

The Alliance Herald

TUESDAY AND FRIDAY

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THE GAS TAX DIES

The proposed excise tax on gasoline is a thing of the past. It was put to death by the republican majority of the house by a vote of two to one, after Governor McKelvie had done his darnedest to put it across. The effort to secure its passage was not given up until the last minute. And now come the brigade of explainers and apologists who are doing their best to explain the disaster.

Thus, we learn from one leading republican daily, not that the house refused to pass a gasoline tax, but that it "refused to lift the burden of road building off of the property owners." The outcome of the vote, it declares, was due to political opposition to Governor McKelvie, thus entirely overlooking the fact that the sentiment all over the state was overwhelmingly opposed to a special session and the gasoline tax in particular.

The defeat of the measure, it is charged, was accomplished by a coalition of democrats (of which there are but four in the house), non-partisan leaguers, persistent enemies of the state administration and house members who are candidates for state offices. In addition, the non-partisan leaguers made a threat of a referendum on the bill even if it were enacted.

In their zeal to save Governor McKelvie's face, these writers entirely overlook the fact that there was a definite objection from voters all over the state, and that there were some arguments against such a tax. Some of the defenders even go so far as to say that the governor doesn't really care about the gas tax, having secured every other thing he wanted. These newspapers overlook the muddle in which the highway department has been left.

The gasoline tax was designed to take the place of money lopped off the road appropriation. This money was intended to match federal funds. Under a five-year contract, Nebraska matches dollars with the federal government, which gets the money in taxes from Nebraska in the first place, and by this plan is permitted to supervise the expenditure of the whole amount. The house, which killed the gas tax, may not put back the \$750,000 it would have realized into the appropriation bill. This leaves the highway department out on a limb. Some of the legislators say that there is so much waste and extravagance that it is cheaper for the state to forego its federal appropriation than to toss money into the hopper to be wasted. Men with this sentiment seem to be in the majority. Either way they go, there will probably be little complaint from over the state, for the average citizen, now that the governor, who insisted on calling the session, has got his comeuppance, are content with the pleasure to be derived from that knowledge.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS.

An illuminating paragraph or two, hidden away on one of the inside pages of a Lincoln daily, furnishes a bit of amusement for those who think that the state authorities are attempting entirely too much regulation, and have assumed more authority than they can conveniently exercise. It is also an interesting sidelight on the activities of the state highway department, which is now under fire from critics all over the state, and perhaps a bit of a reflection upon all local law enforcement officials as well.

All of us will recall the law passed by the last session of the legislature, at the request of the state highway department, which provided punishment for automobile owners who persisted in keeping glaring headlights on their cars. The department officials had dozens of reasons, most of them good, why such legislation should be enacted and enforced. And the obliging legislature complied with their request.

The state department entered into the spirit of the thing. A rigid test for automobile headlights was established. You will remember, of course, that approved lenses, at so much money, had to be installed on all cars, and that the headlights had to be set at a proper angle, so that they would reveal the outlines of a tom cat at so many feet away—that is, they had to reveal the whites of the eyes, but leave the tip of the tail, when fully extended, in semi-darkness and shadow.

The state highway department promptly began sending out bulletins

to the sheriffs, police officers, county attorneys and, above all, the newspapers. There was an indication that Guy Hyers' sleuths, when not engaged in running down bootleggers that had been located by lower-salaried local officers, would spend their time testing headlights. Apparently everyone meant business. The garages sold an enormous number of approved lenses for headlights. A few automobile drivers got scared. In Lincoln hundreds of car owners attended a police demonstration and had their headlights adjusted.

Two weeks later, the whole plan was forgotten. It has been months since Mr. Johnson sent out a bulletin. Apparently the law is destined to be self-enforcing. A fairly close watch of the newspapers from over the state fails to disclose as much as a single conviction for glaring headlights. The department spent a good deal of money in approving lenses and preparing to enforce this law. The automobile owners spent ever more. Today a large number of cars are equipped with approved lenses, but not one in ten are properly focused. The law, so far as enforcement goes, is a dead letter.

The amusing paragraph is a protest from the Lincoln council of Commercial Travelers, to Chief Johnstone of Lincoln, at one time the most ardent advocate of the lens law in the state, with the possible exception of State Engineer Johnson. The traveling men ask that the law be enforced. They are serious about it. Will it be done? Sure, about the same time that the Esquimaux belles begin rolling their hosiery.

It's about time that some of these state officials who are anxious to take on more authority should get back to the fundamentals. It is well to masticate one mouthful before taking in additional provender. Wouldn't it be a fine thing if all of us could take about a year off and get rid of the accumulation of unfinished business?

DANGEROUS CURVE AHEAD.

Our esteemed contemporary, in its last issue, published a strong editorial in support of the anti-lynching bill, which recently passed the lower house of congress by a vote of 230 to 119. The editorial in question gave some thrilling details concerning mob violence and closed with the following indictment:

Although it may have a temporary effect in curtailing crime, it does not cure the criminal. It never does. It puts one criminal out of the way, but it incites many others to crime. It serves only to bring out the worst and the most dangerous passions of men and women and it accomplishes nothing in the end except to stamp a black disgrace upon all who participate in it and upon the state and nation as well.

With these utterances we have no quarrel. Our only object in quoting them, aside from the fact that we think they are worth quoting, is to warn Brother Ben Sallows that in all probability these sentiments, which do credit to both the publisher and the editorial writer of the Times, will serve only to get him into difficulties with his temperamental partner at Minatare. Col. Rufus Jones, unlike us, will never endorse these words. Several times Rufus has expressed himself, editorially and otherwise, and his opinions do not jibe with those we have quoted.

It seems to us that Brother Ben is running a grave risk of being charged with attempting to destroy Rufus' influence with a possible mob element in Alliance. We shall now watch the "Public Forum" column of Mr. Sallows' newspaper for the indignant and inevitable protest.

IT'S CALLED JUSTICE.

From Grand Island comes the report of the conviction in county court of Charles Hessepano, who was given a sentence of fifteen days in jail for theft. The offense for which this punishment was decreed was the theft of one bottle of milk a day from doorsteps. The milk was delivered by a co-operative store and the criminal was caught stealing one bottle.

The defense was that Hessepano was hungry and out of work. It didn't go. The managers of the store, greatly incensed, claimed that this conscienceless criminal, in addition to stealing milk, had added insult to injury by bringing the bottles back to the establishment and trading them for bread.

Hessepano received fifteen days in the county jail. The store is satisfied that this particular series of thefts is at an end. The court is resting serenely, with a calm conviction that justice has been done. But frankly, after all, has there been any real solution of the problem? Hessepano will be fed, at least, during the fifteen days. After his term expires, will there be a job, or will the good people of Grand Island hesitate to offer work to a man convicted of theft?

Victor Hugo, in "Les Miserables," tells the life story of a man who was sentenced to the galleys for the theft of a loaf of bread. There are some who, reading that book, will shudder at the barbarous injustice of courts in those dark days. Hugo's hero became a criminal, because he was just this

one time given a much heavier sentence than his offense warranted.

Is the Grand Island judge, or any other court which upholds the dignity of the law by assessing such penalties, doing his duty? Does any of the blame rest upon the good people of Grand Island, who force hungry men to steal bread. Hessepano hasn't gone far on the criminal path; he stole only what was needed to keep his body and soul together. He could have bootlegged, or held up citizens, or committed much more aggravated offenses, but he didn't desire to do anything more than keep from starving. What will he do when he is released? The chances are, now that he has a prison record, he'll go after bigger game than loaves of bread or bottles of milk. And yet we speak of courts of justice, and do it with sincerity.

Every other town in the state, or the nation, for that matter, may have problems similar to the Hessepano case. Hungry men must be fed. If there are no jobs, and the public does not come to the rescue, are they to starve? The Grand Island brand of justice seems to think so, but what do you think about it?

"PECULIARLY UNIQUE"

(Scottsbluff Star-Herald.)

Both of the Alliance newspapers take the Star-Herald very severely to task because this paper saw fit to give its opinion as to the ethics and effect of what amounts to a condoning of students for overt acts in connection with their examination questions. We expected to hear from Alliance, and while there is no desire nor no attempt to influence the conduct of the Alliance school system, yet we maintain that if the schools desire to air their soiled linen in the columns of their own publications, the rest of the state should not be blamed for criticizing—and what is of more importance—forming its own opinions of such methods. It is worth while to find out what the Alliance newspapers ever is an ideal school system and to use a mild phrase it stands peculiarly unique.

A Frenchman has made gold out of lead. We saw a plumber make \$50 out of a lead pipe once.

Many men want to wear knickers. There's a secret about it. Knickers do not bag at the knees. They quit there.

Harvard's history students are singing their lessons—another case of a professor's services going for mere song.

According to a medical man, fast living shortens our lives. According to the coroner's records, fast flivving has the same effect.

Governor McKelvie's Gas Tax Measure Is Put to Death

Governor McKelvie's gasoline tax bill was killed by the lower branch of the legislature by more than two to one majority Tuesday morning. The motion to advance it for third reading and passage was defeated by 67 votes to 31. Without another roll call, the chamber then voted for indefinite postponement with an overwhelming chorus of "ayes."

Two of the thirty-one votes for the bill were cast by Governor McKelvie's appointees, Frank L. Carroll of Colfax county and W. H. Quade of Logan whom the house seated last week despite the irregularity of their appointment.

The opposition vote included all four democrats, twelve non-partisan leaguers and fifty-one regular republicans, many of whom have been administration supporters in the past. Thirty of the votes cast for the bill came from regular republicans and one non-partisan leaguer, Mr. Hakanson, lined up with them.

Not until the debate closed and the vote was taken did Governor McKelvie and his aides cease their efforts to win over sufficient support for the passage of the gasoline tax measure.

By knocking out the gasoline tax the house made it possible to shorten the special session a day or two, and members were talking at noon about finishing up by Wednesday evening. It is doubtful, however, whether the legislature will finish by that time. The ten day's period during which members are entitled to draw pay will be out on Friday.

Among those who rallied to the defense of the governor and supported the bill was Representative Dwight P. Griswold of this legislative district. Mr. Griswold is mentioned as a candidate for state auditor, and his vote may have been influenced by a desire to stand in well with the party leaders.

In the course of the debate, Mr. Jeary spoke in opposition to the governor's plan and said the bill as drawn is unconstitutional because it taxes some people on their use of a commodity and exempts others who use the same commodity. It would be held up in the courts, he predicted, and if no other provision were made for the state highway construction the road program would have to be abandoned.

Mr. Byrum, another opponent, accused the bill's friends of misrepresenting the facts by claiming that the appropriations have been reduced two and three-quarters millions, when in fact the reduction is only two million dollars and \$750,000 would be appropriated for road work, whether the money was derived from a gasoline tax or general property tax.

A lengthy argument for the bill was made by Representative Snow of Chadron, who told of getting a letter from the secretary of the farmers' union at Chadron stating that its members had

unanimously endorsed the gasoline tax idea. Snow attributed the hostile sentiment which exists throughout the state to the opposition press, which he said wanted to keep the republican party "in a hole" and give the democrats a better chance of carrying the next election.

National debts are what we get out of war as long as we don't get out of war.

Be careful how you refer to the automobile age. Your friend may think you are making reference to the 1915 model he drives.

Maybe China invented gunpowder, but it has an alibi in the case of poison gas.

Bootleggers throw still more discredit upon the ancient game of getting rick quick.

The ex-crown prince is planning to return, and Germany already has troubles enough.

The fly-swatting campaign is a tremendously good thing, but it does make us a little tired to see fellows think they have done a day's work when they have winged a fly.

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