

The Alliance Herald

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EXPENSIVE ECONOMY

The members of the Nebraska legislature, like the voters who elected them to office, have strange ideas of economy. One of these ideas concerns the matter of salaries. In some way, legislators have the idea that chief among their duties is that of swatting every bill that calls for more money for any public servant, on the theory that he is now willing to work for the salary he is getting and that he will have to be satisfied.

Since the opening of the present session, a number of self-appointed watchdogs of the state treasury have been using the axe on every proposed increase in salary, irrespective of the office or the previous salary. The burden of their song has been: "The farmer is getting only 30 cents a bushel for his corn—it's no time to raise salaries."

This is a most short-sighted point of view. It's true that times are hard, but the financial situation is conceded to be only temporary. Two or three months from now, conditions will be normal, but by that time, unfortunately, the legislature will have adjourned and it will be too late to take action. The legislators cannot be blamed, particularly. They are not exceptional men—if they were the legislature would not appeal to them. They are just ordinary people, and ordinary people are not expected to see very far beyond the end of their noses.

One of these salary bills, in particular, deserves attention. The county judges' salary bill, House Roll 70, should be passed without amendment and without delay. It should be passed, if for no other reason, than that it will do away with the abominable fee system, which has been the curse of the lower courts for years.

At present, the law provides that a county judge in counties of the size of Box Butte shall receive \$1,800 per year, provided the office takes in that much in fees. If the fees do not amount to the \$1,800, the judge's salary is automatically lowered. It so happens that in this county the fees for years have been several hundred dollars in excess of that figure, but there are counties in the state where the fees are not sufficient to tempt good men to take the place. An ignorant official is expensive, even if he donates his services free.

The proposed law, as drawn, provided for a salary of \$2,500 for judges in counties of 8,000 to 16,000. The economy hounds of the legislature have reduced the amount to \$1,900 on their mistaken theory that they are saving the farmers, whose corn is worth only 30 cents, some \$400 per judge.

The fact is that the increased salary of county judges will not have to be paid by the taxpayers at all. It will not add one cent to their burdens, save in a very few counties. The county judge's office will take in sufficient fees in most instances to more than pay their salaries. The litigants, not the taxpayers, will pay the bill, and fully half of these litigants are non-residents.

The county judge's office is one of the most important in county government. An intelligent and efficient judge can save his taxpayers more than his salary by giving such decisions as will reduce the number of appeals. When a case is appealed, then the real drain on the taxpayers begins. There is hardly a county office where ability is more essential. Judging by the salary paid, Box Butte county is especially fortunate. There are fewer appeals, and fewer mistakes in the judgments rendered in Box Butte county than in any other in western Nebraska.

Few people realize how much authority a county judge possesses, and how much he can help or hinder law enforcement in the sentences he imposes. A weak judge, fearful of popular sentiment, can make the law enforcement agents a joke. A strong judge can make their work effective.

By failing to provide for adequate salaries to county judges, the legislature can work an injury to the entire state. It's no excuse to say that other county officers will want increases in salaries if the judges are granted an increase, for time and again other officers have had their salaries increased while the judges continued to draw their same amount of fees. The county judge does an enormous amount of work; he does it faithfully and well—nine out of ten cases never go as far as district court—and he is entitled to good pay for the work he does. If legislators are unable to realize this, they aren't intelligent enough to be legislators.

HEAVEN AND HELL

Judge Tash has started something. In a talk before the members of his church, he pleaded for more rigorous sermons, and declaring that there is just as much ground for believing that a literal hell exists as there is ground for belief in a literal heaven, urged that the preachers throw a little fear of God into the hearts of their hearers as well as love of God. The judge, who spends a good proportion of his time in dealing with offenders, knows that fear of punishment is perhaps the greatest deterrent of crime.

Every point that was made by the judge was well taken. The Bible speaks of both heaven and hell, and there are no more reasons for believing in the one than the other, and the Bible is the best evidence that either exists. The last point, that fear of punishment is a preventive of crime, has an illustration right in Box Butte county. The first few months of last year, when money was plentiful, there was an unprecedented number of "no fund" checks issued. Case after case came before the county court, and Judge Tash, like every other judge, didn't follow the strict provisions of the law. If a man came before him charged with drawing a check when he had no funds in the bank to cover it, professed regret and made the shortage good, the matter was allowed to drop.

About six months ago, the judge turned over a new leaf. He issued a printed warning that from that time on, the law would be followed, and any man who wrote a check when he had no funds on deposit to cover it, would be held for trial in district court. Since that time there have been just two cases of "no fund" checks. In other

counties, the authorities are talking about the fundless check evil, but there isn't any such animal in Box Butte county, although money is scarce and by all the laws of human nature there should be more of such violations rather than less.

Mr. Tash's remarks, however, have been made the basis for an editorial and a sermon, and an argument has resulted on the actual existence of a hell. If our preacher and newspaper friends will pardon us, we will suggest that there is no profit in such a discussion. It is a matter that cannot be settled on earth, and indications are that the judgment day is not yet at hand. With countless real problems demanding a solution, this sort of an argument is as profitless as the ponderous expositions of the monks in the middle ages, who debated fiercely such burning issues as the number of angels who could dance on the point of a needle. If a man chooses to believe that a hell of brimstone and sulphur exists, we have no quarrel with him; nor do we seek words with the man who thinks the only hell is in the pangs of an outraged conscience. If a man wants to deny the existence of any hell, mental or physical, we are satisfied. Heaven, for the average newspaper man, is just a hope anyway.

SEX-STUFF IN THE MOVIES

Benjamin B. Hampton, the president of four motion picture corporations, has written a most illuminating article on "Too Much Sex Stuff in the Movies." He has wisely written it for the Pictorial Review, a woman's magazine, realizing that the womanhood of the nation will be, in general, more responsive to his arguments. He admits there are too many plays that emphasize sex, that unscrupulous movie houses do not hesitate to advertise the situations that are the most risqué, and that something ought to be done about it.

In Nebraska, as in a few other states, those who have realized the evil immediately have jumped to the conclusion that "a law should be passed" and so we have movie censorship bills. Mr. Hampton argues that the censorship theory is all wrong, and these are his reasons:

Everybody feels that something is wrong, seriously wrong. We don't want to keep the children away from the movies, but we know we must deal with the situation somehow.

I am afraid we must not put too much dependence on government. After all, government is merely a diluted, delayed expression of public opinion. My suggestion is that we move directly to set at work the great power of public opinion, instead of moving indirectly through the tedious red tape of government.

In several states, government has already created boards of censors, and my investigations convince me that censorship is dangerous, un-American, and ineffective. Almost invariably the demand for censorship has been started by earnest, sincere, straightforward folk who still believe in old-time things like decency and morals and ethics. Their efforts are promptly aided and abetted by the politicians of the itching palm, who smell new jobs and attractive perquisites. The history of the operation of censorship in the states that have tried this form of purification proves that the responsibilities and temptations are too great for any political body.

There are other dangers in censorship, and to my mind one of the greatest is that hard, red-taped, political-palmed censorship might kill a new art. For such the "movies" are—they are a genuine art and one unique in that it can be understood by and appreciated by more people than any other art in existence. Music, too, travels with the movies, so that two great art forms are open to all classes and all the masses at prices so low that every one can have access to them.

We must not impede the splendid progress of this great new power in civilization. We must not hamper it by censorship that can not understand its needs, its aspirations, and its struggles.

Let us do all in our power to encourage motion-pictures, with their beautiful theaters and their inspiring music—and let us also do the simple, easy, prompt thing of telling the movie people what we approve of and what we do not approve of. And whatever we do, let us not be fanatical or narrow-minded. Let us remember that times and customs change. Our children have their points of view just as we had ours, and we can not coerce them by trying to turn back the hands of the clock.

Only a few years ago our own mothers thought it wicked to drive to church in a motor-car! When we shudder at the jazz-music of today, let us remember the ragtime cake-walks which we loved so joyously, and at which our parents looked with questioning eyes. If saxophone and drums have replaced harp and violin, don't be frightened—all changes can be turned into progress upward if we will approach the new things with open mind.

Such must be our attitude toward the movies. If you and I are somewhat offended by a corpulent comedian dashing a custard pie into the countenance of a colored man, we must remember that in the vast audience of the theaters many people are being amused and laughter lightens the day's burden. In brief, let us remember that our taste may not coincide with the taste of the great majority, and let us not try to force our taste on those whose minds are not prepared to accept a standard equal to ours. We must distinguish between judgment and taste; we must move carefully to eliminate that which is undoubtedly dangerous to morals and to ethics, and in this we need the co-operation of the men and the women who make pictures and exhibit them.

In my opinion the way to get better movies is to actually register your preferences where they'll be most appreciated. That is at your local theater. Think of the tremendous power wielded by the General Federation of Women's Clubs! Just imagine what that organization of millions of women could do to secure better movies. Why not get all the women's clubs and similar organizations interested? Let each member of each club pledge herself to form an opinion of the desirability, or the reverse, of at least one picture a week—the opinion not to be formed on hearsay evidence, but by seeing the picture herself. Then, so the pledge would provide, she would either see the theater-manager personally or write him a letter and give her opinion of the picture. Also she would ask her neighbors and friends to follow the same course.

You will soon learn that the picture people are willing to co-operate with an earnest, intelligent, sincere, board-minded movement "to move the movies upward."

Theater-owners are extremely sensitive to expressions of public opinion. The merchandise they offer for sale is perishable—that is to say, if public opinion does not approve the picture shown at the Blank Theater this week, the theater-owner feels the disapproval immediately in the reduction of his box-office receipts, and he moves instantly to secure a picture for next week that will increase his receipts.

You will find out, too, that the overwhelming majority of directors and players are anxious to make none but clean, fine, inspiring pictures that can be seen by every member of the family. The men with millions of dollars invested in the industry will be very quickly convinced that the safety of their investments rests on the approval of the fathers and mothers of twenty-five million youngsters.

All that the movie men ask of club-women is that they co-operate with the picture-exhibitors and producers in creating a sound, broad public opinion that would insure free development of the art along broad lines of good judgment, unbiased by personal taste and political preference.

The state legislature, after a couple of weeks' delay, has finally met in joint session and confirmed the six code secretaries reappointed by Governor McKelvie. Secretary Stuhler was opposed more than any other candidate, but the well trained republican legislature fell into line docilely when the time came to vote. Aside from the fact that the salaries are plenty large for the class of men, there's no more objection against these appointees than could be made against any political appointee.

LEGION STRONGLY FAVORS A NEBRASKA ALIEN LAND LAW

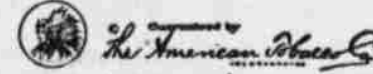
Considerable opposition to house roll 138, the alien land law, may be expected to develop from the Nebraska American Legion. The legion at its last national convention endorsed the stand taken in regard to the Japanese question by California, stating that "The American Legion demands immediate confirmation and legalization of the policy that foreign-born Japanese shall be forever barred from American citizenship," and that the constitution be so amended that no child born in the United States, whose parents are ineligible to citizenship, may become a citizen. The proposed Nebraska alien land law is modeled on the California act.

According to Jesse G. Faes, vice commander of the Lincoln legion post, the situation in Nebraska is serious enough to demand immediate action, such as is provided for in the proposed bill. "My opinion is that Nebraska should not procrastinate as California did, until the problem gets almost too big to handle. It will be a whole lot easier to settle the whole thing now than to meet the problem which is bound to develop after the Japanese have secured a foothold. There are now 70,196 Japanese in California, an increase of 69 per cent in ten years. Statistics from other states show an alarming increase of these unassimilable people. They are coming into our western counties in increasingly large numbers, and I sincerely trust the legislature will recognize the gravity of the situation, and pass the alien land bill as it is drawn."



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