

THE LEGISLATURE

Adjourned to February 9—Revenue Committee Working on New Measure—Corporations Busy

On Saturday (January 31) the legislature adjourned to February 9, in order to give the joint committee on revenue and taxation an opportunity to draft a bill. This week the committee has been busy—and so have the corporations!

The two open meetings of the committee, Wednesday and Thursday night of last week, were curiously enough devoted almost entirely to a discussion of one point—whether the city tax commissioner in Omaha should be permitted to assess the railroads for municipal taxation, or whether the law should stand as it is, permitting the tax commissioner to assess all property except what the state board has assessed.

In behalf of his railroad, John N. Baldwin, Nebraska's non-resident boss, instructed his members of the committee—which seemingly includes about the whole push, except Loomis (fusionist) of Dodge—regarding the "distribution" theory; and J. H. McIntosh, in behalf of the Omaha Real Estate Exchange, made a masterly appeal for local self-government. Of course, Baldwin will win.

The Independent is still of the opinion that no satisfactory solution of the problem will be had until the state board is deprived of its power to assess railroad property. It should be empowered to secure all the necessary information which will enable it to arrive at the fair cash value of all railroad, telegraph, telephone, express, sleeping car, dining car, and freight dispatch company property and franchises within the state. The mileage method of dividing up this valuation among the various counties, works all right with most of these kinds of property, although some modification perhaps ought to be made in the case of telephone property. Then the board should certify this fair cash value to the county authorities.

When the county board sits as a board of equalization, it should then assess the railroad and other such property in accordance with the standard of valuation employed in assessing other property. The state board's certificate of "fair cash value" would simply be a guide for the county board.

In determining the levy for state taxes, the state board would have a substantial guide as to the standard of assessed valuation employed in the various counties, and the levy could be made high or low in accordance with the standard used, the chief aim being to require the same amount of state taxes to be paid on each \$100 of "fair cash value" no matter in what county it may be located. If a \$50,000 mile of road in one county should be assessed by the county board at \$10,000, that would be prima facie evidence to the state board that all property in that county was assessed at 20 per cent (or 1-5) of its fair cash value. If another mile of that road in another county should be assessed at \$15,000, it would be evidence that all property was assessed at 30 per cent of fair cash value. And so on for all the counties having some railroad mileage—which would include all but five counties.

Now, a levy of 6 mills on the first county and 4 on the second would equalize the state taxes. Each mile of road would pay \$60 state taxes. Each hundred dollars of "fair cash value" in either county would pay 12 cents state taxes.

For municipal purposes the municipal assessor should be allowed to assess railroad property within his jurisdiction without regard to the mileage theory. State government covers the entire state, and, consequently, every foot of railroad within the state; hence, for state purposes, if it were possible to do so, the entire mileage of any given railroad ought to be taxed as a unit; but as the constitution seems to prevent that, state taxes must be levied upon the returns made from the various counties, and the division between the counties can best be made on the mileage theory. Besides, this is amply sustained by the highest courts in the land. County government covers every foot of the railroad within the county, and as state and county taxation are so bound together, there is no escape from the mileage plan. Collectively the various county governments cover every foot of railroad within the state.

But this is not true of municipal government. It covers a few miles of line in one city; then there are a number of miles running through territory where no municipal government obtains; then the next city is reached and there is more municipal government; then another portion without, until another city is reached; and so

on. The 467 miles of the Union Pacific pay city taxes on but a comparatively few miles; but state and county taxes are "distributed" according to the mileage theory.

The law should be so amended that all cities and villages—not Omaha alone—should, for municipal purposes, be allowed to assess the railroad property within their jurisdictions without regard to any other portion of the road outside, because a large part of the burden of municipal taxation is for fire and police protection, and other services of that nature, which apply to only that portion of the property lying within the jurisdiction.

Frank A. Harrison, the Union Pacific's "all-round" handy man, and understudy to John N. Baldwin, has been busying himself sending out editorials to country editors trying to befog the public as to the real merits of this municipal taxation fight. Monday's Omaha Bee publishes the correspondence between Harrison and George L. Nelson, editor of the Hartington Herald (rep.)—a rather amusing incident in the history of the new bulletins being "issued under authority of the railroads of Nebraska." Harrison offered to "send check" to pay for inserting his "editorial," which was a shrewd attempt to scare the country school districts by making them think every additional dollar of Omaha taxes levied would come off them. Nelson was not so green as Harrison had a right to suppose, and handed him an "open letter" in which he said:

"In conclusion, dear Frank, permit me to say you are in mighty small business when you undertake to act as go-between in buying up the influence of the country press in behalf of the railroads of this state, and permit me to exhort you to turn from the slimy path of political and corporate corruption before it is eternally too late."

Some days ago the revenue committee allowed it to be understood that they expected to write an entire new measure, using the present law as a basis. But Wednesday the reporters discovered that the committee has gone back to the Kansas "abortion" for their basis. This, as it seems to The Independent, is simply part of the prearranged plan to have no revenue legislation. The Kansas bill will not pass in Kansas—and it will not pass in Nebraska. A few amendments to the present revenue law would suffice—but the legislature will not venture enacting an out and out new law drafted on a week's notice. County assessment of the railroads, municipal assessment of the railroads for municipal purposes, removal of the nonsensical 5-mill limit for general fund purposes, a more accurate method of equalizing state taxes by varying the rate of levy, and better methods of collecting taxes, will cure the patent defects; and all these can be had by making a few amendments.

The Independent makes this guess: That by the first of April the only important revenue legislation effected will be the removal of the 5-mill limit.

Reliable Hail Insurance Can be Procured.

Notwithstanding the fact that several hail insurance companies have in the past four years ceased doing business, with practically nothing paid for losses, there is at least one company doing business in this state that can be relied upon. The United Mutual Hail Insurance Association, of Lincoln, Neb., was incorporated January 4, 1899. Since that time it has paid to 1,949 policy holders the enormous sum of \$147,326.70 in losses. It has paid a loss of \$1,577 on one policy. It would seem from the above figures that this company is perfectly reliable, and further that this class of risk is one for which every one raising crops should have protection. This company has divided the state into two districts, the division being between ranges eight and nine west of the sixth principal meridian. The average cost in the eastern part of the state the past three years has been 2-3-4 per cent upon the amount insured, while the western part has cost 4 per cent. In the eastern district the limit of assessment is 3-1-2 per cent, and is not called for until October 1, while in the western it is 4 per cent, and must be paid May 15, or before the risk is assumed by the company.

The following are a few of the hundreds of letters received from members who have had losses. They speak for themselves.

Seward, Neb., Nov. 22, 1902.—United Mutual Hail Ins. Ass'n, Lincoln, Neb.—Sirs: Your favor of November 29 to hand. Permit me to thank you for your prompt settlement of my claim

for damage to my crops by hail. I want to say further that this is the third year since I have bought a policy in your company. I have had two losses and I must say that they have been promptly and satisfactorily adjusted and paid. I believe the company deserves the support of every farmer and grain grower, and I shall do all I can to extend the usefulness of the association. Wishing you success in all your efforts, I remain, respectfully,

"C. H. ADAMS."

Carlisle, Neb., Nov. 23, 1902.—Mr. John F. Zimmer, Sec'y.—Dear Sir: Replying to yours will say, was very glad to get the \$105, which I was not looking for until next month. I shall do all I can to help the order along. This was the first time I had ever insured. Some of my neighbors laughed at me, and said I would never get anything for my loss. The same ones who laughed at me are going to insure next year. I shall do all in my power to keep things booming. Yours truly,

SAMUEL GILBERT."

Elgin, Neb., Nov. 30, 1902.—Home Office of the United Mutual Hail Ins. Ass'n.—Dear Sirs: I received check as payment in full for my loss by hail to my crops for the present season. Would say that I am well pleased with the association and its promptness both in adjustments and payments of claims. Had I not insured I could not have met my obligations. As it is, I can pay every dollar I owe. For this I am much obliged to the association, and remain, respectfully yours,

"B. F. HENETT."

ADVANTAGES OFFERED BY THE UNITED MUTUAL.

Insurance carried at actual cost. Full control is in the hands of the members, each member being entitled to vote at the annual meeting of the association.

There is but one assessment each year, and that only for such sum as is necessary to pay losses and in no case to exceed the amount specified on each member's contract.

All policies are written for five years, thus making a decided reduction in expenses from year to year, the one policy fee standing good until the expiration of that time.

The United Mutual has paid \$63,606.70 more for losses than has been paid by all other companies combined in the state during the past four years.

Mr. Chas. Spahr in his book "The Present Distribution of Wealth in the United States," says that for \$4,650,000,000 shares (railroad stock), now in existence the original investors certainly paid no more than \$4,650,000, or 10 per cent of their face value, and probably less, hence shares reputed to return about two per cent per annum, are really returning about 18 per cent on the actual investment.—Pueblo Courier.

Select Good Seed

It is barely possible that farmers do not pay the amount of attention to selecting seeds for planting that they ought to. It is an evidence of good farming that a large number of farmers, and always the successful ones, are paying strict attention to the kind of seeds they plant, especially that of seed corn. This year corn grown on the bottom lands as a rule will not grow and the very poor season of last year makes good seed corn a matter of more than usual interest as only corn grown under most favorable circumstances and by thoroughly experienced seed men will grow. One of the most conscientious seed firms in this whole western country and in fact in the United States, is Van Sant & Sons of Farragut, Ia., whose advertisements are running in this paper. Mr. Van Sant says that he would rather not have a single sale during the year 1903 than to make one mistake and have one farmer disappointed in the seed corn bought of him. This is the character of a man who has a conscience and when the seed corn season is over he has a feeling of relief as the responsibility he feels of supplying only good seeds to his customers has been lifted off his shoulders. Any one dealing with a man of this character, especially when he has had thirty years of actual experience in growing seed corn, will not regret it. Another thing, all of the qualities which he attributes to his corn will be found in the growing crop next year. A careful reading of his advertisements will pay any farmer and a postal card sent to W. W. Van Sant & Sons, Farragut, Ia., will receive by return mail samples of his seed corn, free of charge, and a neat pamphlet telling the qualities of his corn and other items of interest to corn raisers. Write them today.

The boy who is tied to his mother's apron-strings may not go as far as the boy who is not, but he usually lands safely.

GOOD WORDS FROM GOOD PEOPLE.

HIGHLY COMMENDATORY AUTOGRAPH LETTERS TO THE NUMBER OF 200 HAVE BEEN RECEIVED BY

THE BANKERS RESERVE LIFE

From the Best Bankers, Business Men and Professional Men in Nebraska Since January 1, 1903.

Nothing succeeds like success. This trite saying is amply exemplified by the commendatory letters voluntarily handed the Bankers Reserve Life Association since the publication of the annual report of the president and the financial statement of 1902. The management of this aggressive home company is justified in the pride shown over these honest tributes of honorable citizens.

THE ADVISORY BOARD

of the Bankers Reserve Life is something more than a feature of advertising. The high-class men who constitute that important auxiliary force of the company's corps of agents are not content with mere approval of the methods and plans of the company. They cheerfully render the company such personal assistance as is opportune and they are so well pleased with their company that they cheerfully go on record in black and white as consistent, efficient, persistent friends of THE BANKERS RESERVE LIFE.

Probably no recent statement from an experienced life insurance executive officer has awakened more interest or brought to its author more words of encouragement than the annual report of the president published in this newspaper last week. Men of intelligence and influence in all walks of life have read the somewhat lengthy discussion of home life insurance with an unusual interest.

B. H. ROBISON, PRESIDENT

of the Bankers Reserve Life Association, made a ten-stroke in that report. Already the quick intelligence of the west has begun to respond to its sentiments and the January record of the field force is a record breaker for new business. Words of commendation please, but actual ducats are a far more conclusive proof of the indorsement of the people. The annual report and financial statement will be mailed to any applicant. Send for a copy. NEW TERRITORY TO BE ORGANIZED.

President Robison has positions for several first-class special and general agents in Nebraska and other states to be opened, with choice of territory on very liberal terms. Persons desiring an opportunity to better their positions will find it of advantage to negotiate with him. Correspondence invited.

BANKERS RESERVE LIFE, OMAHA.

IDAHO IRRIGATED LANDS.

Good climate, healthy location, rich and productive lands, abundant water from the famous Snake River, never failing supply; good crops always assured; you govern your own moisture; no cyclones; no hail storms; no rains to prevent gathering of crops; more sunshine in the year than any other state in the union. Land with good water rights for sale at from \$10 to \$15 per acre; one-third cash balance in six annual payments at 7 per cent interest. Address,

M. PATRIE,

Market Lake, Idaho.