

Elections have come a long way — or have they?

"... public faith in the purity of our elections has become shaken, and the feeling is widespread that the decision at the ballot box no longer reflects the honest judgment of a majority of the voters."

Indiana Gov. Isaac Gray, 1889

The out-going governor of Indiana was telling the General Assembly that "enough is enough — get on with some reform legislation."

Vote buying and fraud were blatant, as seen in the 1888 letter to the editor of *The Nation* written by Indiana University Professor Richard H. Dabney. The state had also been



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By Rose McIlveen

rocked by the conviction of Marion County Democratic Party boss, Simon Coy, for altering returns in the 1886 election.

The state legislator's response was a bill that called for the government, rather than the parties, to

furnish ballots; privacy when voting; equal representation of parties on precinct election boards and no unauthorized persons within 50 feet of a polling place. Voting fraud lingered.

In the 1905 election, the *Bloomington Evening World* was promoting an agreement between the two major parties that votes should not be bought and voters should make their own way to the polls. It was a city election, and charges and counter-charges between the *World* (Democratic) and the *Telephone* (Republican) took up a tremendous amount of space on front pages

leading up to Nov. 7.

The *World* was advocating the overthrow of what it called "the ring," leaders of the Republican Party who held the offices of mayor and city council. The *World* called the incumbents "the gang now fighting for its life." Furthermore, the *World* kept repeating that the Republican officials had refused to sign an agreement designed to safeguard the honesty of the election.

Retaliating, the *Telephone* printed a statement which said, "It is no secret that the Republican Party and its candidates will insist upon an absolutely clean city election the

coming November in keeping with the primary of yesterday. (Primaries at that time were held in the fall.) The candidates will demand such an agreement with their Democratic opponents and will insist upon such a contract being carried out to the letter."

Snapped back the *World*, "Does this look like a huge joke now? The people wonder why the ring and its candidates refused within a fortnight to enter into such an agreement, when they had such a good opportunity. The Democratic candi-

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