

SHALL NEBRASKANS GOVERN NEBRASKA

Shall We Profit by the Lessons of the Past and Rescue the State from the Pernicious Influences of Boodlerism and Railroadism?

LOOKING BACKWARD AND LOOKING FORWARD

The Scarecrow Reports About the Destruction of the State's Credit Effectually Exploded by Facts and Figures Gathered in Populist-Governed Kansas.

SIDE LIGHTS ON THE RECORD OF TOM MAJORS

An Earnest Appeal to Patriotic Citizens of All Parties to Unite in Defense of Home Rule and Good Government.

Friday evening Mr. Edward Rosewater addressed the people of Lincoln on the leading issues of the state campaign. The Lansing opera house was packed from pit to dome. Many prominent citizens of the capital city were present with their ladies, while hundreds were unable to gain admittance. Hon. E. B. Brown of Lincoln, well known as a staunch republican, presided, and in fitting words introduced Mr. Rosewater, who upon his appearance before the audience, was greeted by hearty applause.

Mr. Rosewater spoke for over two hours and was listened to with close attention throughout. He said:

Mr. Rosewater spoke as follows:

Mr. President and Ladies and Gentlemen: The magnificent audience that greets me here tonight is testimonial to the fact that the people of Nebraska are wide awake to the very important, the very grave issues, that are pending in the contest that is to be decided by your electors on the 6th day of November next. It is now forty years ago since the men who sought to establish upon a portion of this continent a colony of free men, carved out of the territory of Nebraska and made her a component part of that section of the great western territories that were to be dedicated to freedom and equality of all men, and of all races, and of all creeds. The motto upon our state ensign is "Equality Before the Law," and that involves not merely the question of equality in law, but justice and integrity in its administration in all branches of the government. The founders of the territory simply were striving to strike a blow at the institution of slavery in the United States. The men who made Nebraska a state made her a part of the union, engrained into her constitution the fundamental principles of equality before the law, equal privileges to all, special privileges to none. (Applause.) Now, we must look backward, take a retrospective view of this commonwealth, and see what in the past had to be done in order to keep the state within the limits which had been prescribed by its founders, to protect it from aggression from within and from without. We had made Nebraska a state in 1867, and had scarcely gone ahead more than three years under the administration of our first governor, when we found ourselves confronted by problems that underlie the entire system of government, the problems with which we are grappling again today.

The location of the capitol at Lincoln brought with it to the state officers then in power certain duties and responsibilities. It brought with it, also, an opportunity for aggrandizing themselves and increasing their wealth, an opportunity for forming combines and rings, an opportunity for looting the state treasury; and it is a blot upon the history of this state that the men chosen to make your laws were compelled to impeach the first governor and depose him from his office.

It happened to be my lot to introduce the first resolution in the legislature of 1871, looking toward the purging of the state and the state house, the investigation of irregularities and unlawful appropriation of money by state officers, and to be associated with a band of republicans who in those days believed in the principle that he serves his party best who serves the state best. I am a republican by natural tendency and conviction. I was a republican in the western reserve of Ohio, the cradle of republicanism, and was at Oberlin in 1859. When the professors of Oberlin college were carried away as prisoners to the Cleveland jail, because they had assisted a fugitive slave in escaping from the clutches of his masters, I used to carry the letters of their families to the jail for them. But my republicanism was not a mere belief in enforcing good government and in making men discharge the duties which they have obligated themselves under their oaths to perform. (Applause.) I can well remember in those days of 1871, when those of us who were in favor of investigating and thoroughly purging the state house, were looked upon and treated as a gang of desperadoes, without aiming at anything but the streets of Lincoln with that sullen and unfriendly spirit that came with the idea that we had come here to destroy the state capital because its founder happened to be a man who was placed upon trial for misdemeanors in office.

LOOKING BACKWARD.

Now, let us look back. The same parties that were in 1871 taking the lands of your state and deeding them away unlawfully to railroad corporations that were not entitled to them, the same parties that in 1877 divided among themselves Lincoln town lots that had been dedicated for the various benevolent institutions, including the Masonic order, Odd Fellows and other secret societies, are still today insisting that we who are here to defend the rights of the state and the people to their own records and that they were satisfied of the state and into the records you will find that, in the first place, we endeavored by resolutions adopted in the house of representatives to make Governor Butler report to us what money he had collected from the United States government belonging to the school fund, and that we endeavored, without aiming at any impeachment, to have that money properly accounted for and placed where it belonged—into the state treasury.

When I introduced that resolution in the house in February, 1871, I walked right into Governor Butler's office and told him that as

a republican I wanted to see the republican party maintain its record as a party of good government and that we wanted to give the democrats in that legislature, who constituted less than one-third of that body, no opportunity to make political capital, and he said to me then that that was just what he liked. He wanted us to proceed and investigate and that he was ready to explain it all satisfactorily. Had he made the same explanation to the house of representatives then that he did to me he would not have been impeached. But he sent to the house of representatives a message stating that he had collected from the government of the United States the sum of \$16,881.26, and had placed that amount in the treasury to the credit of the school fund, when in fact it was shown afterwards that he had not placed one penny into the school fund, but had appropriated it to his own use, and had used it in the construction of his own residence in this city. It was upon that charge, one of the eleven articles of impeachment brought against him, that he was finally convicted by two-thirds of the senate sitting as a court of impeachment. Remember that the legislature was mostly republican and that David Butler was a republican, that I was elected on the republican ticket, and that we, the republicans, endeavored to do our duty to the state, and to the party, and purge the state house of corruption.

BRIBERY AND BLACKMAIL.

Now, what followed? During the investigation that was made prior to the trial of David Butler, an investigation conducted by five of the most impartial men that were found in that body, it turned out that Governor Butler had in the construction of the university demanded bribes, demanded bonuses from the contractors and in some cases had procured bonuses from them and that these contractors were permitted to erect a building that was dangerous and unsafe. It is a matter of history that finally the state had to expend about \$15,000 in putting a new foundation under the university building in order to prevent it from tumbling down. It also transpired that in the tearing of the saline lands and in many other transactions bribes had been given and bribes had been demanded, and in the appointment of officers of state, in one case where an attorney was engaged to act as attorney general, \$7,000 had been paid from him as part of the consideration for his appointment. And all these things overwhelmingly showing the corruption in this state house were brought out in testimony before the impeachment court, and upon that evidence Mr. Butler was convicted.

An extraordinary incident happened while the impeachment trial was in progress. During the investigation it transpired that the first asylum for the insane, constructed at an outlay of over \$300,000, had been built by a contractor who was dishonest and irresponsible, that a great part of the material furnished for the building had been carried away and used in the construction of residences of state officers, and that the building was in a very bad condition and was liable to tumble down and bury everybody that was inside of it. And on the morning of the 17th day of April, 1871, a fire broke out in that building, the entire structure and contents were destroyed and two men perished in the flames, and the charred remains of one old lady were found the next day after the fire.

INSANE ASYLUM DESTROYED.

The following extract from the Omaha Republican of that date affords a brief outline of that horrible crime:

"LINCOLN, April 17.—At about 3 o'clock this morning the alarm of fire was sounded through our streets. The cause was soon ascertained to be the insane asylum. On our arrival there we ascertained from one of the persons engaged about the building that the origin of the fire was without doubt the work of an incendiary, as it caught exactly in the same place as where it was once fired before—in the northwest corner of the wing near its connection with the main building. There was no possibility of any of the inmates having access to that part of the building, and the responsibility, therefore, rests upon some fiendish devil—no human being could possibly be so far lost to all reason.

Immediately upon the alarm Dr. Larsh, with all the men employed about the building, made every effort to extinguish the flames, but to no purpose. When it was found impossible to subdue the flames, their next efforts were made to save the patients. In the upper part of the portion occupied by the patients two men, who had to be kept in separate rooms, were confined. The watchmen went and released them, and made every effort to get them out, but every time they would return again. Finally they had to abandon them and go to the rescue of others. The names of the two who perished were Edward Holmerson, sent here from Richardson county, and Henry Koeler, from Dodge county.

"After the patients were safe they succeeded in saving a very small portion of the parlor furniture and a considerable number of blankets, but what was saved will probably not exceed \$2,000.

"The building was insured for upwards of \$30,000, divided among the Underwriters and the Lorillard of New York, the Phoenix of Brooklyn, and several other companies."

At the very hour that this fire was raging at the insane asylum a revolt broke out in the penitentiary, and at that time the penitentiary was very loosely built, with a wooden enclosure, and ten convicts made these convicts from the penitentiary. Among these convicts was Sam Poole, a man who had been convicted of murder at Omaha,

and was there under sentence for life. When the insurance companies found that the fire was set by an incendiary they employed detectives to ferret out the perpetrators. They found that Poole had had a mistress at Omaha, who had found her way into the insane asylum, and was temporarily employed there. They found by circumstantial evidence that she was the person who had set the building on fire, that a plot had been formed, and that she had been induced to commit this crime in order to rescue her lover or husband out of the penitentiary. In the due course of time this woman was traced up; she was found in St. Louis. The insurance agents were sent out to bring her back to Omaha, as a state witness, and to arrest the parties that were implicated in that conspiracy, but the very next morning, when they called to take her on the train, they found her dead in her room; she had been poisoned that night. This is a historic fact, and the men who were connected with the insurance companies will attest that fact.

Here was one of the greatest crimes that was perpetrated in this state; Poole, the murderer, was found about six years ago and brought back here to Lincoln, to the penitentiary, but the warden pretended that he did not recognize him, and he was allowed to go at large. There was still danger that somebody would be convicted of participation in that conspiracy, because murder never outlaws by the statute of limitation.

Now, wasn't it just and right that these legislators, in 1871, should do just what they did do? Why, you say, "Well, the things occurred when the state was in its infancy," and I admit that at that time, perhaps, a great many things were in order—or, rather, out of order. For instance, the very first allotment that we had in the house pending those investigations listed something like \$200,000, and that was the amount that we found that our clock had been stolen, that some of our furniture had been carried away. This furniture was carried out of the house bodily by parties who had taken upon themselves to relieve the state from the responsibility of taking care of it. (Laughter.)

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WAITS ONLY ON RINGSTERS.

This is a glimpse backward; now we will pass to the corrupt state house ring of 1871 was broken up, but the same state of affairs has continued with more or less variation ever since. There have been occasionally clean and good state governments, but in the main there has been a series of state house rings that have pilfered and robbed the state wherever it was possible to do so, and it was in the interest of good government, and in the interest purely of the combine. I am no enemy of Lincoln; the men who have endeavored from time to time to protect the interests of the state and stop those ringsters from robbing the treasury are not the enemies of Lincoln, but they are the friends of good government, and the men who are constantly crying out against it are the enemies of good government and the enemies of Lincoln. (Applause.)

You can remember that I was brought down here some years ago on the charge of libel because I had seen fit to denounce the private secretary of a governor for participating in that great crime and outrage, the shooting of the peck-legged robber that was sent to enter the treasury, and he was hanged \$200 and was shot down and killed right here in the state house by a set of fellows who pretended that they were doing the state a great service. (Applause.) You remember that after I had taken all the pains and trouble to travel clear down to Arkansas and away up to Chadron to bring you a witness in this case, and that when I had published the truth, that whatever I stated was well founded and published in the interest of good government, I found that my witnesses were being spirited away, just like Taylor was (laughter), and that the sheriff of your county was doing that work. And when I went to your judge and asked him to protect me against the kind of outrage that was being done, but the supreme court reversed the verdict and set it aside. From that time on, backward and forward, you will find permeating the state house the corrupting influences that set all law at defiance. It runs back and forth between the penitentiary and the state house, and between the state house and other institutions. The penitentiary has now to enter the treasury, and he is hanged \$200 and was shot down and killed right here in the state house by a set of fellows who pretended that they were doing the state a great service. (Applause.) 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