

The Political Career of Joseph W. Folk

Former Governor Folk has had a remarkable political career. Since his advent into the arena of Missouri's political life, the state has been revolutionized. The things he has accomplished are difficult of brief enumeration.

As circuit attorney of St. Louis he exposed more official corruption than was ever laid bare before in the history of the world.

When he commenced, bribery was the common and accepted thing. It was regarded as merely conventional. The revelations he made awoke a slumbering conscience, and the moral wave now rolling over the land is the result.

Meeting with the fiercest opposition in his work of eradicating corruption, denounced and villified by corruptionists of every kind, he took his fight before the people. In the face of one of the bitterest contests in the history of American politics he won the nomination of the democratic party of his state for governor by an overwhelming majority. Again in the campaign for election every venal influence combined against him, and again he triumphed. He was elected, while the others on the ticket, who were not fought as he was, were defeated. He carried Missouri by 30,100 for governor at the same election Roosevelt, on the opposite ticket, carried the state by 23,000.

In this campaign he announced the doctrine known as the "Missouri idea," which is familiar in every part of the earth today. This idea is that citizenship in a free country implies a civic obligation to enforce the performance of every public trust; that bribery is treason, and the givers and takers of bribes are the traitors of peace; that laws are made to be enforced, not to be ignored; that officials should no more embezzle the public power entrusted to them than public money in their custody.

His was the first of the great battles for reform before the people, and the principles he declared are the inspiration of the crusade for higher ideals of public life. It is easy to be for reform when reform is popular, but it is quite another thing to be a pioneer and to make reforms popular when they are unpopular.

As governor he put an end to boodling in legislative affairs. There was no crookedness or scandal in the three legislatures held under him. This was a wonderful change from conditions that existed prior to that.

He abolished the practice of legislators and officials riding on free passes.

In the first legislature under him he secured the enactment of a law giving a right of action for the negligent death of adult unmarried persons. Until then there was no remedy in such cases.

He signed a maximum freight rate bill, the first relief in that direction for twenty-five years.

He caused the exorbitant fee system, whereby the excise commissioner of St. Louis received more than forty thousand dollars a year, to be changed, and the commissioner put on a salary basis. Although the governor appointed the commissioner he did this because he believed it right.

He procured the passage of a law, after a hard legislative fight, repealing the race track law, whereby gambling was legalized, and put the most powerful and insolent race-track syndicate in the world out of business. He broke up the attempted defiance of law by race-track gamblers, who had the assistance of local officers, and enforced the law over the heads of the local officials.

He put the state institutions on a business basis, and eliminated graft from them.

He took the police of the large cities, where the governor appoints the commissioners, out of politics, and put them on a basis of public service alone.

He stamped out the grafters from the police departments.

He revolutionized the conduct of the police in reference to elections, and made elections fair and free from police interference.

He appointed men of the highest character to all positions of public trust.

He closed up the gambling dives in St. Louis, and ran the gamblers from the state.

He exterminated the wine rooms in the metropolitan cities, where so many young girls had been ruined.

He made the large cities unhealthy for crooks,

DEMOCRATIC STATE CONVENTION'S INDORSEMENT OF FOLK FOR PRESIDENT

Jefferson City, Mo., Sept. 14, 1910.—The democratic state platform convention today unanimously adopted the following as one of the planks of the state democratic platform: "In the battle for good government we commend to the democracy of the country the leadership of one who has been at all times foremost in the fight, and whose work as circuit attorney of St. Louis and governor of Missouri accomplished so much for political and practical reform, which, like a tidal wave is now sweeping over the whole country. Conservative as an administrative officer and progressive in his legislative policy, he is the foe of all grafters, the friend of all honest toilers, and will make the doctrine of equal rights a living force in government. Therefore, the democracy of Missouri presents for nomination for president in 1912, Joseph W. Folk, and pledge to him our hearty support."

and brought about a reign of law and order never before attained.

In St. Louis, Kansas City and St. Joseph, where he had the power through appointees, he enforced the law closing saloons on Sunday, in the face of intense opposition and denunciation. This was the beginning of the movement for law enforcement that is now going on in all the large cities.

Fought by venal influences and corporate power, he went before the people asking for an indorsement by an election of a legislature in accord with his policies. The democratic convention indorsed his policies, and the people approved by electing a majority of the general assembly pledged to his reforms. When the general assembly met every hostile influence in the state was arrayed to have legislators faithless to their pledges to the people. Some of them did fail, and proved untrue to their constituents, but in spite of organized wealth of the special interests, he fought for and secured the passage of more good laws than were ever enacted in the history of the state before. Here are some of the important measures recommended, and which became laws through his efforts:

Reducing railroad passenger rates to two cents.

General state-wide primary law, providing for the nominations by all political parties on the same day all over the state, with the same number of polling places and with the same penalties as to illegal voting as in the general election.

Pure Food Bill—In conformity with the national pure food law.

Anti-Lobby Law—Making professional lobbying a felony, except upon the lobbyist registering with the secretary of state, and stating whom he represents, the bill he is lobbying for, and filing with the same officer a statement of expense. This has ended the evil of professional lobbying in Missouri by giving publicity to the operations.

Law making operation of bucket shops a felony—whereby this vicious form of gambling was run out of the state.

Anti-Trust Laws—Providing for prison punishment for violation.

Eight Months' School Law—Applying all over the state.

Constitutional amendment, separating sources of state and local revenue, providing for a radical change in taxation system.

Good Roads Laws—Providing for a state and county highway engineer; \$500,000 appropriated for good road fund; \$1,000,000 appropriated to be distributed among the counties for road purposes.

Amendment to the constitution providing for the initiative and referendum.

Anti-Discrimination Law—Prohibiting a concern from selling goods higher in one part of the state than in another, cost of transportation being considered.

Law creating state banking department.

Law giving railroad commissioners power to

fix railroad rates, and making their orders effective until overruled by a court of competent jurisdiction.

Parole law for all first offenders.

Uniform text book law.

There were other good laws that were not passed. He told the general assembly that it had done a great work, but there was more to be accomplished. To carry out the pledges of the people he called the legislature into extra session, and succeeded, though every move was contested, in securing the enactment of laws, the value of which, to the people, is incalculable. The more important measures that he recommended to the extra session and that became laws were:

An act regulating the rates charged by the owners of public utilities in cities and towns. There had been before no check whatever upon the rates of these public monopolies, except the benevolence of the owners. In the passage of this act a billion dollar lobby of the public service corporations was crushingly defeated, and the people given a law that will save them millions of dollars.

An act curing the defects in the race-track law, whereby the scheme of race-track gamblers to open up again was thwarted.

An act providing for the removal of every mayor, prosecuting attorney, sheriff or other officer failing to enforce the laws. Under this act any citizen can file suit in court to have the derelict official removed for neglect of duty. The proceeding is a civil one, and if neglect of duty is shown the official is ousted. This law affords a long needed remedy against officials who in their public duty forsake the service of the people.

An act extending the fellow servant law to minors, thus affording that class of men a great relief.

An act extending the jurisdiction of the factory inspection or in prohibiting child labor, with provisions for its enforcement.

No special session ever enacted so many important laws, and few, if any, regular sessions prior to Governor Folk's administration.

He brought about a reign of law, with the result that crime decreased, immigration increased, and the state is enjoying a prosperity never before experienced.

During his administration, the state became the leader of all the states in the fight for reform.

He has, by his fight for the public, incurred the bitter enmity of all agents of greed, and their allies.

He is the most hated man in Missouri by selfish interests, grafters, and corporate monopolies who would break the laws or oppress the people bitterly oppose him.

But he has the support of the soldiers of the common good in Missouri who believe in him and support him. The enemies he has made prove his sincerity.

He refused to permit the police departments and boards under his control to be a political machine. He has no machine except the heart and conscience of the people.

He is conservative in charging wrong-doing, and would not oppress lawful capital or legal business, but once sure of an evil he is radical in its extermination.

In every official act he was fought by the grafting element and by special interests. He had arrayed against him the great corporate interests because of the laws he recommended for the welfare of people. He had against him the liquor interests because he compelled them to obey the law the same as anyone else. He has against him the political bosses because he looked to the people, not to them, for support. He has against him all the grafters, gamblers and crooks of every kind because of his fight against them.

"I have been fighting for eight long years," he said. "Sometimes I have won and sometimes I have lost, but I am not tired yet. It is not essential that I win, but it is essential that I be true. It is not necessary to succeed, but it is necessary to keep the faith. I will keep up the fight as long as I have life and strength to do so."—He has, throughout his official career, had the indorsement of a majority of the people of Missouri regardless of politics.

These are some of the things accomplished by the man whom the democracy of Missouri, in convention last fall, indorsed for the presidential nomination. WILLIAM J. COCHRAN.

St. Louis, Mo., August 14, 1910.