

CURRENT TOPICS

COUNTY GOVERNMENT EXTRAVAGANCE

Citizens of other states may read with profit that portion of the annual message of Governor George M. Alexander, of Idaho, relating to the duties, powers and abuses of county governments. In reference to this subject, Governor Alexander said:

"There is a habit throughout the state in the various counties that runs to extravagance. County governments have become so burdensome, in the way of costs and expense, that the people demand relief at your hands. Counties should be graded into first, second and third class counties. A limitation should be placed upon their power to levy taxes. Counties should also be compelled by law to go on a cash basis and be prohibited from issuing warrants in any sum beyond the amount levied for that one year.

"For the year 1913 there was levied by the various counties in this state for the county warrant redemption fund \$266,320.00. This is simply an item of extravagance that has grown up in the state and that should be prohibited.

"Boards of county commissioners often the first year of their official life levy insufficient taxes to make a showing, and the next year following, before they go out of office, they pay old indebtedness, make unnecessary improvements, issue warrants in excess of the levy for that year, or else leave a huge indebtedness to be provided for by future tax levies. I would advise you to prohibit the issuing of warrants on any fund in excess of the levy for that year; that the board of county commissioners issuing the same, and those voting for said issue, should be guilty of a misdemeanor and should be ousted from office and be held responsible for the amount of the warrants upon their official bond, and further by a judgment against their property. The stronger this law can be made the better it will serve its purpose."

FUTURE TARIFF DISCUSSIONS

Up to the time of the passage of the federal trade commission bill there had been no administrative agency of the government directing its exclusive attention to the procuring of the facts that would be a guide to future legislation. The possibilities of this new act, in connection with tariff legislation, are discussed by the St. Louis Republic, as follows:

"Tariffs were formerly made by calling in prospective beneficiaries and learning from them about how much protection they thought they ought to have. Then, when the tariffs thus made were questioned at election time the men for whom they were made financed the defense and supplied the facts and arguments most largely used by tariff defenders. The man with a personal interest was there all the while looking out for himself. If the people at large wished to know how the tariff was working or how truthful were the grounds upon which tariffs were demanded they had no such access to original sources of information as was available on the other side. The new trade commission will have among its other duties the duty of supplying the public with facts about how the tariff is working. The members will approach this task with their minds open to the truth. They will have no private interest to serve, but will have the right to go to the bottom of any complaint or demand and to ascertain all the facts needed in making up an unbiased judgment. In future discussions of the tariff the commission will, therefore, be able to contribute materially to intelligent understanding of the subject in its capacity as a source of unvarnished truth and, indirectly, it should have an even more important function as a discourager of tariff mendacity from those who seek tariff benefits."

PUBLIC SERVICE CLUBS NEEDED

The city of Lincoln, Nebraska, has a public service club which holds meetings for the discussion of public utility subjects, with occasional digressions into broader fields of political problems. The scope of its work includes investigations by committees and discussion by members in proper legislative fashion. The work of this

club suggests that such organizations could be made a source of profit to communities in other states. In commenting on the need and usefulness of such clubs, the Nebraska State Journal says:

"We desire to call the attention of the world more particularly to the Lincoln public service club. This organization is setting an example which people in all parts of the state might with profit emulate. * * * Would that Nebraska had a thousand such organizations. We do not take enough interest in public questions. The average man would be astonished at the smallness of the number of letters and telegrams which a legislator receives 'from home.' That is because the people are not keeping track as they should. The average man has no idea, we suspect, of the number of crimes and cynics and misanthropes that proceed from ingrown ideas. Such calamities could have been saved by a chance to air their views. Contrary to the general view and teaching, men do not talk enough. The tongue is for the elimination of ideas, is as necessary to mental health as are the exhalings of the lungs and skin to bodily safety. We prove it by Shakespeare:

"Thoughts shut up want air,
And spoil like bales unopened to the sun."

"The Lincoln public service club has doubtless saved many a human boiler explosion and will save more. We need more such clubs. The newspapers, for want of space, may be unable to broadcast them all, but no matter. The good will have been undiminished by that."

A VICTIM OF BAD ADVICE

Recent newspaper dispatches contained accounts of a prolonged fast of a California man who abstained from food for a period of fifty-nine days. Commenting on the futility of following promiscuous advice on health matters, the San Francisco Star says:

"Louis Roth, the Palo Alto tailor who fasted two months in order to cure himself of 'chronic indigestion,' is dead. He will no longer be troubled by the failure of his digestive organs to do their work. Some time ago he read a book, 'Vitality, Fasting and Nutrition,' written by Hereward Carington, and determined to try the virtues of a prolonged fast. When urged to take food, on the ground that he was endangering his life, he refused, saying that he would eat when his appetite returned. Of course, his appetite did not return.

"Professor Swain, of Stanford university, who watched Roth during the long fast, says that death was not unexpected; that 'the insidious sophistry of the book he had read had wormed itself into his imagination,' and that the book is dangerous. It must be said that Professor Swain's language is very temperate. It is still true that the lawyer who takes his own case generally has a fool for a client, and that the man who undertakes to repair his internal machinery has a fool for a patient. That is especially true of a person who goes into a long fast, with the idea that it will be time enough to eat when his appetite returns."

EVILS OF SCHOOL MILITARISM

The evils of school militarism were set forth by N. C. Shaeffer, state superintendent of public schools of Pennsylvania, in a discussion before the department of superintendence of the National Educational association, at its recent meeting in Cincinnati. Professor Shaeffer said:

"The introduction of militarism into the public schools of the United States would be organized insanity. When the demand is made that militarism forms an integral part of vocational training, the teachers' distraction reaches a climax. If she should succeed in fulfilling this latest requirement the public schools would develop a race of amazons more fierce than the militant suffragists.

"Militarism does not develop the sense of duty such as the Sunday school inculcates, but justifies spying, lying, forging letters, telegrams and signals to mislead the enemy. Having been taught that it is right to suspend the decalogue

for his country's sake the pupil afterward repeats the ten commandments for his own sake whenever any advantage can thereby be gained in the political or financial world.

"The great powers of Europe have come to judgment and are grinding one another to dust and ashes. Their fate should be a warning to the American people not to introduce and foster militarism in the public schools."

SELF-SUPPORTING PENAL INSTITUTIONS

There is a growing sentiment towards the undertaking of enterprises that will help to make our state penal institutions not only self-supporting but that will, at the same time, accomplish the physical, mental and moral upbuilding of the state's charges. An editorial in the San Antonio Express gives an idea of the work being done along this line by the state of Arkansas. It says:

"Arkansas boasts a penal institutional system superior to that of most of the other states by reason of the fact that crime is as nearly adequately punished as elsewhere without the taxpayers being overburdened by the cost.

"The state farm, which is worked by convicts, not only is self-supporting, but the profits arising from its operation are sufficient to maintain the state penitentiary and the state reform school, so that the legislature is not called upon to make annual appropriations for the conducting of these institutions.

"Since the change in the disposition and care of state prisoners and the abolishment of the convict lease system, with its many repulsive features, there has been wholesome difference in penal conditions, says the Little Rock Democrat. Health problems have been solved and unjust and inhumane punishments for minor infractions of rules have been supplanted by model, humane methods. Prisoners on the state farm are, to a greater or less extent, upon their honor, and conduct determines whether one who has been kept under guard becomes a 'trusty.'

"The health of the prisoners on the farm is maintained by plenty of exercise, fresh air and wholesome food, and there is such appreciation of the confidence reposed in them by the state that the prisoners give the authorities comparatively little trouble and the cost of providing guards is reduced to a minimum. The system is not altogether experimental, having been in operation for several years, and, according to report, it is proving its effectiveness more and more each year."

THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE FRONTIER

The part played by the pioneer in the development of this nation was set forth in a recent address by Dr. George E. Vincent, president of the University of Minnesota, before the City club of Milwaukee. Dr. Vincent said:

"The philosophy which has been dominating the American people for the last 100 years is the philosophy of the frontier. It is the philosophy of a people who go out into the wilderness to subdue it, to make homes in a wild country, and bring nature under the control of men.

"We call this philosophy individualism, and it is the only philosophy which a people living under frontier conditions can evolve. Individualism holds that every man works out his own destiny. There are no complicated problems to be considered.

"An individualist is one who grapples with nature in his daily life. When he succeeds he is to be praised for his success, because upon himself alone depends the outcome of his work. If failure comes to him he is to blame, for no one has been associated with him, and no one can be accredited for the failure.

"On the frontier we must be everything. Frontier life makes a man a jack of all trades. Is it any wonder then, that the Americans of today are self-sufficient? When a man is able to do many things, and do them all well, he is affronted at the appearance of a man who says that he is an expert and that he knows how to do just one thing, and do it thoroughly.

"Self-sufficiency of the American people, fostered by their frontier experience is seen every-