

The Alliance Herald
TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

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FORGET IT.

Now that the Northwestern Bell Telephone company has filed an application for an increase in rates, some of the fellows who were responsible for putting the question of the telephone franchise on the ballot at the last city election are beginning to wear long faces and shake their heads slowly. If the city council hadn't granted that franchise, they say, then there wouldn't have been this trouble. Forget it!

There were two whole years that the telephone company had no franchise in Alliance. And yet, despite this fact, there were at least two applications filed for an increase in rates. Both of them were allowed. Don't think for a minute that the telephone company would have let the existence or non-existence of a franchise in Alliance influence them in the slightest degree, especially while the state railway commission was in the frame of mind to grant the increase.

The city council granted the franchise because, having been elected to give this city a business administration, they saw no sense in perpetuating an ancient grudge. The vote on the franchise was not binding legally. There are some who think it was binding morally, but The Herald can't see it that way. We elected the city council to run the affairs of the city. By adopting the city manager plan we announced our willingness to keep hands off. Now, for the love of Mike, let's don't let that old franchise row disrupt the city again. It has absolutely no bearing on the present fight to keep rates from being raised. There's no excuse for digging up the old corpse after it has been decently buried. If any voter wants to oppose the present council for re-election on this ground—and we haven't found anyone who does—that's his privilege, but wait until the next campaign to do it.

The thing for Alliance to do right now isn't to howl about the council, but to get behind them and lend our moral support in the fight to keep the company from raising rates. The council gave the company a franchise, but in every particular it was a victory for the city. There were no kicks about it until this last application for higher rates. Let's not make any mistake—our fight is with the railway commission and the telephone company, and not with the council or the city manager. The sooner this is realized, the better chance we'll have to win a victory. Of all times, this is the poorest for a split over something that is entirely beside the question in argument.

WHAT'S THE ANSWER?

An interesting case was called to the attention of the chief pen pusher of this establishment yesterday. It concerns a Hemingford business man who, for some reason or other, discouraged the purchase of land near that city. Until the end of the late unpleasantness between Alliance and Hemingford, it was no uncommon thing for Hemingford men to wield the hammer, so far as this city was concerned, but it's a different thing when a man goes out of his way to give his own community a black eye.

The story comes from an Alliance real estate firm, which has business connections with a Lincoln firm. The Lincoln firm is headed by a former Alliance citizen, once superintendent of schools here, who knows the county pretty thoroughly, and has for years been encouraging settlers to come here.

It seems that the Lincoln and Alliance firm were negotiating a trade, by means of which a substantial farmer would give up land in eastern Nebraska and come out to Box Butte county. The Box Butte farm lies some seven or eight miles to the north of Hemingford. It comprises an entire section. Half of it lies as level as a table, and the balance, while somewhat rolling, is pretty good land. The Alliance firm made a price of \$35 an acre, knowing that it was to be a trade and therefore setting the price somewhat high. That, we understand, is usual in a trade, where both buyer and seller get more for their land and feel better about it, but no more actual cash is expended than if both men stuck to rock bottom prices.

The Alliance firm figured that the

land in question is actually worth, at present prices, fully \$25 an acre. They forwarded a description to the Lincoln firm, which relayed it on to the prospective purchaser, with the request that he make his own investigation. He wrote the Hemingford business man, and got a reply stating that the land, in the high price era of the war, was worth not to exceed \$15 an acre, and judging by present standards, a fair value was \$5 an acre. Naturally, the eastern Nebraska man refused to buy. The real estate firms lost a commission. Box Butte county lost a citizen. And what did the Hemingford man, who wielded the hammer so effectively, gain by it?

The newspapers, the business men and the farmers of Box Butte county want the world to know that there isn't any better land in Nebraska, at the price, than is in Box Butte county. We spend considerable money telling the world of our products. We take advantage of every opportunity to boost this county. We spend good money building roads that tourists may come through. We can expect that outsiders, who wish to draw settlers to their own part of the state or nation, will discreetly or openly knock Box Butte county. It's to their advantage to discourage buyers from coming here, or staying if they come.

But what earthly gain is there for a man who lives in Box Butte county, who is in business here and who "makes his living" from the citizens, in spreading this kind of talk? And what can we do to put a stop to it? This is one of the most important questions that wants solution. Who can point the way to making boosters out of citizens who, for personal reasons or just plain cussedness, are working against the interests of all of us?

A GOOD SPANKING NEEDED.

It begins to look as though the Northwestern Bell Telephone company were in need of a hard spanking. Their attitude in the matter of the present application for increased rates reminds one strongly of a thoroughly spoiled child, who having had its way for a long time, is suddenly denied something it wants very much and proceeds to go into tantrums. Sometimes a thorough paddling in the place made and provided by thoughtful old Mother Nature will bring the child to its senses. So far as the telephone company is concerned, the plan is worth a trial. There will be no end of volunteers to wield the paddle.

The Northwestern Bell Telephone company is a child of fortune. Offspring of the wealthy American Telephone & Telegraph company, born, as it were, with a silver spoon in its mouth, it is not inured to hardships of any kind. In its youth it acquired expensive tastes, and though long since out "on its own," it has set its standard of living pretty high and has considered that the world owed it a living. Hanged if it hasn't come pretty near collecting it.

However, there's an end to all things, and the telephone company, which of late has been flying pretty high, is about to be brought back to earth, if outward indications are to be relied upon. Heretofore the railway commission, which has had the job of handing out more money to this un-

grateful child, has always shelled out on demand. This time, let us hope, the story will have a different ending, and this child of fortune, no longer protected from the cruel world, will have to go out and earn a living. It may be a good thing for the spoiled darling if it has to be buffeted about a bit. It may knock from its head the notion that money grows on trees.

For if the telephone company finds it hard sledding to make but 4 per cent investment on its inflated capitalization, think how much more difficult is the lot of the company's patrons, most of whom would think 4 per cent a darned good income. Of course, 4 per cent is less than 6 per cent that the company says the railway commission will permit it to earn, but come to think of it, just how did the commission ever get into the way of thinking that a telephone company was entitled to such a return on its investment, especially in times when every other business is fortunate if it holds its own.

Something has got to be done to bring the Northwestern Bell outfit back to earth. At the hearing before the railway commission, E. M. Morsman, attorney for the company, before the application had even been considered, threatened the commission much in the same style as other officials of the company have blustered in Alliance. "If you don't grant us a continuance of this 10 per cent surcharge," Mr. Morsman said, "we'll go to federal court and get higher rates still, fixed by court order."

Isn't it about time to call this colossal bluff? Isn't it about time to administer a good spanking to the telephone company that can talk in this manner to patrons and state officials who have been so kind and so liberal to it. Mr. Morsman didn't say the company would ask for higher rates—he said the company would get them. F. A. May, who used to visit the old Alliance council regularly, had the same sort of argument: "If you stick us for a high occupation tax," he used to say, "we'll go to the commission and they'll give us higher rates to offset it."

The state railway commission, which has been markedly friendly to the telephone company, may be able to stand this sort of guff for old times' sake, but it should be about as weary of hearing it as the patrons over the state. If it doesn't see fit to step on the company now, perhaps there will be some people to whom the company's threats will seem no stronger than the air from which they are made. There are more ways of killing a cat than of choking it to death on butter. The telephone company has been overwhelmed with kindness entirely too long. It's got to the point where someone ought to wield the willow switch or papa's slipper. Some people can understand no argument but the crowbar.

PARSONS WITH A PUNCH.

So many things have been attributed to the war, both good and bad in their effects, that the average editorial writer is inclined, when something out of the ordinary occurs, to look first for some connection with the huge struggle and later, if that doesn't pan out, to seek other explanations. Strange as

it may seem, one of the striking changes has been brought about in the attitude of the live-wire preachers toward their work.

There have always been some few preachers—unfortunately not so many as one to a community—who have a somewhat broader view of the opportunity of the church than their followers. All of them, however narrow, are splendid men at heart, but the number who are able to get their message across to the ones who most need it has been growing smaller and smaller in the past decade or two.

Now, one doesn't have to look far in any direction to see a preacher with a punch, who is not only seizing the opportunities on all sides of him, but grasping them. In order to reach those who have not heretofore been drawn into the church it is necessary, sometimes, to create new precedents and smash old traditions to smithereens. Sometimes, too, in the search for means to apply the saving punch, mistakes are made. But how much better it is to make progress with mistakes than to make neither.

The churches are beginning to advertise. They are beginning to compete with one another for membership. They are beginning to frame programs that will appeal to the people outside of the church instead of confining their efforts to spiritual ministrations to those who are in the church and are, presumably, already saved. It has taken a big wrench to change the attitude of centuries, and somehow or other, we like to attribute it to the war. Participation in that unprecedented conflict has made a lot of men and women break precedents, and, please heaven, now that they've started, they'll keep it up. The world needs that kind of men and women more now than at any time in its history.

A striking example of the parson with a punch is the new national chaplain of the American Legion, the Rev. Earl Blackman of Chanute, Kas. Mr. Blackman returned from the world war with his ideas concerning the way to inculcate religion greatly changed. One of his first acts on his return to Chanute was to attend a dance. He didn't dance, but he didn't wear a long face and wring his hands in holy horror. A small group in his congregation set up a howl. He promptly turned in his resignation and set off for a fishing trip. On his return, two weeks later, he found the majority of congregation had refused to accept the resignation. With the slogan, "Let's put religion over," he and his supporters proceeded to do it.

Mr. Blackman has some decided views on Sunday observance and the so-called blue laws. His ideas are worth careful study. He says:

I think that part of the day should be spent in meditation and quiet, but I think it is utterly foolish and stupid to try to pass laws compelling people to refrain from any specific things. What is rest and relaxation to the farmer may not be such to the bank clerk. The one might derive the greatest benefit by sitting in a chair all afternoon on the shady side of the house, while the other might prefer attending a ball game, making the rounds of the golf course or lounging all afternoon in a boat watching his fishing bobber dance in the sunlight. The street-car conductor might not desire a trolley ride for his recreation, while the factory worker who makes the carman's uniform might be greatly benefited thereby.

To my mind the advocacy of such laws only serves to cheapen religion in the minds of the masses and tends to push it back into the superstitions of the past. It is a cheap and indolent way of grappling with these complex

social problems. It demands our greatest sincerity and consecrated efforts to solve them; and not the passage of restricting laws, in the hope of solving a problem by doing away with it.

The dance, an object of attack for years, is defended by this preacher. He goes so far as to oppose official supervision and regulation, holding that the control should be made by the community conscience. His position seems impregnable.

If ministers and church people would co-operate and participate in the dance, recognizing its value as a social medium it would not be left to the control of the cheaper elements of the community.

People have always danced and they always will. Dancing is recognized by some of the best authorities and leading psychologists as one of the fundamental instincts of the race. Where it has been properly directed and controlled, it has ever been a benefit to the individual. When improperly controlled and allowed to become degraded, it becomes a corresponding evil and menace.



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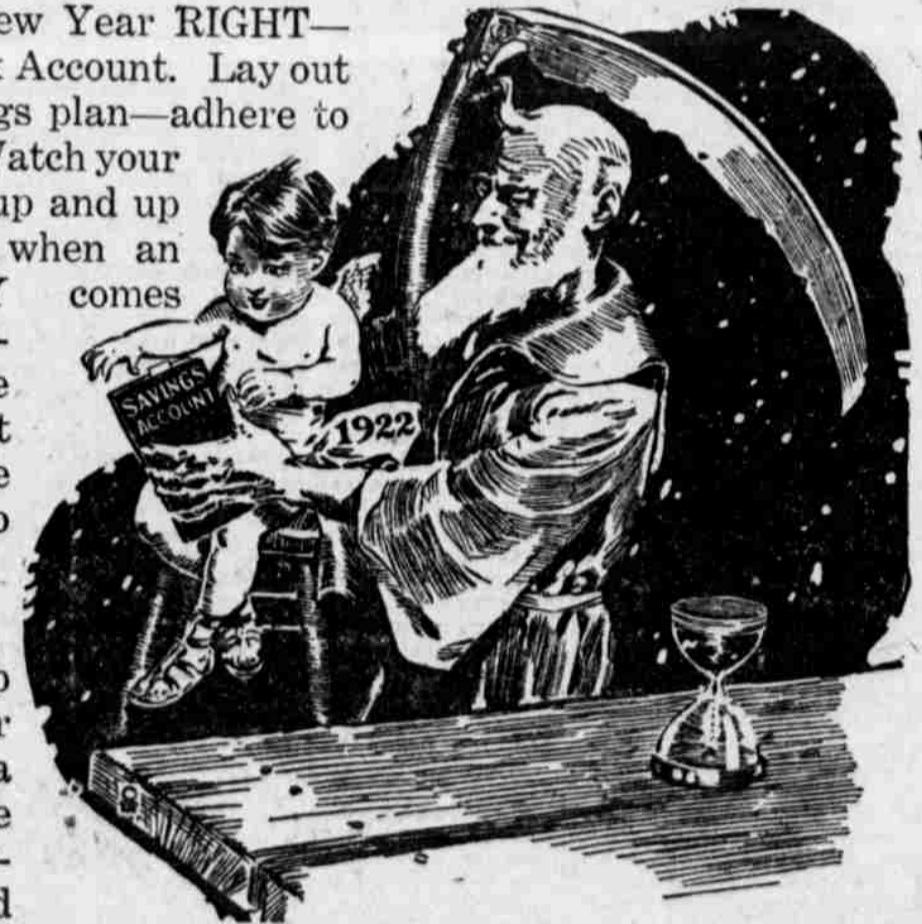
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