

That's What's the Matter With Lincoln

There may be a number of things acting to Lincoln's detriment; doubtless there are. But there is one thing, above all others, that is operating to this city's disadvantage—lack of unity of action along lines calculated to advance the city.

This is not due to the lack of zeal along progressive lines; it is due to a failure to get together, a failure to "give and take" with a view to at least getting somewhere. It may be treason in the eyes of some people to compare Lincoln with Omaha to Omaha's advantage, but just the same the big sister to the northeast sets an example along some lines that Lincoln would do well to emulate. For instance: A few months ago a joint committee composed of men selected from various business organizations in Omaha met for the purpose of drafting a charter. A half dozen meetings were held, the charter drafted, agreed upon and accepted by all parties directly concerned, and the Douglas county legislative delegation is behind it to a man.

A year ago a similar "joint committee" was appointed in Lincoln with the same end in view. After a score of meetings the committee is today no nearer a charter than it was the day of its first meeting.

Why? Simply because men are insistent upon having just what they want, and preventing what they do not want, instead of accepting something calculated to improve conditions and patiently awaiting the time when they can get more. During the early meetings of the Lincoln charter committee a commission plan of government was agreed upon. But when it came to drafting a commission form of charter trouble appeared, for certain men wanted to "improve" a tried and successful plan by bringing in a little idea of their own. Others wanted to "improve" the tried and successful plan by cutting out some particular feature or features. Others opposed the whole commission plan of government. Some wanted the omission of party designations, others wanted party designations. None would yield to secure the commission plan, so all attempts along that line were abandoned, and a new policy mapped. That comprehended the election of a mayor with power to appoint all subordinate officers, subject to the approval of a council of fourteen elected without regard to ward lines. Naturally this plan was opposed. After several efforts to agree on this line the proposition was defeated and a committee instructed to make some amendments to the present charter with a view to making it temporarily fit present conditions, pending an effort to secure the enactment of a law permitting cities to make their own charters. When this committee reported it had gone a little further, and as a result opposition arose at once, and nothing was done. Finally, at a meeting last Wednesday, the whole committee went on record as favoring a commission form of government, similar to the "Iowa plan," but in the meanwhile an effort will be made to secure the adoption of the patchwork charter designed merely to tide over.

After a year Lincoln is no nearer a charter than it was two years ago. Omaha got through with revision inside of sixty days.

Gentlemen of Lincoln—business men of Lincoln—everybody in Lincoln! Isn't it time to sink personal jealousies, private opinions, political disagreements and personal spites and prejudices, and get together with the one purpose in view, that of making Lincoln bigger, busier and better? Last summer a special election was called for the purpose of voting bonds for a new high school and for city park purposes. Some men opposed the bond issue for business reasons that to them seemed good. The bonds were defeated because a lot of men were "sore" over the result of a former election and carried their personal resentment to the extent of giving Lincoln a black eye.

That's the spirit that kills cities, ruins business enterprises and makes grass grow in streets that should be busy.

Lincoln needs a new city charter. That is admitted on all sides. The present charter has been outgrown. A new and adequate charter is imperative.

Then, in the name of common sense, voters of Lincoln, why not act sensibly and get a new charter? The man who expects to have a new charter drawn to exactly fit his views is indulging in insane visions. The man who will fight any proposed charter because its every provision does not suit him is not a patriotic citizen.

The editor of *The Wagoner* has been privileged to sit as a member of the charter committee at just one session. With all due

respect to the eminent and successful business men who constitute a majority of that committee, we declare with positive conviction that we never saw a bunch of union mechanics in regular meeting assembled, indulge in more "horse play," "rag chewing" and wrangling than the aforesaid charter committee indulged in on the occasion mentioned. The same men meeting to discuss a private business enterprise could have gotten together in an hour. When they adjourned they were further apart than when they foregathered.

Lincoln is today suffering from an overdose of that sort of thing. The spirit of "If I can't get all I want I will not let anybody have anything they want" is altogether too prevalent in this city. It is retarding business development; it is engendering personal resentments that will injuriously effect future enterprises.

The Wagoner has steadfastly stood for the adoption of the commission form of government as successfully tried in other and larger cities. It is willing to stand for anything that promises improvement upon the present cumbersome and inefficient system. It has its own ideas of what should be, and will stick to them until a majority overrules then; when overruled it will cheerfully and gracefully abide by the will of the majority, without harboring a resentment nor waiting for an opportunity for wreaking revengeful spite.

Lincoln has come to the parting of the ways. Either its citizens must cease their eternal wrangling and pull together, or see golden opportunities flicker and vanish away while men pull and wrangle over trifles and technicalities. Present conditions are intolerable to men who are eager and anxious to push Lincoln to the forefront of live, progressive developing cities.

Gentlemen of the charter committee, it is not the charter that you want, but the charter the people as a whole want and deserve to have. Unofficially, but none the less emphatically, the voters of Lincoln have overwhelmingly expressed a desire for a commission charter. Such a charter may not suit you, but you are not the ones to be suited. It is your duty to give the people what they want, regardless of what your personal views may be.

Citizens of Lincoln, let's have done with wrangling and disputation. Let's fight like men for what we think is right and proper, and if we win, all right; if we lose let's be "good losers," congratulate the victors and push for Lincoln until the time comes when we may with good grace and perfect fairness, again strive to have our ideas of civic matters adopted.

If the editor of *The Wagoner* did not think Lincoln a good town, the best town in which the rear his family and in which to do business; if he thought there was a better one for all-round purposes, he will move as soon as he could pack his lares and penates. That is, he thinks he would. If he found that he could not, he would at least try to work for the best interests of the city as a whole. Anyhow, when he finds conditions such that he can not boost for Lincoln, he is going to refrain from knocking. A fairly thorough application of that policy by a few hundred citizens would help a lot right now.

You know the fable of the bundle of sticks!

Well, it is high time that we wrap the twine around the business sticks of Lincoln, and tie the knots good and tight. The sticks are now badly scattered, and some of them are being broken; others are in danger.

How the Referendum May Operate

"O general principles," remarked Railway Commissioner Furse the other day, "I favor the initiative and referendum, but while in Texas recently I heard an argument against it that struck me as having considerable force. While talking with a Texan about it he said:

"I'm against the referendum proposition, suh; and I have a plentitude of reason fo' my position, suh. Don't you recollect, suh, that when Christ was taken befo' Pilate that Pilate cross-questioned Him severely an' then remarked to th' effect that he found no fault in Him? Then Pilate washed his hands an' turned Christ ovah to th' pee-pul, suh; and danged if th' pee-pul didn't go right out an' crucify Him, suh! I'm against any proposition that gives th' rabble any opportunity to do that sort o' dirty business, suh!"