

# THE WAGEWORKER.

State Historical Society.

VOLUME 7

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA, FRIDAY, MAY 18, 1910

NUMBER 9

## BILLY MAJOR'S DOPE CARD

THE SAME CONTAINING A FEW UNBIASED OPINIONS ABOUT MATTERS OF MORE OR LESS INTEREST TO THE PUBLIC

James W. VanCleave is dead. And one of his satellites has the nerve to assert that VanCleave's death was caused by the labor unions. Of course the satellite lies like a thief. I am one of those who believe in speaking only good of the dead, and in case nothing good can be said I believe in casting the mantle of silence over all. That VanCleave was a mono-maniac on the subject of trades unions is beyond dispute. If his fight against unionism had any effect at all upon him it was to arouse his passions as to consume him like a flame. In the latter years of his life he did more to make anarchists than all the repression of kings. He aroused bitter hates, created no feelings of charity, and left discord and strife in his wake. James W. VanCleave is dead, but the great cause of humanity which he fought still goes marching triumphantly on to a glorious victory.

The esteemed Star now and then manages to say something really worth while. Its suggestion that instead of limiting the height of buildings in the business section—prohibiting skyscrapers—we prohibit the erection of buildings less than a certain height, is such a good one that it ought to receive more than casual consideration. The men who have grown rich by the increased value of lands—an increase in no wise due to their efforts or their sagacity—owe something to the public that made them rich. The practice of some of these men is to build dinky little two-story buildings and then charge about 50 per cent of their value every year for rent, the high rent being due to the location, not to the conveniences of the building. There is one ideal way to cure this sort of thing, and that is to tax the building site according to its value for occupancy. If that were done we'd see no more of those little "taxpayer" buildings on valuable sites.

One of the big jokes, to my mind, of recent weeks, is the letter Jake Tazelaar wrote to Rev. Charles Stelzle. Jake thinks that Stelzle, every other monster, and all the churches in the country are to be condemned simply because a couple of ministers in South Bethlehem did not do just as Jake wanted them to while he was investigating the steel mills there. The labor papers that gave space to Jake's letter wasted it. He made no point against the church. And if Rev. Charles Stelzle sees fit to reply to Jake we can see the Tazelaar hide hanging on the fence.

The election of Tom Pratt to the presidency of the city council is not so much a tribute to the political sagacity of Pratt as it is an evidence of the lack of political acumen on the part of some eight members of the council. No one has ever questioned Pratt's personal honesty, and it must be admitted that he made a first-class city clerk. But he is gifted with the natural bull-headedness of a Briton, and whatever he opposes is, in his mind, everlasting and fundamentally wrong, vicious and dangerous. Self-opinionated to a high degree, he is not at all charitable of the view of others, and we venture the prediction that as presiding officer of the councilmaniac body he will be the creator of all kinds of unpleasant friction.

John Kirby's union busting association met in annual convention a few days ago, and of course John opened up the proceedings with a characteristic belch against trades unions. And of course he seized the occasion to again print his picture in "American Industries." Some of these days, in one of his fits of insane anger against trades unions, Kirby is going to bite himself and die a horrible death from blood poisoning, and when friends gather around and say, "How natural

he looks," one of his lieutenants will arise and cry: "The unions killed this great and good man."

Did you read Mr. Bryan's artistic skinning of the Omaha Bee in his speech at Omaha last Tuesday night? If you didn't you missed a rare treat. It really was the best thing that has happened since Mr. Bryan had so much fun with the Bee over that paper's fool tariff editorial break during the campaign of 1908. In his easy, good-natured, but terribly effective way, Mr. Bryan backed the Bee up against the political fence and deftly removed its hide without spilling blood all over the fence.

Just a few hours before that Mr. Bryan performed the same operation upon John Lee Webster. It was at the "Peace Meeting" in the Omaha auditorium, arranged for the graded and high schools of Omaha. The occasion was the anniversary of the first peace tribunal at The Hague, and Mr. Bryan was the chief speaker. Mr. Webster spoke first and took occasion to advocate the building of great battleships and organizing great armies for the purpose of awing the nations into peace. He spoke about "our honor," and tried to impress upon the minds of the school children the necessity of always being armed and ready to scrap like bulldogs in defense of honor. It is easy to imagine the gentle way in which Mr. Bryan handled that phase of the Websterian fulmination. I sat within a few feet of Webster while Bryan was making reply, and I could see the Websterian form fairly shrivel, while the Websterian countenance took on as many changing hues as the famous Websterian chromatic vest. The man who will stand before 7,000 American school children and advocate building warships and supporting huge armies seems to me to be sadly in need of a guardian. The Webster argument brought out scarcely a ripple of applause, but when Mr. Bryan finished his arraignment of the idea of swashbuckling around with a belt full of knives and pistols in order to safeguard "honor," it brought forth a wave of cheers that fairly shook the auditorium to its foundations.

Do not be deceived—the \$100,000 park bond issue does not mean that if the bonds are carried the city will have to pay \$50,000 for Lincoln Park. It does not even mean that the city will have to buy Lincoln Park at any price. It simply means that the city will have \$100,000 to spend for park purposes, and it is not a dollar too much. Now is the time for Lincoln to secure park lands. It ought to have been done ten or fifteen years ago. Leonhart opposes the bond issue on the ground that "everybody in Lincoln has a park in his front yard." But we are

becoming so accustomed to that sort of superheated atmosphere from the Leonhardt lungs that it is not worth while to give it any particular attention. Schroeder opposes the park bonds because he wants a pile of money to spend on sewers, but Schroeder is noted for being unable to see anything good in a move that is not "practical"—and by practical he does not mean such things as parks and playgrounds. The workmen of Lincoln ought to be an unit in support of the park bond issue. It means more to them than any other public improvement.

The trouble with Nebraska is that it mistakes parsimony for economy. If ever I run for governor of this commonwealth my platform is going to consist of four words: "To h——l with parsimony!" This is one of the richest states in the union, yet it is being run on the old grasshopper business basis that prevailed thirty years ago. It is working under an antiquated constitution that fits present conditions about as nicely as a roundabout and knickerbockers would fit a 200-pound man. Its code is a jumbled-up mess that serves no other purpose than to make fat fees for lawyers. Its public institutions are behind the times, in poor keeping with modern ideas and thoughts and wholly inadequate. It pays its attorney general \$2,000 a year and expects him to make good against corporation lawyers who get more per month than he gets per year. It pays its governor a salary to manage a four millions dollar business less salary than a good department store manager can get, and it sticks to a convict labor lease system that has been condemned by every student of civics, political economy and humanitarianism. Instead of seeing how much it can spend to good advantage in the interests of good government and kindly care of the state's dependents, it tries to spend as little as it can without actually putting itself in the attitude of sacrificing common decency in the interests of dollars and cents. The howl about taxes has no foundation in fact. The first thing needed is a commonsense system of taxation, and the second thing needed is a rigid enforcement of the laws of that system. Remove the tax on enterprise and thrift and put it on the unearned increment. Tax the value of land for use and occupancy and quit taxing the thrift of the worker who builds a little home. Quit taxing the improvements the enterprising farmer makes upon his land, and make the unenterprising land speculator pay as much tax on his unimproved land as the industrious farmer pays upon his well tilled and highly improved farm. Tax the men who get without working, and quit taxing the men who work without getting. But while we are framing up this commonsense and equitable system of taxation, for heaven's sake let us get Nebraska out of the grasshopper class!

Th' foreman in our shop says we don't git enough credit f'r makin' good on a lot of fool estimatin' that's done in the front offus.

## HITTING THE POLITICAL PIPE

A FEW STRAY BITS OF GOSSIP CONCERNING MATTERS THAT HAVE TO DO WITH RUNNING THE CITY, COUNTY AND STATE

The word has gone out that the gentlemen who frame up the legislative ticket for Lancaster county republicans have kindly consented to give organized labor one place on the ticket this time. That is really so kind of them, don't you know. Organized labor ought to meet these ticket-fixers more than half-way, just like Mark Twain did the bill collector who agreed to throw off half the bill. "I'll not be outdone in generosity by any man," exclaimed Mark, "I'll throw off the other half." Organized labor ought to accept the one place on the ticket and then walk right out and grab three or four more. It could be done just as easy as falling off a log. All that needs to be done is for the union men to agree on three or four good men and then nominate them at the primary. The legislative candidate at the primaries who receives a thousand or twelve hundred votes will get on the regular ticket, and there are more than double that number of union men in the county who are eligible to vote at the primaries.

As for the democrats, they are in a hopeless minority in this county and they will have to get out search warrants to find men willing to accept legislative nominations. That means that it will be a simple matter to get two or three organized labor men on the legislative ticket put up by the democrats. The only reason why Lancaster county trades unionists have never had a representative in the legislature is that they've been political numbskulls. They have blindly voted partisan tickets so long that it seems to be a confirmed habit. Whether the habit is confirmed or not will be demonstrated by the way they vote at the primaries next August.

There are a lot of people who entertain the belief that Mr. Bryan did not do the right thing when he started this special session agitation, then slipped off to Great Britain without seeing it through. Mr. Bryan sprung the special session idea while Governor Shallenberger was absent from the state, then after putting the governor up against the proposition, Mr. Bryan goes to Europe to be gone a month or six weeks. Under the circumstances there seems to be good grounds for the belief in many quarters that Mr. Bryan was unjust to the governor. Of course 98 per cent of the people favor the initiative and referendum, and a goodly minority, at least—perhaps a majority—believe a special session would be wise and profitable, but having started something Mr. Bryan might have remained in it to the finish.

Word comes that William E. Andrews is considering the matter of trying to secure the republican nomination for governor. The Peruna people

could well afford to finance the Andrews' campaign. That famous "testimonial," containing a likeness of Andrews, would be reprinted without cost to the near-whisky outfit to the extent of about a million dollars' worth.

Some three or four years ago, during a republican county convention being held in the Oliver, Bud Lindsay arose in the Third ward delegation to oppose a motion, and started out by saying:

"I have been a delegate to Lancaster county republican conventions for thirty years, and——"

"That's too damned long, 'Bud!' shouted a delegate in the rear of the theatre.

The rest of Bud's speech was never delivered, or if it was it was drowned in the gale of laughter that followed the interruption.

This little incident is mentioned merely to preface the remark that the little machine that is now fixing the republican legislative ticket in this county has been at that kind of work "too d——d long."

According to Secretary Ballinger a subordinate government employe who becomes cognizant of crooked work on the part of a superior, owes more to the superior that he does to the country, and therefore ought to refrain from exposing the crookedness.

Very few people will take seriously the candidacy of William F. Porter for railway commissioner. Of course there is nothing but "Durham" in that "Porter-put-it-back" cry, but the fact of the matter is that Porter is not the man for the place. His personal honesty no man can successfully assail, but he lacks the mental poise. The trouble with Porter is that he takes himself too seriously. He had no more to do with the adoption of the Australian ballot than a score of other members of the famous session of 1891. As secretary of state he was a member of the railway commission, and for four years, no attempt was made by the commission to do anything other than provide fat jobs for three "secretaries." He went into office on the wave of populism, and the populist movement, while the greatest political educator of modern times, waned and died because too many of its self-constituted leaders soon made principle subsidiary to place. And when Mr. Porter takes to himself the credit of the "Newberry bill" he adds nothing to his claim upon further public recognition. The intent of that bill was all right, but the attempt to make a copy of the Iowa freight rates fit Nebraska conditions could not have ended in anything but disaster.

The only interesting features about the attempt of Secretary Whitten to make Senator Burkett commit himself on the "long and short haul" clause in the railroad bill was that a man of Whitten's ability should have thought it worth while to try and make the senior senator commit himself upon such an important question. As a balancer and high wire walker our senior senator has Blondin backed off into Niagara river.

The poke is on Congressman Hitchcock. He came down to Lincoln to file for senator, and tried to pay the filing fee of \$50 to the secretary of state. Mr. Hitchcock is a lawyer, and is serving his third term in congress. Yet he didn't know that the filing fee should have been paid to the clerk of Douglas county, and the clerk's receipt filed with the secretary of state. Somehow or other that incident reminded us of King Arthur, the man who could not understand how the housewife got the apple inside of the dumpling.

## OBSERVATIONS OF THE OFFICE BOY

It's mighty easy for the boss to sit in an easy chair smokin' a ten-center an' give us kids advice about not watchin' th' clock.

I ain't worked long enough yet t' get a union card, but I've worked long enough t' notice that them employers that advise their hands to be free an' independent instead of slaves to labor agitators, ain't never built no homes for disabled workingmen yet.

If ever I get t' be a boss I'm goin' t' be just as ready to praise a good piece of work as I am to growl because a piece of work ain't done t' suit me.

Th' other day my boss got chummy wit' me an' give me a long song an' dance about "th' dignity o' labor." But I didn't notice any more mazuma in me envelope th' next Saturday night

Pa says he's gittin' tired o' hearin' people say they want t' do somethin' f'r th' workin' man when all th' workin' man wants is a chanst t' do somethin' f'r himself. An' pa is a workin' man hisself.

A wise gazabo wunst said that th' offus should seek th' man, an' ever since th' factories have been seekin' th' kids.

Ma says she knows more about how th' tariff works than any o' them expert tariff fixers can ever learn. Ma's got t' make pa's wages stretch further than th' tail o' Halley's comet, an' twice as thin.

I ain't got no perlitical ambish, but if I ever gits t' de city council do foist ordeance I'll pass will be done t' either make th' shops let us off an hour

earlier or make de fashionable shoppers do their shoppin' an hour later.

I was de only make man on a car do other day, an' it was crowded t' de limit. I got up an' give a swell skoit me seat an' she didn't bat an eye in my direction. At de next crossin' an' ol' lady with a hand-me down dress boarded de car an' de swell skoit sat there an' let th' old' lady swing t' a strap. After dis I'll let de swell skoits stand an' hold me seat till some hard-workin' ol' woman or goil gits on—den me t' de rear platform.

I ain't a journeymen yet, but I've been workin' long enough t' see dat de blokes what's so anxious about givin' us kids a chanst t' learn a trade is a darned sight more anxious to git a chanst to make money off of kid labor.