REFORM AND RETALIATION: CORA DIEHL AND THE LOGAN COUNTY ELECTION OF 1891

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ABSTRACT

This is an account of the election of the first woman in public office in the new Territory of Oklahoma. The Logan County elections of 1891 pitted the majority Republicans against a fusion of the minority Democratic and People's parties. Cora Diehl was the People's Party nominee for County Register of Deeds. Later she was endorsed by a fusion convention for that office. This fusion proved successful and Diehl was elected. But elements within her own party, as well as the Republicans, challenged her election— a challenge that ultimately went to the Oklahoma Territorial Supreme Court which upheld Diehl's election. This article examines the elements that contributed to her defeat for re-election. Most significant of these was the adoption of the Australian ballot. The single ballot format, rather than the previously used partisan ballot, discouraged fusion. The new ballot had a specific impact on both Populist "mid-roaders" and on the expanding black voting population in Logan County. It is the assertion of this article that the Republican victory of 1892 was directly attributable to the antifusion nature of the Australian ballot and that the decline of the third party movement also resulted from the changed ballot format. As a result, women and blacks lost their political voice.

FULL TEXT:

Logan County, West Virginia, includes a small area known as Buffalo Creek Hollow. A typical geographic feature for West Virginia, its long, winding hollow stretches for twenty miles with steep ridges on either side. Numerous towns sprang up over the years in this coal rich hollow and the population fluctuated similarly to the rise and fall of mining "booms" and "busts." 1970 saw the most prosperous year for coal since the late 1940s, which prompted new mining companies to seek a presence and buy out already existing companies to seek a presence and buy out already existing companies. The County Carlow by-election, 1891 was a parliamentary by-election held for the United Kingdom House of Commons constituency of County Carlow on 7 July 1891. It arose as a result of the death of the sitting member, James Patrick Mahon. The by-election took place at a crucial moment in the history of the Irish Nationalist party. After a public scandal in which it was revealed that its leader, Charles Stewart Parnell, was living in a relationship with Katharine O'Shea, wife of one of his party MPs, and