stump in Cleveland to defend his iniquitous legislation, and when he adds to that error a systematic course of personal abuse, he insults the intelligence of the voter, independent, Republican or Democrat, who hears or reads of his performances.

The public might overlook the strenuous business features of his campaign, his frequent and gratuitous promises that his street railway will "give the public a fair deal" when it goes about it to get a new franchise. Such remarks appear arrogant to a degree, but we suppose they are evidences of Mr. Hanna's determination to "separate business from politics." Not so, however, when he indulges in the folly of supplanting argument with abuse, which supporters of Mr. Burton must realize can only have an injurious effect in that gentleman's district, where already the fear is daily and hourly expressed that he may be a victim to the popular and proper feeling of indignation against boss rule as exemplified by the Cox-Hanna legislature.

Is it in the power of any committee to reform Mr. Hanna's stump methods, or at least to keep him busy outside of Mr. Burton's district?

It would appear from the Plain Dealer's manifest concern for its Republican candidate for Congress, that Edmund G. Vail, the blacksmith candidate, may very likely displace the scholarly dispenser of river and harbor "pork," as Congressman from Cleveland.

As time goes by, knowledge of the means that were resorted to to defeat Bryan begins to leak out. Here for instance is a dispatch from Iowa, a special to the Chicago Chronicle, which professes to be a Democratic paper but which opposed the election of Bryan in 1896, was treacherous in 1900, and is all the time as

good a party organ for the Republicans as they could ask for. The Chronicle published this dispatch on the 25th. It tells its own story:

The Republican State central committee has been notified the railroads will not allow free transportation to students of the colleges of the State who desire to go home to vote. The railroad officials say they began the practice in 1896, when, under strong pressure to prevent the election of Bryan, they aided the Republican campaign management as much as possible. Now they hold there is no necessity for it.

Railroads are not excusable for giving free transportation to serve a political purpose. They are public servants, whose right of way has been secured for them by the sovereign power of the State for a public purpose, and they have no more right than any other public servant to discriminate against persons or classes. Yet it was by means of such discrimination not only that Republican college students were carried long distances to vote, but that crowds were carried to Canton to hear McKinley speak, and that the party of plutocracy was otherwise aided. But a day of wrath is coming fast, and against that day things like these will be treasured up.

The impudence of the railroad-coal trust was manifested in a new way at the first meeting of the arbitration commission, when one of its representatives took occasion to insist that this must not be an arbitration, but only an investigation. It was impudent because the very proposal the trust had made and the miners had accepted was that the "questions at issue between the respective companies and their own employes" should be referred to the commission, and that the "decision of that commission shall be accepted by" the trust. If that is not a proposal to arbitrate, it would be impossible to frame one.

The anthracite arbitration commission, appointed by President Roosevelt, have refused the offer made by the railroad and coal trust

of a special train gratis on their trip through the anthracite coal regions. There was nothing else for them to do. It is inconceivable that some of the men on that commission should for an instant harbor the thought of accepting such a favor in such circumstances; and entirely aside from moral sensitiveness, an acceptance by the commission would have been scandalous. But think of what the offer reveals. These "courtesies" have been so common of late years, that this one was extended as a matter of course. And, indeed, if Senators, and judges, and tax commissioners, and even Presidents may be the favored guests of railroad magnates when great railroad interests are before those officials for adjudication of some sort, why not the arbitration commission?

In a leading editorial in its issue of Oct. 21, the New York Journal of Commerce has some impressive words on certain "Aspects of the Times." Coming as they do from so conservative a source, they will carry weight with a class of readers who rate statements and judgments according to where they find them rather than according to inherent merit and truth. The writer says:

The founders of our government flattered themselves that they had devised a system of rights and liberties so wisely adjusted and guarded as to unite all classes in reciprocal bonds of interest and maintain equal access to the virgin resources of our vast domain. At the end of our first century, however, we find broad and powerful tendencies wholly incompatible with these foundation theories and we seem to be gradually drifting into a very unassuring reconstruction of our political and economic institutions.

The words, "maintain equal access to the virgin resources of our vast domain," are not alluded to again in the editorial except under the general condemnation of the growth of monopolistic power; but it is a good sign of the times that such a journal should specifically mention the maintenance of "equal access to the virgin resources of our vast domain" as an