

July 13, 1938

Honorable Lloyd C. Stark  
Jefferson City, Missouri

My dear Governor:

Pursuant to the call on yesterday from your secretary, I write you in relation to the Primary. For sometime past in certain precincts in this county the elections have been characterized by deliberate violation of the law governing elections. For illustration, in some precincts those who belong to the Organization have been advised shortly after the election as to how the vote of certain individuals was cast, thereby violating the letter and the spirit of the law in relation to a secret ballot, and there are some precincts in this county where a number of Democrats who would be glad to support the candidacy of Judge Douglas will not participate in the Primary for the dual reason that their ballots will not be held secret, and because they know from past experiences their ballots will not be properly accredited. This condition does not inhere alone in the Inter-City District, nor in Sugar Creek, but in some country precincts where one hardly expects such condition to be. So far as Independence city is concerned, my observation and experience is that we have generally had fair and honest men representing both parties.

The main battle ground outside Kansas City is the well populated Inter- City District lying between Kansas City and Independence, together with the little city of Sugar Creek. In these districts the force and the influence of the Organization is predominant. The reaction of the Election Commission for Eastern Jackson County to the proposed changes of judges and clerks is that these officials are appointed for a term expiring subsequent to the date of the Primary and therefore none may be removed save for cause. I am loathe to admit that in many precincts the best assurance a Democratic voter has for the honest counting and recording of his ballot lies with the Republican officials and many of those are not untainted.

I have these suggestions to make:

That the Board of Election Commissioners be duly admonished that they see to it that all ballots are counted and accredited as cast;

That supervisory attention be given precincts 5, 9, 19, 26, 28, 31, 32, 35, and 49, and the precinct at Grain Valley;

That where there is question or doubt as to the integrity of the judge or clerk, the Commission substitute others for those whose integrity is in question;

That the old practice in each precinct of permitting the Democratic judges and clerks to retire to one part of the polling place for the

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purpose of counting the Democratic ballots be abandoned, and that all judges and clerks participate in the counting of all ballots cast;

That so far as possible the Election Commissioners see to it that the secrecy of each ballot be not violated;

That prior to election all the judges and clerks be called into one general conference by the Board of Election Commissioners and there admonished by the Chairman both as to their respective duties and their liability under the law, with an unequivocal statement to the conference that any such official found violating the law relative to elections would be subject to prosecution, with the distinct understanding that any off-color returns from any precinct will be immediately investigated by the Board. I would recommend further in relation to this suggestion of an open conference that due publicity be had of the fact of such conference, so the voter at large may have the assurance that this is one election at which he may vote his sentiment without fear of publicity as to the manner in which he

voted;

That the Board of Election Commissioners see to it that none be present when the votes are counted save those whose presence is permitted in the language of the statute. It is reported that in times past of the boys looking over the shoulders of the officials and participating with Officials in ascertaining the results.

Yours very truly,  
Burns Strader  
BS/hm