

GOVERNMENT FOR THE PEOPLE

Where Our Taxes Go!
Part 4

By DR. HENRY GEORGE III

For a democracy to survive, the power of the ballot must be assured. It is not enough that you and I can vote. There must be no tampering with our ballots. For your vote and mine to count we must be certain that there are no "flop house floaters," no stiff and sharpers, who at the right moment slip in and for a sum of money vote your name, vote the name of your friend or the name of some one who, perhaps, died last year. It is this illegal vote, conceived in political corruption and dedicated to Boss Rule that destroys your honest ballot and mine, and to that degree destroys democracy.

If we would make government clean, if we would make it direct, make it the instrument of the people it was intended to be, and not the tool of unscrupulous machines, we must make tampering with the ballot unprofitable for those who traffic in such business. Today, thanks to science, we can here in Wilmington, become in actuality, quite probably, the First City in the nation to really have every vote count.

We can, but probably we will not because there are not enough of us who will take an interest in the significance of the ballot.

If we would have our ballots count we could by public opinion alone compel a procedure. Once the legislative body understood the people were in earnest and united an effective law would result. We do not need to have voting machines, an improvement which many progressive communities have adopted.

It lies within the power of every citizen to have his ballot count, and it is for this reason that I call upon Mr. Thomas Herlihy as Republican candidate for mayor, to join me in urging the public to protect their rights. The procedure is simple. Let all citizens go to the polls, let them give their names and addresses as is the custom, then in the presence of the officials, let them sign their names in a registry book as they are handed their ballot and beside their names let them affix their thumb print.

Surely such a procedure is simple to understand and institute. Such a procedure would give the challengers and officials the opportunity to examine the signature and exclude from the ballot booth any who might try to fraudulently steal or destroy the effect of your vote. There might be a few who would try and forge another's name if the price is right, but show me the adventurous spirit who would publicly sign another's name and leave a fingerprint for later examination.

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This procedure does not mean that our police would be crowded with registration books and fingerprints for examination. It means that the risk of detection in ghost voting would destroy the incentive and profit. It means that in as much as the ballot is concerned you and I, the public, would be protected.

I believe that you and I owe our soldiers the very best government we can possibly have. I believe that having a signature, fingerprint challenge system at the polling booths will assure the public that their votes will count, irrespective of how they vote or the merit of the candidates.

I believe that if we guarantee an honest voting method, good men will come forward and lift public office back to the place of honor it once enjoyed. Many good men shy away from politics because of the corrupt practices that we have allowed to develop.

What I propose is no panacea for our political or governmental ills, but it is a step, and a necessary step toward better government.