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GOVERNOR SMITH OF GEORGIA

Hoke Smith was inaugurated governor of Georgia June 29. Following are extracts from Governor Smith's inaugural address:

I take the oath of office with the purpose, God helping and directing me, to perform every duty the office permits in the interest of the masses of the people.

But there are certain duties which have been specifically placed upon me. They have been voiced by the voters at the ballot box. They have been declared by their representatives at the democratic convention. I accept office under solemn direction by the people to carry out the platform pledges.

We must not be led away to other tasks until our specific pledges to the people have been performed.

The time has come when it is necessary to determine whether certain favored interests or the state shall rule.

What has been told of hired political agents infesting legislative halls is no idle story. They have been the curse of national legislation; their influence for evil has been felt in nearly every state, and Georgia has been no exception to the rule.

I believe that you will pass legislation to make it a crime for any attorney or agent, hired to support or oppose legislation, to discuss his client's interest in the presence of those who are to vote upon it, except where that discussion is at a public hearing or with members of the legislature officially named for conference.

The proposed legislation also requires that anyone employed to support or oppose a legislative measure must promptly enter an appearance with the secretary of state in a book to be kept open to the public, describing the nature of his employment.

Stop Free Passes

I urge also the passage of a bill which will put an end to the free pass system between local points in Georgia.

This practice began and was followed for a long time, with but few harmful results. It has grown to be a crying evil. It has become a means of petty political bribery.

Our common carriers have no right to charge for transportation more than a sum reasonably sufficient to pay them for their services. If some ride free, those who pay must be charged sufficient rates to cover the legitimate cost of their transportation and the passage of the free pass holder.

The best results from popular government can only be had where the individual voter approaches the ballot box influenced alone by a patriotic purpose to serve his country, his state and his nation.

One of the evils which has polluted elections and debauched voters has been political contributions by great corporations and special interests. Their money given not to advance principles, but to debauch character and defeat popular rights.

Make it a crime for a corporation or special interest to contribute money to politics. Make it a crime to buy a voter or hire a striker at the polls. Place upon every candidate the duty of showing, under oath, a detailed statement of what he spent, how he spent it, and where the money came from.

Fixing Franchise Standard

I realize how difficult it will be to reach the standard for which I plead when a great number of qualified voters are hopelessly ignorant and purchasable. The difficulty is greatly increased when a class of voters has for generations inherited inca-

capacity, and must transmit the same incapacity for generations to come.

I favor an amendment to the constitution of the state which will fix a new standard for the elective franchise.

The proposed constitutional amendment will be before you. With an oath fresh upon my lips to support the constitution of the United States I favor the amendment.

If it happens that the members of some particular race lack more than others these qualifications, their inability to become voters is not "denied or abridged on account of" race or color, but on account of the fact that they do not possess the qualification which we legally fix as Georgia's standard—the qualifications being required of all without reference to race or color.

Six Classes of Voters

The proposed constitutional amendment is along the line of the Alabama law. It provides that a person to register and vote must have all the qualifications now required for that purpose, and also belong to some one of the six classes following:

1. All persons who served in any war of the United States, the Confederate States or the state of Georgia; or

2. All persons lawfully descended from any of such soldiers; or

3. All persons of good character who understand the duties and obligations of citizenship; or

4. All persons who can read correctly and who can write correctly when read to them in the English language any paragraph of the constitution of the United States or the state of Georgia; or

5. Any person who is the owner of forty acres of land on which he lives; or

6. Any person who owns \$500 worth of property in the state of Georgia as shown by the tax digest.

While the proposed constitutional amendment meets every requirement of the constitution of the United States, it will permanently preserve the elective franchise to all of our citizens who have borne the burdens of the commonwealth in war and peace, and upon whom the burdens now rest.

It will exclude, by fair and constitutional tests, the great bulk of that class who are incompetent to govern others or even themselves.

It will protect us from dangers that would otherwise attend the political divisions of the future. It will insure the permanent control of the state and of every county, municipality and division thereof, by its citizens of most intelligence and character.

Regulate Primaries by Law

Popular government can only exist as a substantial reality when the voters are given a full opportunity to express their convictions at the ballot box.

In our state it is especially important that this opportunity be given in our primaries. By common consent, an overwhelming majority of the people accept the verdict of the primary as conclusive.

If machine politicians are allowed to manipulate either time or manner of holding primaries the will of the people can be defeated, and the schemes of the machine may be substituted for popular government. A common dodge is to call a primary long before an election when the issues are not before the people. No primary should be permitted more than sixty days before the election.

I have no desire to discuss the past, but I would protect the future. Let us by legislative action fix the time for party primaries and surround them with safeguards which

will guarantee in future an opportunity for the voters to select their officeholders, untrammelled by cunning devices.

Regulate Public Service Corporations

Our pledge made to the people covered legislation to promote pure popular government, and also legislation upon the great question of protecting the rights of the people in their relations with common carriers and public service corporations.

Railroad corporations and public service companies are monopolistic in their nature. It is impossible for the ordinary rule of competition to protect the rights of the public in their dealings with such companies. Railroad corporations and public service corporations are given special privileges primarily that the people disconnected with those companies may be benefited.

The stockholders rely upon the directors and officers of the corporations to protect their interests. The rights of the public must be guarded by the state in local matters; by the nation in interstate matters.

It is especially important at this time when many are ready to transfer all control to the national government that the state show capacity to meet its part of the responsibility.

Amend Railroad Commission Law.

While the legislature would be authorized to act for the state by fixing in detail the duties of transportation companies and public service companies, these duties are so varied that years ago Georgia adopted the policy of placing the power and responsibility of the state upon a railroad commission. Our railroad commission law, passed more than twenty-five years ago, has in it so much of value which has been sustained by the courts, that I believe it to be the wise policy to perfect by amendment our present commission laws rather than to adopt an entirely new bill covering this subject.

Judicial Interference

The time must come when the courts will cease to grant temporary restraining orders interfering with the authority of the state in these matters. There is no broad question of law upon which the courts could rest their interference with the action of a railroad commission. The cases must turn upon questions of fact, and surely the findings of a commission upon the facts deserve the respect of a court until a final hearing satisfies the court that the

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