



ELECTORATE—Jailbirds, dead people, lunatics, small children and dogs have at one time or another appeared on voter registration lists.

Fraud! Fraud!

Gone are the days (aren't they?) when dead men and dogs could 'vote' and The Boss held sway.

By **ALEXANDER B. CALLOW Jr.**

AS Americans go to the polls this year, Election Day will probably be a quiet one. But in the days of the city boss, from the Civil War to well into the 20th century, elections were riotous affairs in which brawls, bribery and intimidation of voters were common practices throughout the country, but especially in the big cities.

In times of crises, when an election promised to be close, or the city machine was challenged by a reform movement, political bosses of both parties acted accordingly. From South of the Slot in San Francisco to the Strip in Pittsburgh, from the North Side in Kansas City to the South Side in Chicago, they mustered an army from the saloons, flophouses and gambling dens and sent them to the polls to vote early and often, stuff ballot boxes, destroy rival voting booths—and each other.

No better example of fabled American ingenuity can be found than the techniques used in cheating at the polls. The first trick in any wholesale election fraud was for ward heelers and corrupt election officials to pad the registration lists with phony names and addresses. They did so with an imagination that was breath-taking. Names of persons in jail, in the hospitals, in the cemeteries or simply nonexistent were added with cavalier abandon.

An angry Philadelphia newspaper once printed the pictures of a dog and a 4-year-old boy listed on the registry. Lincoln Steffens recalled a campaigning Philadelphia politician who, after reminding his audience that Independence Hall was in his ward, went

on to name the signers of the Declaration of Independence. "These men," he said, "the fathers of American liberty, voted down here once. And," he added with a sly grin, "they vote here yet."

The next step in rigging elections was to recruit men, known as "repeaters," to vote the fraudulent names. Particularly resourceful were the tiny, flinty-eyed saloonkeeper, Hinky Dink Kenna, and Bathhouse John Coughlin, lords of Chicago's wicked First Ward, the best of all possible wards—for vice and corruption. They brought in voters from the Hospital for the Insane at Dunning. It was said that Hinky Dink, a Democrat, found the Dunning inmates more astute politically than the most erudite of Republicans.

HINKY DINK and Bathhouse John also took advantage of woman suffrage. On election day their lieutenants, Make-a-Fuss Wilson and John (Mush-mouth) Johnson, recruited hordes of ladies of joy still in their working clothes from such places as the Bucket of Blood, Black May's, the House of All Nations and a place whimsically called "Why Not?"

Immigrants proved ready recruits for the bosses' election armies, because the bosses played like virtuosos on their ignorance of political issues and on their old world prejudices. In New York City Tim Campbell, an old Tammany leader, made this clear in a classic speech in his Irish district (his opponent was an Italian named Rinaldo).

"There is two bills before
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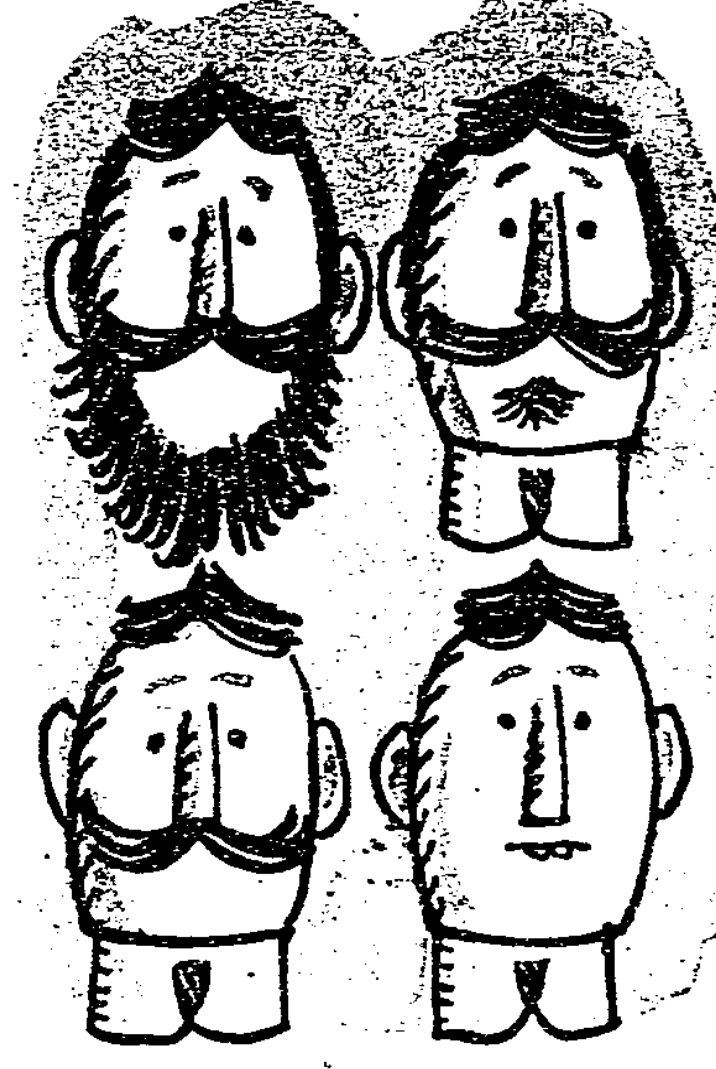
the country—the Mills bill and the McKinley bill," Campbell declared. "The Mills bill is for free trade with everything free; the McKinley bill is for protection with nothing free. Do you want everything free or do you want to pay for everything?"

"Having thus disposed of the national issue, I will now devote myself to the local issue, which is the Dago Rinaldo. He is from Italy. I am from Ireland. Are you in favor of Italy or Ireland?"

"Having thus disposed of the local issue and thanking you for your attention, I will now retire."

BIG Tim Sullivan, a tough Tammany Hall buff alias Dry Dollar Sullivan (he was once found drying off a revenue stamp from a brewery keg under the impression it was a dollar), argued that repeaters had to have whiskers:

"When you've voted 'em with their whiskers on, you take 'em to a barber and scrape off the chin fringe. Then you vote 'em again with the side lilacs and a mustache.



REPEATER—A citizen could vote at least four times if he visited a barber between trips to the polls.

Then to a barber again, off comes the sides and you vote 'em a third time with the mustache. If that ain't enough and the box can stand a few more ballots, clean off the mustache and vote 'em plain face. That makes every one of 'em good for four votes."

Often repeaters voted under bona fide names and legitimate voters arrived at the polls to be greeted with "Mr. —, you've already voted."

One election official told the story of a repeater who, when asked his name at one polling place, identified himself as "William Crosswell Doane," a prominent Episcopal clergyman.

"Come off," said the official. "You're not Bishop Doane."

"The hell I ain't, you bastard!" said the voter.

Another weapon in the bosses' arsenal of fraud was the gangs of barroom gladiators

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hired to intimidate and terrorize the legitimate voter. Thus a respectable citizen who seemed likely to vote the "wrong" ticket might find himself slugged and thrown into the street, where, as one observer reported, "He would meditate on the beauties of our free institutions for a few moments, and depart, a sadder if not wiser man."

At least this was better than what happened to a voter in a wild election in 1856 in New York City. When he voted against Tammany, his nose was shot off. (It was reported that he was consoled by an onlooker who told him that his face was less ugly now.)

AND then there were the ladies. Gallus Mag, Sadie the Goat and Euchre Kate Burns, the champion heavyweight female brick hurler of New York, were specialists in election-day mayhem. Hell-Cat Maggie filed her front teeth to points and wore long artificial nails made of brass on her fingers. When she unleashed her battle cry and dashed biting and clawing into a polling place, even the bravest of men lost their poise. The huge and violent Battle Annie, the sweetheart of Hell's Kitchen, was a terrifying bully. She commanded a gang of blood-thirsty females called the Battle Row Ladies' Social and Athletic Club.

The bosses' control over repeaters, the courts, the police and organized crime often led to the ultimate form of intimidation: the election-day massacre. The bloodiest of them all occurred in the present century and has gone down in Kansas City history as Bloody Tuesday.



HANCOCKS ALL—Signers of the Declaration of Independence have popped up as 20th-century voters.

When the polls closed on March 27, 1934, machine-gunnings, pistol-whippings and blackjackings added up to four murders, 11 cases of critical injuries, more than 200 cases of assault and Tom Pendergast's machine ticket returned to office by a margin of 59,000 votes. Boss Buckley of San Francisco put it well: "The game of politics is not a branch of the Sunday school business."

FRAUD during election hours was one thing, but it did not end with the closing of the polls. When election officials counted the votes, the laws of mathematics were subject to political necessity. The bosses nominated election officials more for their party loyalty than for their devotion to civic duty, like the Philadelphia official who returned 252 votes from a precinct which had only 100 registered voters. Perhaps anticipating accusations of fraud, election officers appointed by Boss Tweed of New York protected themselves morally by being sworn

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THAT'S A-PLENTY—It was once easy enough to stuff boxes or drop "wrong" votes on the floor.

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DELIVERING THE VOTE—The old-time boss used every trick to influence election results.

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in not upon the Bible but on Ollendorf's "New Method of Learning to Read, Write and Speak French."

Election officials had an imaginative repertory of tricks. Ballots were switched. In one New York election, an official simply dropped ballots on the floor, substituting for them a pile of previously marked tickets he had beside him. When a voter protested, the official threatened him, a man kicked him, another punched him in the mouth and a policeman arrested him.

Ballot boxes in New York were often stuffed with additional ballots. A Boston politician was once asked if any such thing went on in his home town. He answered with an emphatic "No! Ballot boxes are never stuffed unless it's absolutely necessary!"

Ballots were also invalidated. In Chicago, deft fellows known as "short-pencil men" palmed pencil stubs in their hands. As they counted the

votes, they added a cross mark to each opposition ballot; such ballots, with both candidates marked, were thus invalid.

In the rogues gallery of American city bosses, there was one rascal endowed with such infinite guile that he did not always have to resort to such crudities as repeaters or crooked election officials. He was the charming, quick-witted James Michael Curley of Boston.

WHEN he was running against Thomas M. Joyce for Congress, Boss Curley performed an election masterpiece. Curley sent his supporters out in the very early hours of election day with instructions to ring doorbells. When the enraged citizen, groggy with sleep, stumbled out of bed, opened the door and asked why in the hell he was being awakened at this unholy hour, Curley's boys merely said they wanted to be sure he was going to vote for Thomas Joyce. The usual response was something to the effect that

"I wouldn't vote for that son-of-a-bitch if he were . . ." As Curley said, "Do others or they will do you."

Fraud still plays a part in the American way of voting. In recent years, "irregularities" at the polls were reported in Chicago, New York and Philadelphia. Indeed, it is not unlikely that some may occur in the coming Presidential election. Nevertheless, the days of the massive, wholesale election fraud are gone forever. The secret ballot, the voting machine and permanent registration have not eliminated fraud, but they have tamed the wild and sly ways of the old-fashioned city boss.

One ancient relic from the good old days was sorry to see them go. "Elections nowadays are sissy affairs," he wrote. "Nobody gets killed any more and the ambulances and patrol wagons stay in their garages. . . . It was wonderful to see how my men slugged the opposition to preserve the sanctity of the ballot and stop the corruption of Tammany Hall."

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