

THE FRONTIER

D. H. Cronin, Editor and Proprietor
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NEBRASKA NEWS OF STATE AFFAIRS

By James R. Lowell

Officials of Nebraska's penal institution are laying plans to keep busy inmates who were thrown out of work by federal legislation and manufacturers and prison codes regulating prison work. They intend to put the problem up to the incoming legislature, and they want an appropriation for machinery for prison factories to make goods for state use on the same principle as the present manufacture of auto license plates for which an appropriation was made in the last legislature for the men's reformatory.

Aside from sustaining the morale of prisoners by keeping them occupied, and preventing strife within the institutions, the prison officials declare that a substantial saving in dollars and cents can be made thru the proper utilization of the prisoners' time.

Approximately \$250,000 will be requested of the legislature as the ounce of prevention against unrest in the penal institutions, with the assurance that much of this will be returned to the state in the form of savings in prison maintenance, industries at the penitentiary and men's reformatory at Lincoln, the two largest penal institutions in the state, were shut down early this year by federal restrictions, and officials have been had put to keep their men busy and contented before the legislature can meet and provide funds for substitute activities.

Meantime the threat of idleness has been met at the penitentiary by baseball and other athletic activities, educational classes, and a gymnasium. At the reformatory the men were busy putting up fodder and reconstructing cell blocks. Reformatory inmates now number 302 or about a hundred less than a year ago, while penitentiary inmates number approximately 900 or 50 less than a few months ago. Prison officials credit much of this decrease to the CCC and federal transient centers.

Recently the state board of control announced a trade of \$350 worth of fiber furniture made at the penitentiary for overalls and shirts of equal value made at the girls' industrial school in Wyoming. This is the beginning of a policy which the officials say could effect a large saving in prison management. Let each state prison make the thing it is best adapted to turn out and exchange it for things made in other prisons, suggests Warden Dan Kavanaugh. He states that rehabilitation of prison industries at the penitentiary would mean a saving of \$100,000 to the state annually.

"The prison shops made \$100,000 a year for Nebraska over and above the 15 cents per day task paid to the men for their labor," Kavanaugh declared, "and this sum can still be made if the legislature will advance sufficient capital to buy and install the machinery necessary for the shop's resumption."

The warden agrees that prison made goods should not compete on the open market with regularly manufactured goods under the NRA codes, but he is certain that all goods produced in the Nebraska institutions could be exchanged with the other states. He advocates a packing plant for the penitentiary along with a dairy herd.

Mrs. Nellie G. Benson, chairman of the state board of control, says that the board is likely to ask for an increase in its biennial budget for funds to dig wells for irrigation purposes at some state institutions, as no crops were raised this year except where they have well irrigation.

The state tax commissioner's office reports a wide variance on local taxes of the state, with Gering bearing the distinction of having the highest total tax among the 93 county seats for this year. Its citizens are called upon to pay 62.8

mills for all purposes. Harrisburg is lowest with 16.2 mills. The average total for all the county seats is 37.71 mills compared with 36.93 in 1933.

On the items of county taxes alone, Scottsbluff county leads with a levy of 8.5 mills for county purposes, while Seward county is low with 2 mills.

The state superintendent's office announces that school costs were \$8,000,000 less in Nebraska last year than five years ago, and about \$500,000 less than the amount spent in the year ending June 30, 1933.

The annual statistical summary just issued from the state superintendent's office shows aggregate taxes voted for school purposes last year to have been \$15,329,043 compared with \$15,821,101 in the previous year. In the same comparative period, the gross value of all property owned by school districts has shrunk from \$81,644,153 five years ago to \$60,929,866 in 1933-34.

Enrollment in city and village schools fell off from 77.46 per cent of the enumerated pupils five years ago to 53.45 per cent in 1932-33. In rural schools, the shrinkage was from 60.74 to 42.27 per cent. About half the total decline took place last year.

Forty-four new school houses (a number of them built with the assistance of the FERA) were erected last year, against 34 the previous year and 76 five years ago. The total number of school houses in use last year was 7,534 compared with 7,593 in 1928-29. The report also shows that the number of men teachers has increased over five years ago while the number of women teachers has decreased, altho the number of women teachers still greatly exceeds the number of men, being 11,708 against 1,803 men teachers. Average yearly pay of teachers has been greatly reduced during the depression, however.

State teachers' association meeting last week in Lincoln was told that Nebraska's public school system is threatened with collapse thru the breakdown of the property tax system, as alleged by H. W. Anderson, superintendent of schools at Omaha. A committee recommended the revision of the administration of the property tax by substituting a system of scientific valuation of property to determine assessed valuations under a trained personnel and further recommended that the office of the state tax commissioner be enlarged and given more power in adjusting taxes to the same basis.

The committee also stated that at one time the property tax was fair indication of ability to pay and during prosperous times the property tax yielded sufficient revenue, but with the change in times, property is no longer an index of ability to pay. A study made by Prof. H. C. Filley of the state university shows that 96 per cent of real personal property taxes are taken out of 25 per cent of our total income. If 25 per cent of our people are paying 96 per cent of our taxes, then 75 per cent of our people are receiving benefits without contributing their just share, the educators agreed.

Federal reports made public in Nebraska during the past few days indicated that Nebraskans have come out at the large end of the horn where federal expenditures are concerned. Farmers of the

state thus far have received more than \$20,000,000 in direct benefit payments from corn-hog and wheat programs, and still have approximately the same amount coming on later corn-hog payments, state AAA headquarters at Lincoln announced.

Furthermore, federal officials declared that Nebraska farmers have been paid approximately three times as much in benefit payments as has been collected in processing taxes. Nebraska stands fifth among all states in total benefits received.

The farm credit administration headquarters at Omaha announced that Federal land bank records show 2,696 emergency cases where-in Nebraska farmers, weighted down with old debts, appealed to the FCA for assistance, these being only actual distress cases. Of this number, loans have been closed or approved in 2,272 cases, with 22 applications still pending and 402 rejected.

The PWA presented figures showing that a total of \$21,230,191 in construction work has been undertaken in Nebraska with Federal funds since the inception of the public works administration program in August, 1933. This includes \$14,329,986 in outright grants and \$14,306,400 in loans, while the entailed payroll to date is estimated at \$6,364,125. A total of 74 projects have been authorized, ranging from the Sutherland and Columbus power and irrigation projects which total over \$7,000,000 each to \$3,200 for a water system at Gothenburg.

Among the latest suggestions for legislation to be enacted is the one coming from City Clerk Berg, of Lincoln, that cities between 7,000 and 25,000 population be given a voters' registration system.

A highway program to cost \$3,000,000 has been worked out for Nebraska this winter, bringing the total mileage of concrete highways to about 890, bituminous mat to 527 miles, graveled roads to approximately 6,000 miles, making the aggregate of all-weather roads in the state nearly 7,500 miles. The winter program, spread fairly well over the state, includes 58 miles of paving, six miles of bituminous mat, 195 miles of gravel, 255 miles of grading, 109 bridges and seven viaducts.

Federal authorities have authorized the purchase of 25,000 additional head of cattle under the AAA drought relief plan in Nebraska. All of these animals will be processed within the state under the direction of the FERA and given to FERA relief clients.

Receipts in the state department of agriculture and inspection for the past 12 months reached \$8,944,118 or \$3,500,000 more than the year previous. The only disappointment was in beer tax revenue which reached \$266,384, whereas beer boosters in the last legislature predicted \$500,000 in revenue for the first year.

Governor-elect Cochran will recommend to the legislature a continuance of the pay-as-you-go plan in road building and will insist that gasoline funds be used entirely for highways.

State Fire Marshal L. J. Butcher has issued his annual warning against using candles on Christmas trees and other holiday decorations. . . . The Lincoln fire chief has reported to the governor that the

storing of newspapers in the basement of the capitol by the state historical society and Nebraska press association constitutes a serious fire hazard. The fire department says the basement of the capitol is not meant for a filing room and that office furniture stored in other parts of the basements presents an additional fire hazard.

The use of corn loan fees for re-inspection of warehouses wherein corn under government seal is housed has been approved by the state railway commission. The cribs will be re-inspected at the suggestion of the Commodity Credit corporation, federal agency that made the 45-cent loans on farm-stored corn. Twenty-seven of the inspectors who made the original check on farmers' cribs for federal loans have been selected by the commission for reinspectors to check on the security of nearly 1,100 outstanding loans. The men will be paid \$5 per day plus five cents per mile travel expense on their cars and living costs away from home.

The railway commission has permitted Nebraska railroads to charge the same rate for ground thistle meal as for carrying alfalfa meal. Last year the Russian thistle didn't have a friend.

In District Court

The Lincoln National Life Insurance company of Fort Wayne, Ind., has filed suit against Charles J. McCarthy, et al., to foreclose a mortgage for \$4,000.00 given on April 27, 1923, on the northwest quarter of Section 18, township 27, range 14, in Holt county, Nebr. The original mortgage was given to the Royal Union Life Insurance company and sold to the plaintiff on December 1, 1933. Plaintiff alleges that defendant has paid no taxes for the years 1931 to 1933 inclusive and that he has paid no interest on the indebtedness since November 1, 1933. They allege that there is due on the principal \$3,700 and the sum of \$1,320.69 interest. They ask the court to determine the amount due and that if same is not paid within a reason-

able time that the land be sold.

The Federal Land Bank of Omaha, has filed suit to foreclose a mortgage against Verne E. Powell, et al., and the southwest quarter of section 35, township 31, north of range 10, in Holt county, Nebraska. They allege that the mortgage of \$1,500.00 was given on April 4, 1922, by Benjamin A. Powell and Rosa M. Powell, husband and wife. They are now deceased and there has been no administration of the estate and that the heirs, children of Mr. and Mrs. B. A. Powell, are the heirs. They allege that the 19th semi-annual payment due on October 1, 1931, was not paid and that no payments have been made since that time. They also allege that they failed to pay the taxes for the years 1931 to 1933 inclusive and that there is now due and unpaid the sum of \$1,667.73. They ask the court to determine the amount due and that if same is not paid within a reasonable time that the land be sold.

The Federal Land Bank of Omaha, also brings suit against William E. Gaffney for a mortgage for \$1,400.00 given on December 11, 1918, on the following described real estate: Southeast quarter of southeast quarter of section 22; southwest quarter of southwest quarter of section 23; west half of west half; southwest quarter of the southwest quarter of the southeast quarter of section 25; southeast quarter of section 27; northeast quarter of the northeast quarter of section 34; northwest quarter of the northeast quarter; north half of northwest quarter of section 35, all in township 28, north of range 18, containing 640 acres more or less. They allege that he failed to pay the ineteenth semi-annual payment due November 1, 1932, and no interest payments since that date.

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That he failed to pay the taxes for the years 1931 to 1933 inclusive and that there is now due and payable the sum of \$1,454.16. They ask the court to determine the amount due and if same is not paid within a reasonable time that the land be sold.

Peter Donohoe has filed suit in the district court asking for a divorce from Margaret Donohoe. In the petition he alleges that they were married in Omaha on December 7, 1928. That the defendant deserted him on or about October 7, 1931, and refused to live with him since that date. There is one child, a boy, aged 5, and the father asks the custody of his son.

Arlene Bonnenberger has brought suit against Mitchell Bonnenberger for absolute divorce. She alleges in her petition that they were married in Lincoln on November 22, 1933. She alleges that she has always conducted herself as a kind and loving wife but that defendant has refused to provide for her and her minor child. She asks for the custody of the child and an order of the court for adequate suit money, attorneys fees and temporary alimony, pending the trial of the suit.

W. A. Ulry has brought suit to foreclose a mortgage given by Ray Cunningham for \$2,000 on January 27, 1928, on the northwest quarter of section 15, township 29, north of range 9. The original mortgage and note was due on January 27, 1930, but it was extended to January 27, 1932. Plaintiff alleges that there is now due the sum of \$2,559.67 and he asks the court to determine the amount due and if same is not paid within a reasonable time that the land be sold.

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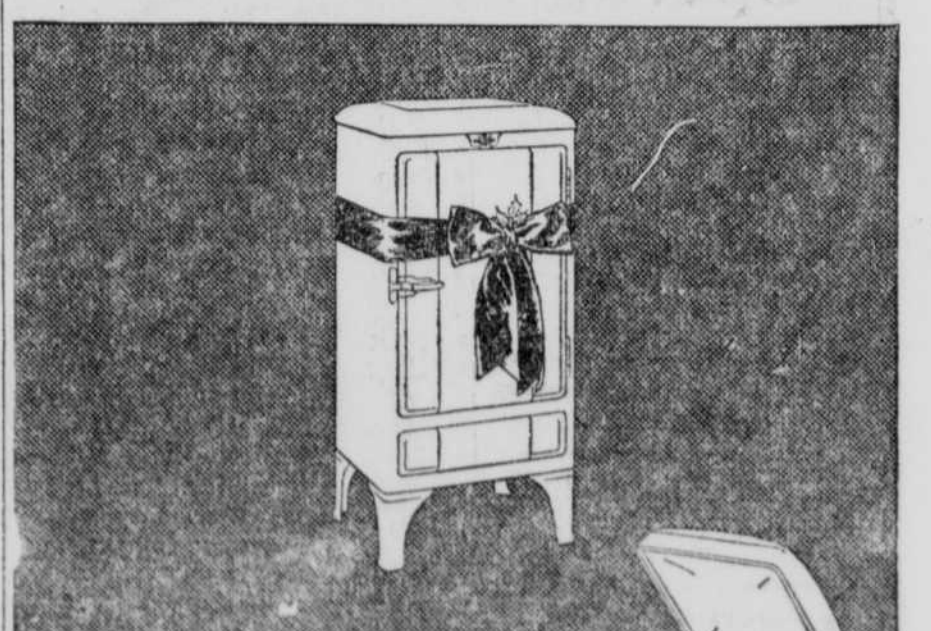
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