

The Alliance Herald
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ONE STEP FORWARD.

Secretary of Labor Davis has had an inspiration which may, in due time be of utmost importance to the public. He has a plan to give the public absolutely true, disinterested facts in all strike controversies. The government has hundreds of bureaus and there are hundreds of committees investigating everything from the high cost of putty to the effect of snow on Chile beans but somehow or other, there has never been any plan devised to let the public know the facts in any controversies between labor and capital. The public, incidentally, is usually as much affected by industrial war as either of them. For it is the ultimate goat. It loses when industry halts to give battle, no matter which side finally wins the particular engagement in the oldest and longest war in the history of the world.

Mr. Davis' plan contemplates maintaining specialists in each of thirty-two "key" industries in the nation thus enabling the government to have on hand a complete file of accurate information concerning conditions in any given line. "As it is now," Mr. Davis says, "no one can tell which side to believe. Propaganda is sent out by each side. Under the proposed plan, the government, at the beginning of a labor difficulty, could give out an official statement which would form the basis for an accurate and just opinion. The proposal for specialists in each industry would bring about just this result. The specialist would live with an industry, year in and year out, and would be familiar with every one of its phases and details."

There is the germ of a real idea here, if it can be put into practice and both labor and capital assured of impartial treatment. Of course, it is to be expected that the radical employer, or the radical employe, in any such controversy, would one or the other be dissatisfied with the findings of an impartial board. But the public, if it had confidence in the fairness of the investigators, would immediately throw its influence in the scale. In most labor disputes the public is not organized to exert any influence at all. It knows nothing of the facts; it has to choose between tall stories told by both sides. But it is reasonable to suppose that if the public were once aroused and organized, it would be the deciding factor in struggles which heretofore it has watched from the sidelines, getting injured as much or more than the participants, but powerless to raise a hand in its own defense.

An intelligent public would never for a moment tolerate such conditions as prevailed at the Carnegie steel mills. It would not tolerate any abuse of power by either labor or capital. But, when its only source of information is the statements of leaders to either side of any controversy, it must shut its eyes and guess at the truth. The big railroad strike was called off when it was realized that public opinion was organized against the railroaders. The present coal miners' strike finds the public uninformed. Its influence may go either way, and it may go wrong.

There is a danger, of course, and that lies in the possibility that the selection of an investigating committee may be controlled by capital. It is possible, however, to get a board that will be unbiased. Scholars are one class of people who cannot be bought or whose opinions cannot be forced. With scholarly, conscientious men whose investigations are a life work, it is almost certain that they will have as fine a sense of honor and impartiality, and the same kind of a reputation and standing as the United States supreme court.

Labor is naturally suspicious. Years of experience have justified their attitude of doubt. Labor has never been able to get its fair share of newspaper space, and as a result the radical labor papers have sprung into being. But with fair and impartial treatment at the hands of government investigating agencies, and full publicity of the findings of such a committee, the need for ultra-radical labor organs would disappear. The press is slowly coming to realize that it must give labor a fair deal, but this does not mean that it should espouse the cause of labor on all occasions, or ape the publications that pander to labor. For the laborers are but human,

as are the capitalists. They make mistakes. There will always be labor, capital and the public, these three, and the time will come when, unless labor and capital learn to compose and adjust their own differences, the public will assert itself, step in and by its overwhelming authority, settle all disputes. The Davis plan is a step in the right direction.

MR. KNIGHT QUILTS.

The resignation of Reuben E. Knight as county highway commissioner opens up a rather interesting discussion. Mr. Knight has not been very communicative regarding the reasons for his action, but he has gone so far as to admit that the unsympathetic attitude of the county commissioners toward his work was one of the principal factors that made him resign. It's easy to understand why the task is not a pleasant one. Commissioner George Carrell of Hemingford has been outspoken against continuing the office of highway commissioner, his argument being that the expense was too great. The other commissioners have apparently felt the same way about it. Inasmuch as Mr. Knight's hands were practically tied without the hearty co-operation of the board, it is not to be wondered at that he refused to go ahead with work in which he could arouse neither interest or co-operation from his employers.

The attitude of the board of county commissioners is not unexpected. It is, in fact, characteristic. All three of them are successful in their own line of business and none of them has discovered the necessity for any intricate system of bookkeeping to keep track of his own affairs. The county's business has always been conducted in a come easy, go easy sort of fashion, and men who have not taken any great pains in keeping track of their own accounts are as a rule difficult to convince that such a system is valuable for any purpose. What they overlook is the fact that as county officers, elected by the people and serving the people, they should work even harder to conserve public money than to conserve their own. Most county officials overlook this important point; most public officials are more willing to spend public money than their own.

But what will be the effect on Box Butte county? The fact is that what is really needed is more system instead of less. What is needed is an adaptation of the city manager principle to highway expenditures. Instead of three commissioners laying plans to spend some thirty thousand dollars in three districts, there should be consistent planning to make this money go just as far as possible and do as much work as possible.

Box Butte county will not save any money by dispensing with a \$50 a month employe whose work is as important as Mr. Knight's. There should be an accurate record of every cent spent on road work in this county. Every road should be numbered, and a careful account kept of every cent expended on every road, and the purpose for which it was spent. There should be some way of finding out, at the end of a year, whether all roads in all parts of the county have received their fair share of the money that has gone to road building and maintenance.

The system in effect before Mr. Knight took charge was in fact no system at all. One commissioner would take the road machinery to his district. The crew would grade a batch of road, and would then be called to some other part of the county. At the end of the month the bills would come in and be paid or laid over for a month or two. At the end of the year there was a stack of claims—so many for labor, so many for gasoline, another bunch for materials. There has been no comprehensive program. A road might be kept in tiptop shape one month or one year and go to pieces the next.

Box Butte county needs system in road work. For years there has been expended from twenty to thirty thousand dollars on roads and bridges, and never has more than one road been kept in sight at any one time. Never has there been a plan that looked any farther than a month or two ahead. Never has there been efficient supervision. One commissioner or another will look after work in his district, draw pay for it, but the result is that the county pays not once for road supervision, but three times. A competent highway commissioner can give all his time to road building and upkeep. He can supervise in three districts or in one. He can hire and fire men and can get together a gang of workers who will be trustworthy. He can keep expenditures down to a minimum and be able to show any taxpayer where every cent was expended.

The Herald believes that with at least \$30,000 to be expended on Box Butte county's roads this year, the efficient, wise and economical course will be to hire Mr. Knight or some other good man as highway commissioner and let him be highway commissioner. Give him the needed authority, let him buy all materials and hire all workers, let him, with the assistance of the commissioners, plan a season's road work, and then let him carry out his plans and prove his ability. We've had a long experience with lack of system, and frankly, we have nothing but dissatisfaction all over the county with the way roads have been built and maintained. It is now time to give system a trial. The county expenditures have been published. There is no way to tell how much money has been spent for road supervision by the commissioners, but it is safe to assume that a competent highway commissioner would give all his time to the work for that money. The Herald believes that results will be better that way.

The present commissioners will hold office for the remainder of the year. Two of them retire, and both are candidates for re-election. Others are seeking their places. This newspaper does not mind confessing that it will throw its support to the best men who will promise to see that the taxpayers get the most value of out their tax dollars. Taxes are too high to see any of the money wasted or handled carelessly.

A SANDHILL FOREST.

To those of us who have lived in and near the sandhills, "sandhill-forest" may seem more appropriate for an All Fools' number than for serious consideration, but there's no joke about it. The United States government is taking the first steps toward covering the barren hills with forests. The federal department of agriculture will this spring plant a million and a half trees in the sandhills adjacent to Halsey. This number of trees, it is estimated, will plant approximately a thousand acres of sandhills and will be the largest acreage planted during any year since the Nebraska national forest was established, during the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt.

A whole lot of us will learn with some surprise that Nebraska has a national forest. Others will be surprised to learn that it is situated in Thomas and Cherry counties, and that both divisions of the forest are in the heart of the sandhill region. At first thought, the place for a national forest would seem to be on the waste acres along the Platte. But there were reasons for the selection of this location, and one of them was the provision of lumber for the future. Another reason was to provide fuel and cheaper material for fence building. The forest service tells us all about it after this fashion:

While it cannot be said that forests are needed in the sandhill region

to conserve water, the planting of forests in these hills will check the wind locally and generally it will prevent the further encroachment of the sand dunes on the fertile land to the east, and will ameliorate the dryness of the atmosphere, so that agricultural land may receive a greater amount of precipitation. Of these influences, the local effects of groves of trees acting as wind-breaks will be felt first, and for this reason the planting of trees by local residents, after the government has thoroughly experimented with species and methods, should be strongly encouraged.

From the forestry standpoint, the Nebraska sandhills present wonderful possibilities. The sand dunes are potential forest lands. In the fall of 1902, the town of Halsey was selected as the headquarters of the Nebraska national forest, and a small nursery laid out for the growing of jack and western yellow pine. Since the spring of 1904, when the first seedlings became large enough for planting, this nursery has been increasing steadily in size and efficiency, so that now the output is 1,500,000 trees a year. To date 1,300,000 trees have been supplied free of charge of residents of the "Kinkaid" district. As a result of this free distribution, small groves of trees are appearing throughout the sandhill region. Trees may be supplied to settlers and farmers in the Sixth congressional district, so far as the trees can be spared.

Alliance has already secured for its municipal pier two hundred of these trees, through the efforts of City Manager Kemmish. If they should flourish like those in the national forest sandhills, within twenty years we may expect to see trees twenty-eight feet high around Broncho lake. Twenty years is not much out of a lifetime, and with some efforts on the part of the sandhill settlers, there could be an enormous change in these barren hills within a quarter of a century. The sandhill national forest is causing surprise and wonderment to those who see it for the first time. One of the biggest things Alliance can do is to stimulate interest in tree planting. It will do much to bring settlers from other parts of the nation here, and with the government paying most of the expense, there is no reason why it shouldn't be among the first things on the program.

FUTURE OF THE BUGGY.

(Omaha Bee.)

A story telegraphed from Oregon intrudes on the placid mind. Up there, for some reason not stated, a customer applied at an implement depot for a buggy. The state was searched, and finally a new buggy was found, last of its kind in Oregon, and the once simple want was supplied. Contrast this with the trainloads of buggies that were coming into the west less than a score of years ago. That will give you some idea of the march of the automobile. A "fivever" represents little more in its first cost than did a good buggy with a team to haul it, while its range of action is many times extended. Returns gathered by a recent survey made by a group of automobile makers shows that among the farmers of the central west the

auto is used 78.4 per cent for business, while in some other lines its business use rises to above 90 per cent. This answers the question as to whether the machine is exclusively for pleasure. Perhaps it points the future for the buggy. Now and again we see one on the streets, a holdover, however, and not a new one. The automobile has taken its place, and it will not be long until the buggy is as dead as the diplococcus.

Everybody has been held responsible for the crime wave except the criminals.—New York Tribune.

Polish Diet votes Hoover a citizen. Hoover helped their diet.—Newspaper Enterprise Association.

Florida scientists claim to have found another lost race. Why don't they leave Bryan alone?—Newspaper Enterprise Association.

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