

REPORT

OF THE

Committee to Investigate Ballot Conditions

TO THE LEGISLATURE—SESSION OF 1908

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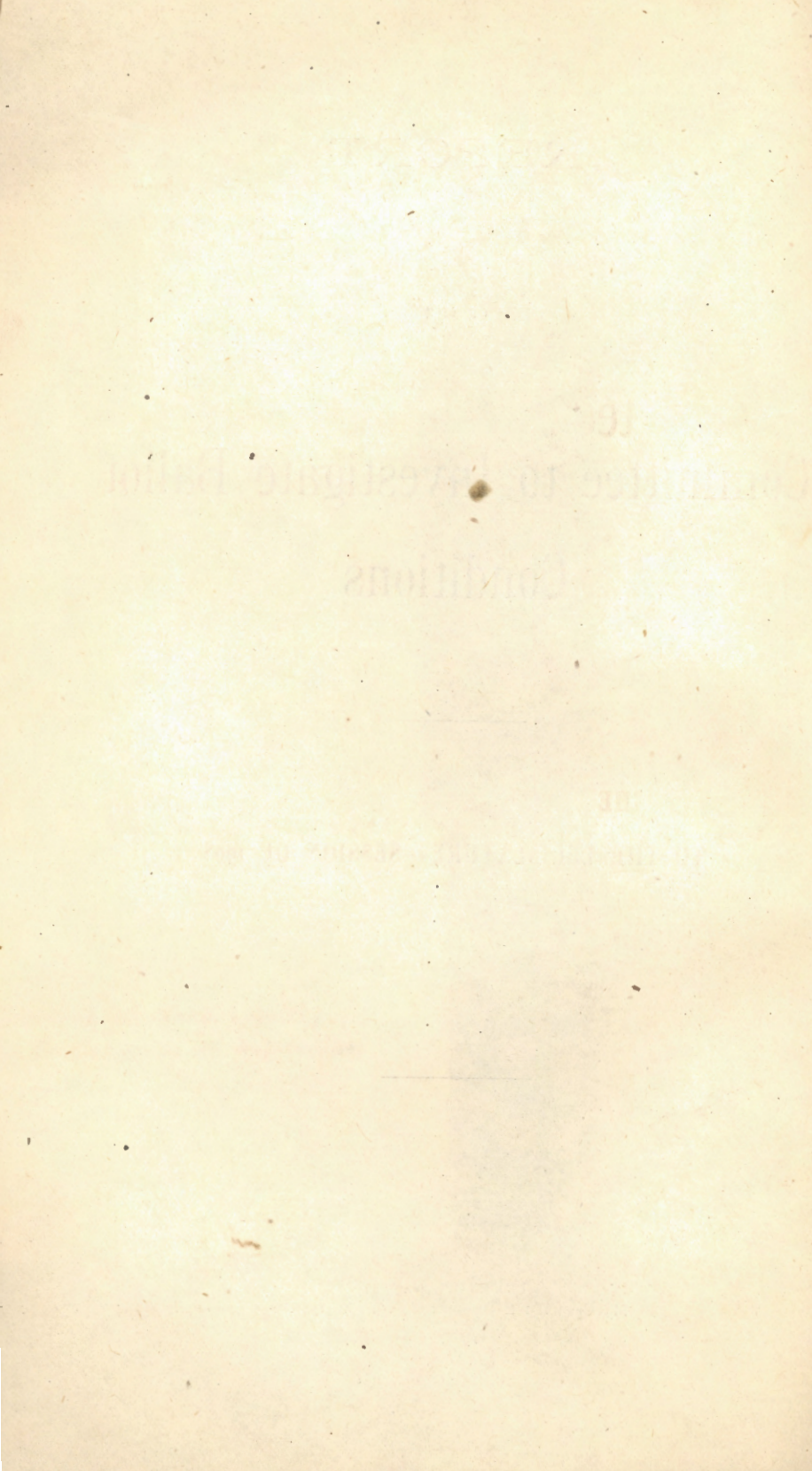
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REPORT.

On the fifth of March of last year the Senate adopted the following resolution :

WHEREAS, Elections are conducted in this State by the use of paper ballots and voting machines ; and

WHEREAS, It is thought by many that the paper ballots as used in this State could be improved and a better method of using them be provided ; and

WHEREAS, It is alleged that the voting machines do not provide a safe method of voting ; and

WHEREAS, It is wise that these matters be thoroughly investigated and all the facts be brought before the people to the end that the very best method of voting be provided in this State ; therefore, be it

Resolved, That a committee, consisting of three members of the Senate, be appointed by the President of the Senate to investigate the entire subject of voting and the different methods of conducting election, and to report at the next session of the Legislature such recommendations with regard to changes in the election laws of this State as they may deem proper ; further

Resolved, That said committee be authorized to employ counsel, stenographers and such other assistants as may be necessary for such investigation and report, and that all bills contracted by said committee be paid by the Treasurer of the State, upon the warrant of the Comptroller, with the approval of the Governor.

And on the 12th of March the President of the Senate appointed as members of the committee, Senators Wakelee, Lee and Hillery. Since that time your committee has been making the investigation, as provided for in the above resolution.

We have examined the ballot laws of thirty-five States, together with conditions affecting the ballot laws of our own State, and beg to report as follows :

We are of the opinion that the voting machines now in use should be continued, with the following changes:

(1) In the interest of independent voting we suggest that the party levers be abolished, and the choice of each candidate shall be indicated by the moving of the candidate pointers.

(2) There should not be two methods of voting in the same municipality, and the municipalities using machines should be entirely equipped.

(3) The machines should be located in the more populous centers, and should, when once located, be not subject to removal. There should also be provision made for fuller and more ample and impartial instruction to voters, and a broader understanding of the mechanism of the machine on the part of those officials who have to do with their use.

We also find that the paper ballots now used in this State are, with perhaps a single exception, the most unsafe, the farthest removed from a secret ballot, and the most easily manipulated in the interests of fraudulent voting of any paper ballot in use in any northern State.

In our examination of the paper ballots in use in the different States we have endeavored to gather therefrom the best features of each, and to add thereto any original ideas which seemed to be in the interest of a perfected ballot. In doing this we have first considered in every instance secrecy and protection from possibility of fraud or bribery, and second, convenience and independent voting. In this we have found valuable suggestions in the ballot laws of Massachusetts, New York, Minnesota, Ohio, Michigan, Montana, and the result of our investigations is to recommend a ballot in which the candidates for a given office are grouped together with the name of the nominating body, in each instance affixed to that of the candidate. These official groups shall be arranged on the ticket horizontally, and provision made for the voter marking his choice for each individual candidate, as is the case in Massachusetts and Minnesota. To lessen the possibility of the voters making ineffective their ballot, through improper marking, we have designated an official marker to be used in place of the customary pencil or pen. To prevent the possibility of the voter depositing a ballot different from the

one received upon going into the polling booth we have arranged a system of numbered stubs to be affixed to the ballots, the number of which stubs shall correspond to the voter's number on the poll book, and provision is made for comparing the number of the stub with the number on the poll book at the time the ballot is deposited, after which the stub is to be detached and deposited in a separate receptacle, thereby destroying all possibility of further identification of the ballot with the name of the voter.

We have also arranged for the use of separate ballots and ballot-boxes for municipal and for State and county elections. The municipal ballot to be known as the "red" ballot, and the State and county ballot to be known as the "white" ballot.

We have endeavored to develop in the highest degree possible safe and convenient methods of voting. In preparing to carry out these changes we found that it would seriously disarrange our present far too much amended election law, and quite recently decided that the most efficient and the speediest way to enact our ideas into statute would be to revise the whole law regulating elections, and in drafting such a bill we have undertaken to re-arrange and re-classify the provisions of the present act in a manner which we believe will be found more comprehensive and more easily read by laymen, by eliminating merely technical legal expressions. We have been able to condense the 205 pages of the present law into a bill which will probably not require over 110 to 115 pages. We have not attempted to amend in any material respect the provisions of the present law, except in so far as it affected the use of ballots, but have endeavored to so arrange it that it may serve as an outline and basis for the easy insertion of any amendment or other change, either in the general elections or the primary act, which the Legislature may desire to make.

We further, with pleasure, report that the committee has been so ably assisted by the Assistant Secretary of State that we have incurred no expense and have not availed ourselves of the provisions in the resolution for the employment of assistants.

Respectfully submitted,

EDMUND W. WAKELEE,
THOMAS J. HILLERY.

