

The Alliance Herald
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A SENSIBLE SOLUTION

From Scottsbluff comes the news that Secretary J. H. Mack of the chamber of commerce of that city has handed in his resignation. There was no friction, no dissatisfaction, no trouble of any kind. Mack was a live-wire in the best sense of the term. He had ideas and he worked hard at carrying out his plans. The cause of his resignation was the lack of funds. There wasn't money enough to pay his salary and meet the financial obligations of the organization. It is announced that the work will be carried on, until the chamber of commerce sees better days, by a woman secretary at a very nominal salary.

Scottsbluff isn't the only city where the chamber of commerce has had to change its plans in this regard. All over Nebraska—all over the west, for that matter—the business men's organizations are adopting that policy. The day of the high-priced commercial secretary in cities of less than ten to fifteen thousand population is rapidly passing.

The business men have been slow to see the light. The commercial secretaries, themselves, have fought hard to hold their lines intact. But one by one they have dropped from view, until precious few of them remain. Now and then the organizations, loth to stop activities and yet dissatisfied with outside men, have tried out home men as secretaries. In nearly every instance the men selected were exceptionally well fitted, by reason of a good knowledge of local conditions, as well as ability, to carry on the work successfully. In nearly every instance the experiment has been a disappointment. Any local man who has lived in a city long enough to be considered for such a place has competitors, enemies and acquaintances who are jealous of the distinction that has come to him. The opposition, small at first, grows. Without harmony there can be no progress. The home secretaries know the feeling, and in most cases have decided the game not worth the candle.

The real reason, perhaps, is the item of expense. If a chamber of commerce is to be supported in the style to which it is accustomed, it requires plenty of money. If all of this goes to pay the secretary's salary, there are no funds left for work. Money is not so plentiful as it was three or four years ago. Men who contribute money are interested chiefly in results. If they cannot be shown results, they cease to pay. With no funds to accomplish anything, how can the results be at all commensurate with the cost?

Alliance found the solution to the Scottsbluff problem months ago. With a limited executive staff, low expenses and the members themselves doing a part of the work, just as much progress can be made in times like these. Just now, with business at a low ebb, there isn't a whole lot of work for a chamber of commerce to accomplish, no matter how aggressive the secretary. For that matter, in the case of most chambers of commerce in cities of this size, there never has been, and the business men are beginning to find it out.

THE NEXT INVESTIGATION.

Governor McKelvie's announcement that a statewide investigation of high prices will be made comes at just the right time to arouse interest. Tax-payers have been looking at tax rolls which show unprecedented increases in the cost of government. Money isn't so plentiful as it has been. A tax assessment that two or three years ago would have occasioned only a bad taste in the mouth now causes pronounced irritation, accompanied by spells of dizziness and deep melancholia. The public is interested in this inquiry into the wherefore of present prices of commodities, rents, wages, interest rates, freight rates and other things.

The public, however, is pessimistic. It hopes for the best, but it expects no tangible results. It has learned to expect nothing, largely because there is less chance for disappointment. A similar investigation a year or two ago, widely advertised by Secretary of Agriculture Leo. K. Stuhr, accomplished nothing. Neither have dozens of other investigations by state and federal authorities. The consumer has learned from bitter experience to realize that it isn't profitable to count

chickens until they are hatched, and that even then there is a danger that the rats may get them.

However, according to Governor McKelvie's prospectus, the coming investigation shows signs of being intended to accomplish results. That the state's executive is in earnest is shown by the fact that the members of the investigating committee are not all politicians. There will be three code secretaries, who will be negligible and might as well remain nameless. Attorney General Davis will be the fourth member and may be relied upon to attempt to get at the truth. Dean J. E. LeRossignol of the college of business administration of the University of Nebraska is the fifth member, and in this man we are justified in placing our hope.

Professor LeRossignol is the best man in the state for a job of this kind. He's so good, in fact, that his appointment seems almost unbelievable. If LeRossignol is given anything like a free hand—if his advice carries weight with the committee, there will be results. Give a committee headed by this man power to subpoena witnesses and examine them, and if there is any profiteering going on in Nebraska, it will be discovered. There isn't a bit of bluff or show about Dean LeRossignol. He will spot flimsy excuses, evasions and faked figures as soon as they are laid before him. If LeRossignol is given a fair show, the rest of the committee might as well stay at home and attend to the baby.

THE REAL PROBLEM

For once in his official career, Federal Prohibition Commissioner Roy A. Haynes has said something. If he never rings the bell again, he has, at least, in the language of Plutarch, "uttered a mouthful" on this occasion. In his official capacity, Mr. Haynes has from time to time issued statements on the work in his department, and these have, for the most part, been of a sort calculated to cheer up the W. C. T. U. and the Society of Sisters of the Super-Soul. If he has seemed almost too anxious to report progress, it may be that he is in the position of the little boy in the woods, who whistled to keep up his courage.

The war against the bootleggers will not be won by peppy talks or by prayer, however much either may accomplish in other causes. The bootleggers of today are not like the moonshiners in the hills of a few years ago. The old-time moonshiner was a man who manufactured a fairly good product, but rebelled against paying taxes to the government. It was the "revenooers" that he hated. He sold his stuff for money, of course, but the price was no more than an inferior quality would bring. The illicit distillers of today, in the big cities and in many of the smaller communities, operate on a vast scale. They have plenty of money to pay fines; they can afford to lose automobiles which are occasionally confiscated, for the profits of their traffic are so great that the average punishment meted out to them hardly serves as a deterring influence.

Mr. Haynes, in one of his recent addresses, hits upon a new tack. Instead of giving the number of the stills confiscated and listing the convictions, as has been his wont, he directs his appeal to all of us—to the people of America. He quotes the judiciary section of the American bar association as saying: "When, for the gratification of their appetites or the promotion of their interests, lawyers, bankers, great merchants and manufacturers, and social leaders, scoff at this law they are aiding the cause of anarchy and promoting mob violence, robbery and homicide; they are sowing dragon's teeth, and they need not be surprised when they find that no judicial or police authority can save our country or humanity from reaping the harvest." To which Commissioner Haynes adds:

It is a spineless American who will see the flag of his land scoffed at by agitator or anarchist without protest-

ing. It is a poor patriot indeed who will permit the bolshevik to hold up the holy institutions of the land to scorn and derision without voicing his dissent and righteous indignation. He is a short-sighted American who fails to see in the bootlegger of today both the spirit of the anarchist and bolshevik.

It is time that the citizen upon whom we depend to uphold our Americanism awakens to the realism that bootlegging is not a mere pastime but it is a nefarious and traitorous business. The bootlegger, whether he be in the highest or lowest walks of life, is in the last analysis a law violator, and stripped of his social prestige or political influence he is a criminal giving assistance and encouragement to those forces of profiteering criminality whose business it has been to prostitute salesmanship and debauch citizenship.

This style of argument is something like. The bootlegger, whom all of us despise even though he panders to our appetites, is only half the problem. The fellows who keep the traffic going, who make enforcement almost impossible, are the respected citizens who buy the stuff. For the most part, they look on it as a lark, a game of wits with the authorities. They do not see the far-reaching consequences. The profit in bootlegging would drop below the point where it pays for the risks involved if the respectable citizens were to stop buying. The fellows who have to have booze couldn't furnish enough money to make the game worth the candle. Until the average citizen refuses to listen to the man who has a gallon or a quart for sale, and until public sentiment so changes until it is no longer considered humorous, or stylish, to defeat the prohibition law, just so long will we have bootleggers and moonshiners. Present profits are so high that two stills spring up where one is destroyed, and two booze peddlers take the beat of the man who is sent to jail. The men who furnish the money by buying the product haven't looked far enough ahead to see the final effects of the funny game of tag being played with the prohibition enforcement officials. The big task is to head off the purchasers; the panders to their appetites will stop the minute the profit drops to a sufficiently low mark.

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