

The Alliance Herald
TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

BURR PRINTING CO., Owners

Entered at the postoffice at Alliance, Neb., for transportation through the mails as second class matter.

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Official newspaper of the City of Alliance; official newspaper of Box Butte County.

Owned and published by The Burr Printing Company, George L. Burr, Jr., President; Edwin M. Burr, Vice President.

MIXING THE WHITEWASH.

The state highway investigating commission, appointed at the special session of the legislature in January, has decided to call its work finished, and the members are now discussing the framing of their report to the state. The commission came into existence to probe the work of the state highway department, and to go into complaints from various counties. Several hearings were held, and these proved interesting enough. It is always interesting when two factions, both thoroughly mad, get together to investigate anything. The hearings were distinguished by the irascibility of State Engineer Johnson, who allowed his temper to rise quite frequently, and the members of various county boards—rough, rugged men who called spades by their right name, although some of them, perhaps, were in doubt as to whether the matter under discussion concerned spades or shovels.

It was feared, from the outset, that the investigation would end in a thorough whitewash for the department. The committee was, for the most part, composed of state officials, who were politically interested in the outcome. The first action of the committee was a fine stroke of policy. They asked the counties for data on road costs, and discovered what had been suspected for a long time—that county boards, as a rule, had not kept any too many records of road work. This gave the state department a big edge, for its records are minute and up-to-date and cover almost every conceivable point in connection with road building and road costs.

The report of the committee will be awaited with interest. The sessions at which it is being formulated are secret, and the public will have to await the findings, although one or two members are not loth to talk of what they think should be included. Thus, Representative Hoffmeister of Imperial, democrat, furnishes a good big hint when he declares that, in his opinion, the county boards should be relieved of all supervision over highways. He would have each board employ a county highway commissioner the latter being empowered in conjunction with the state highway bureau, to direct and supervise road and bridge work. Under Hoffmeister's plan, the county board's duties would be confined to auditing and paying bills after the work is done. "We would never have any such roads as we now have in Nebraska if the state had not started its program," Mr. Hoffmeister says. "No such roads would have been developed under county board management."

Mr. Hoffmeister's position is probably indicative of the report of the investigating committee. If this be the case, then it is exactly opposite to the desires of the complaining county boards. Their complaint was that it cost too much to build roads under state supervision; that the state department had wasted the money of state and county, and that roads had been built under county supervision for much less money than where the state had charge or control of the construction.

No one will dispute that a system of state roads would be impossible if the county boards have the upper hand. At least, no connected system ever resulted when they were in full control, before there was a state highway bureau. Nor is there much doubt that a county highway commissioner, with full powers, could handle the road problems better than the average county board. It may be that the county highway commissioner may be the solution of the difficulty, but not if he is subject to the dictation of the state bureau which has proved so irksome and so expensive to the counties. Somewhere there is a middle ground. It is folly to refuse to accept federal aid so long as it is a national proposition, but if the federal aid can be dispensed with, and road building be made a state and county responsibility, it is possible that some plan can be devised whereby the counties can build roads, where they save money by being in charge of the construction, and still have the benefit of state aid and assistance in planning through routes. The chief complaint in this part of the state is that the state department wants to do all of the planning, and that the officials are not particularly interested in putting roads where the people who pay the taxes

want them to go. It is to be hoped that the investigating committee, in making its recommendations, will, between dabs with the whitewash brush, pause to point out some of these things.

"HELL'N MARIA" UNDER FIRE

It is human nature to relinquish illusions with regret, and if it transpires that Charles G. Dawes, budget chief of the federal government, is nothing more nor less than a four-flusher, there will be a lot of genuine sighs mingled with perfunctory expressions of regret. Mr. Dawes sprang into the prominence of publicity just after the war, when the republican party was busy appointing hundreds of investigating committees in an effort to "get" something on the democrats, and he achieved country-wide comment because of the picturesque flow of profane language that came from his lips. He didn't hesitate to say "damn" and words that were even stronger when talking to senators and congressmen and bureau heads and officials who were testifying. In fact, his nickname is "Hell'n Maria," taken from one of his favorite expletives.

As director of the budget bureau Mr. Dawes a few days ago issued a report in which he set forth an itemized account of saving in government expenses totaling \$136,000,000. It was an imposing figure. All over the county there have been businesslike administrations by city commissions and city managers which have actually effected large economies, and considering the opportunity for waste, the claim of \$136,000,000 savings was easily credible.

But the democratic congressmen, realizing that an election is near at hand and that it is well to be prepared, are following the tactics that the republicans used prior to that fatal day in November, 1920, when the light was extinguished in thousands of happy democratic headquarters. It is charged, and with good foundation, apparently, that Mr. Dawes figures are "plainly deceptive," and that the whole itemized account is "pure bunk." Even the republican leader, defending Mr. Dawes, admitted that some of the economies have resulted quite as much from the vigilance of congress as from the activities of Mr. Dawes. It is charged that of the savings claimed, less than \$12,000,000 can be really attributed to the Harding administration.

According to the critics of Mr. Dawes, the real test of the genuineness of economies lies in the matter of the tax reductions secured. Taxes have not been reduced, and the deficiency appropriation bills will amount to \$447,000,000, at least three times as much as the economies claimed will total.

Mr. Dawes has a difficult task. He must save money for the country, and in anything that he tackles, he must fight every other official, congressman and a host of office seekers. It's probably human nature to want to report progress, especially when the republican administration is so much in need of something that will make good publicity—but when every taxpayer knows where the shoe pinches, hot air economies and paper savings won't get by.

So, it seems, the man who affects profanity and the treat-em-rough attitude is not necessarily efficient, any more than the tin-horn gambler of the plains who used to call himself "Honest John" or "Honest Joe" was what his handle indicated. Shakespeare had the dope right when he said a man might smile and smile—and be a villain. There is a general belief that the man who swears loudly and in any company, especially if he be a prominent public official, is more likely to be man of rugged honesty than the fellow who observes the niceties and

conventions of speech—but in politics at least, the rule doesn't hold good.

OUT-OF-DATE DRAMA

(Louisville Courier-Journal)
The manner in which daily newspapers handle dispatches from Durango reporting the killing of the city editor of the Durango Herald by the editor of the Durango Democrat is indicative of the attitude of the press and the public toward gunfights between editors.

The militant editor who made his columns a channel of personal abuse and relied upon his shooting iron once was a dramatic figure in the eyes of the public. Feuds between editors were matters of public interest. The cockpit style of controversy was entertaining to the readers of newspapers. The ever-present probability of bloodshed was relished popularly.

Nowadays the public has no burning interest in what the editor of the Daily Bugle thinks of the editor of the Daily Clarion. Each must concern himself with publishing the news and with other matters which should concern a publisher. His personal affairs aired in his columns detract from rather than add to the value of those columns as appraised by the public. "Be respectful," said a Texas editor thirty years ago, speaking of the man on the other side of a personal controversy, "because I can make the English language crack like a blacksnake whip, and, if need be, make a double-barreled shotgun sing: 'Come to Christ.'"

That sort of fatuity and blasphemy passed for the words of a hero. When the other fellow used the shotgun and the editor who had proclaimed himself a master of English and double-barreled shotguns, was killed the report of the killing appeared upon the first page of the majority of the daily newspapers of America. The day of the strutting editor passed some time ago. If nowadays two editors cannot discuss a matter of public interest without abusing each other and if, as a result of that disqualifying inability, the two fall upon each other with pistols, night editors do not remake the first page after midnight as a result of having received reports of the incident.

Blood-and-under journalism is out of date entirely. Street duels between editors have about the same news value as street duels between merchants or lawyers.

AFTER TAX-EXEMPT SECURITIES

(Omaha Daily News)

Large investors who escape paying tax on a portion of their income by investments in tax-exempt securities will be forced to pay increased taxation if a constitutional amendment just reported by the ways and means committee is approved by congress and thirty-six of the states.

The proposed amendment will prohibit the issuance of tax-free bonds by federal and municipal governments. Under the constitution the federal government is prohibited from levying taxes on these securities.

From \$10,000,000,000 to \$18,000,000,000 worth of such securities have been issued—\$1,000,000,000 worth last year.

According to a report to congress, as time goes on the issuance of these securities will increase "until every opportunity will be offered to the man of large income to make his investments solely in tax-exempt securities and even the small tax-payer will find it to his profit to invest in them." The result is that the revenues of the federal government derived from large incomes continues to shrink.

In his message to congress last December, President Harding recommended action. Secretary of the Treasury Mellon has repeatedly done so. Congressional economists have done likewise, while organizations like the Investments Bankers' association, the American Farm Bureau federation, the People's Reconstruction league and the Ohio Tax association have joined in the demand.

This does not mean, however, that the proposed amendment will be passed without a fight. Unless all signs fail there will be a considerable contest.

DEMPESEY CAME TOO LATE.

(Nebraska City Press)

German newspaper editors refused to enthuse over Mr. Jack Dempsey, America's latest tourist contribution to weary Europe. The Teuton editors mentioned briefly that a so-called "world's champion" was sojourning in their midst, but that is about all. It remained for the Man in the Street to follow the ship-builder and prize fight-

er around and pay to him the adulation which, perhaps, he is entitled to from the Germans, from whose immediate vicinity he was conspicuous by his absence in 1918. Having been Mr. Dempsey's first visit to Germany, as The Chicago Tribune remarks, why shouldn't he be interested in what he sees, and why should one blame the German people as a whole for being mildly

curious. Speculation, no doubt was rife as to just how Mr. Dempsey evaded military service. But German editors should be congratulated for their refusal to go into hysterics. They are in similar taste with some American editors, for that matter.

It would be better if Ireland picked the harp more and the quarrel less—

"It is hard to give away a million," you have to get one first.—Newspaper Enterprise

When the Police Commissioner announces that New York is the safest city in the country, he carefully neglects to mention for just what class of people it is safe.—New York Tribune

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