

THE OMAHA BEE

MORNING-EVENING-SUNDAY

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Omaha—Where the West is at its Best

LITERACY TEST FOR VOTERS.

A Douglas county senator expressed himself publicly in Omaha as in favor of a law that will require the voter to be able to read and write English. A measure looking to that end is pending before the senate.

Such a law should be carefully pondered before it is enacted. We earnestly advocate the policy of teaching the English language in the schools of Nebraska, to the end that everybody will be enabled to take a proper place in the life of the state. Our constitution provides that English shall be the official language, and that it must be taught in the public schools. With this we are in full accord.

Something else must be considered. Nebraska was largely settled and developed by foreign-born citizens. These have proved themselves in all ways qualified for the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship. Thrifty, industrious, fugal, law-abiding, God-fearing, they have wrought well in building up a great state. Prosperity, both material and spiritual, has followed their efforts. But many of them have not for reasons of their own acquired a working knowledge of English. They still read and write in the language that was theirs from birth.

Are they now to be denied the privilege of voting, something they have enjoyed through all these years, because they are not proficient in English? Can the state of Nebraska afford to visit such an injustice on these men and women, to whose efforts is due in so great a measure all that the state represents in social and political life?

Other aliens have come amongst us more recently and have satisfied all the requirements of the law with regard to the qualifications for citizenship. They read and write in the language of the land from which they came, but not in English. Are they, too, doomed to be disfranchised because they do not comprehend the language of the common people?

The literacy test adopted by the United States was ability to read and write in some language. Nebraska can well be content with that limitation, relying on the public schools to remedy the deficiency in the second generation. For the matter of that, the majority of those who now come here show great eagerness to acquire a new tongue. Will this ambition be fostered by taking the vote from those who for any reason fail to perfect themselves in English to the extent of being able to read and write the language?

This agitation exposes again the insincerity of the "word of mouth" provision of the election law. That applies to Douglas county only. In any other county of the state the deficient voter is not so handicapped. If the legislature earnestly desires to improve the citizenship of the state, it might do so by providing for the better enforcement of the excellent school law. Under it in good season all voters born in this state will be trained in the language of the state. But it would be too drastic a change to suddenly pounce upon the older people who came here from Europe, and disfranchise them because they cling to the mother tongue. The end sought is good, but the means proposed is not.

THE STORM.

It wasn't really a blizzard, except in the headlines. It was just a March storm, during which a lot of needed moisture was precipitated. It caused considerable inconvenience here and there, and perhaps some suffering. But on the whole it was highly beneficial to Nebraska. It doubtless slowed up traffic here and there and prevented many people from getting to town to do their trading, thereby decreasing the cash receipts a bit. But those things are temporary.

With the soil saturated with moisture it means a boost to spring work on the farm. It means a big wheat crop. It means a good stand for another bumper corn crop. Two or three days of inconvenience, to be sure; but just think of the good that will follow the little storm.

Listen as you may, you are not hearing any complaints from the farmers. They know what these March storms mean in terms of soil preparation, crop growing and harvest gathering.

"Blizzard" is a much abused word. It is usually applied by those who find themselves temporarily discommoded by a little flurry of snow borne on a brisk wind. If last Friday's storm in Nebraska was a blizzard, then Patrick Henry was a deaf mute and George Washington a conscientious objector.

IN THE MATTER OF PAY ROLLS.

One of the factors in community prosperity is the pay roll. Much if not all the permanent growth and business of any city depends on the amount of wages paid to the workers. Out of this fund goes the support given to the local trade, the home business, that is the life blood of commerce. For these reasons the people of the city, big or little, are supremely concerned in the pay roll.

An advertisement appeared in the Omaha papers one day lately that must have opened the eyes of everyone who read it. It stated that for the year 1924 the "combined pay rolls of the Nebraska insurance companies maintaining home offices in Omaha amounted to \$1,799,101.06." Almost \$2,000 a year each for the 900 families dependent on the wage earners represented.

This is a tidy sum. Considerably more than the

uninformed would set the figure, but indicating the importance of the rapidly developing home insurance industry of the city. Certainly it is a factor in the community life of Omaha, one that is not to be neglected, and deserving of careful consideration in connection with any home industry movement that may be contemplated.

TAKING A LOOK AT FACTS.

Every now and then some statesman arises to mourn about the lack of water power development in this country, and shed great salt tears over the alleged fact that some unknown conspiracy by unknown men in a mysterious place have combined to gobble all the water power sites. They insinuate that if only they are permitted to have their way they will harness these water powers for the public and give us power so cheap that it will really be like finding it.

But George Otis Smith, director of the United States geological survey, Department of the Interior, informs us through the current number of Collier's that—

"First of all we need to deflate our large ideas of the adequacy of our water power, which, though not a diminishing resource, is deficient in amount, for if fully developed it could not turn more wheels than are already installed in all the power plants of the country."

Some of our would-be statesmen are resting their whole cause on government development of water power, but here comes a man who knows what he is talking about to tell us that we must deflate our large ideas about the adequacy thereof.

Nor should it be forgotten that much of the possible water power is so located as to be of little advantage if developed. And much of it would have to be supplemented by steam power in case of accident. Nebraska has several available hydro-electric power, but hard-headed men of business, after long and expensive investigation discovered that to develop the power and carry it to the point of consumption would cost by considerable more than to develop an equal amount of power by steam or oil, and particularly if developed by interior combustion engines.

To use the language of the street, there has been an awful amount of blab about development of water power. Developing electric current is one thing; distributing it is quite another. As between the politicians who talk water power for the purpose of catching the favor of the uninformed, and Director Smith, who knows what he is talking about, we pin faith on Smith, who says:

"Nor should we face the future with gay assurance that science will unlock the atom and thus set free energy enough to turn all our wheels forevermore. Unfortunately for such optimism, the scientists who know the atom best promise least. And as for harnessing sunshine, the carboniferous plants probably did that far better many millions of years ago than human ingenuity can do it today. So we must continue to rely upon the stored-up sunshine in our unsurpassed coal deposits as the cheapest source of energy to turn the wheels required by our present-day civilization."

Increasing knowledge of how to use coal economically, and constant improvements in electrical machinery, will result in cheaper current and wider distribution in the future, just as it has in the past.

It behooves the people of this country to acquaint themselves with the real facts, turning a deaf ear to the insidious plights of politicians who are using this "white coal" thing for purposes of deception only.

THE DRIVE AGAINST OLEO.

There are arguments on both sides of this butter-oleo controversy. This being true there is no earthly reason why so careful and conservative newspaper as the Milwaukee Journal should muddle the whole controversy in this fashion:

"But, getting down to fundamentals, a man who wants oleomargarine has a right to it. What government can rightfully do is to protect him from having a substitute foisted upon him when he asks for butter."

But has a man a right to have oleomargarine if enough people insist that he shall not have it and manage to Pass a Law to prohibit him from getting it?

Putting it another way: Has a man a right to have butter if the oleo manufacturers become strong enough to Pass a Law prohibiting the use of butter? Getting down to fundamentals, as the esteemed Journal puts it, has a man a right to anything he wants if a lot of vociferous reformers insist that he shall not have it?

What's a little thing like fundamentals between friends, anyhow?

The Greeks and Turks are going to stage another round in a contest that has been going on for at least 1,300 years. Maybe this time the world will stand back and let them go to a decision.

The husband who let his wife pay for the honeymoon trip and buy gas for the family bus has some of the markings of excess baggage.

Head of the telephone company sees signs of prosperity reaching out for five years more. By that time we will be used to it.

The idea of March may have meant something else to Julius Caesar, but it nearly always means a snowstorm in Nebraska.

A smuggler has been sent to prison two years for kissing one of his women cargo. He may have deserved it at that.

Omaha's tramway is making something of a stir at Lincoln. Home folks will take up the subject later.

Auto owners who paid for licenses with bad checks deserve all they are likely to get.

Homespun Verse

By Omaha's Own Poet—
Robert Worthington Davis

A GLIMPSE OF GROWIN' OMAHA.

A farmer friend with whom I tolled when I was garbed in jeans,
And had an eighty where I made my coin ar-raising beans—
Came into town—our Omaha—one day not long ago,
And this is what he writes because he says that I should know:

"I'd heard about your city fair, its parks and boulevards,
Its great commercial industries, its far-famed cattle yards,
But, strange to say, I didn't know, like lots of silly fools,
A blessed thing about those blamed-ten-minute parking rules.
"I left my car and started out to look around a bit;
Your city wasn't had to view—I liked to look at it!
When I come back my car was gone, but ninety cents I had,
And naturally I sort of got a trifle vexed and mad.
"I've had to sell a couple pigs to fix up things complete;
I doubt if I can make enough my other debts to meet,
And I can not appreciate the better things I saw
When I went down to get a glimpse of growin' Omaha."

Crossing the Political Bad Lands



Letters From Our Readers

All letters must be signed, but name will be withheld upon request. Communications of 200 words and less, will be given preference.

"Improving" the Bible.

Gibbon, Neb.—To the Editor of The Omaha Bee: Your editorial under date of March 7, wherein you ridicule any attempt to improve on the Bible sounds a little queer in view of the fact that the Bible, until the advent of the "King James Version," failed to satisfy the mind of those to whom, and about whom the subject matter related, written in a language without vowel or consonant, and only a matter of conjecture that we have the exact words of any of the Old or New Testament writers. Few, if any, deny the Bible the religious literature of an age long extinct, and few would have its place in literature destroyed, but why leave the impression the Bible's 66 books are the beginning and ending of printed wisdom, when all we have are copies of copies, and in very truth we do not know just who wrote the original, for they are lost. It would appear on the face of things, the mind of man cut some considerable figure through the ages in collecting and improving on the many fragments that have reached us, and these many fragments would give us a very poor mirror through which to reflect nature's perfect self were we to rest content in the "land-looked bay" of traditionalism.

What About Ideals?

Omaha.—To the Editor of The Omaha Bee: In an editorial that appeared in a local paper, "Fact Versus Hysteria," it is stated that the M. E. Smith company did only 1 1/2 per cent of the total volume of Omaha's wholesale business in 1924, and goes further to say that the employees affected represent only a little more than 1 per cent of the total employees of the manufacturing and jobbing houses of the city.

I am not contradicting any of the facts, but when we consider the narrow-minded, un-American principle used which caused the wrecking of this institution, also the efforts of such broad-minded, patriotic, public-spirited men as A. W. Gordon, Mr. Crofoot and associates, who gave their time and efforts to save this institution, I can't see how we can take it so cool even though the Industrial facts are before us.

When we look back to find the cause of President Wilson getting America into the European war, was it not an insult to our American ideals to have one of our ships sunk? Is it not an unpatriotic desire to have one of Omaha's institutions sunk for the small sum of \$5,000? Has not the M. E. Smith company a right to run, even though it causes a strong competition for some other house in the same line of business? This is a free country, is it not? Then why not protect our institutions and not let there be any Kaiser, if I may say with-

Center Shots

up injured does on Monday of this week. JOHN F. POUCHER, General Manager, Nebraska Humane Society.

Peeping Tom

Peeping Tom was getting an eye full of Godiva. "Some day," said he, "they'll get paid for snooping like this."—Nashville Tennessean.

Civilization isn't hopeless.

None and Cave City get more publicity than Herrin.—Baltimore Sunday Sun.

"Bootlegger" isn't a very pretty name.

but it goes. The bootlegger's other name is legion.—Anacanda Standard.

It's a sad and disappointing world

and nobody ever gets to be as important as he feels at 14.—Vancouver Sun.

They put the word "hot" on the

warm water faucet because there wasn't room to label it "Ananias."—Toledo Blade.

Sixty-eighth congress—1923, sworn

in 1925; cursed out.—Wall Street Journal.

Talents usually come singly.

The

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The CONSERVATIVE

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- Toothache Lumbago
- Neuritis Rheumatism

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SUNNY SIDE UP

Take Comfort, nor forget, That Sunrise never failed us yet, Calla Thayer

Got to thinking about electricity while sitting and waiting for an inspiration, or whatever it is you call the impulse to jot down a few lines for publication. That's all we can do about electricity, just think about it. Nobody knows what it is, but it just beats all what it can do. Right now it is the most commonly used thing in the world, with the possible exceptions of air and water.

When we were a boy about the only use we put electricity to was for telegraphing. We were sitting up and taking notice of the girls when the telephone was invented, and had to use a razor at least once a week before the electric light was invented. We are yet only middle-aged—O, well, maybe just a little past—and just look what a lot of dependence we put on the blooming juice. Without it we couldn't telegraph or telephone or use the radio. It runs our street cars and makes possible the use of the automobile. It lights our homes, cooks our food, heats our water, curls our hair, massages our faces, runs the washing machine, runs the sewing machine, heats the iron, toasts the bread, boils the tea and coffee, rings our bells, runs our elevators, and turns nine-tenths of the commercial wheels of the nation.

Can you imagine what a calamity it would be to be deprived, all at once, of our telephone and telegraph lines, and be forced to wait until steam engines could be installed to run industrial wheels now run by electricity? It would mean going back to the ox cart, the grist mill and the stage coach. It would mean more days than it now means hours to travel from New York to San Francisco, and more days than it now means seconds to establish communication between the two coasts.

Electric current is now in such common use that we never give it a thought until the monthly bill comes in. And even then we are mighty apt to grumble about the cost without taking into consideration how much more expensive it would be to live without it. It has made skyscraper buildings possible, and because of it half the people of the United States will sit down to their radio tonight and listen in on the world's best music and oratory.

Less than a century has seen all of this development, save only the beginnings of the telegraph. And the telegraph system of our boyhood days was woefully crude compared with the quads and duplexes and automatic receiving typewriters we have today. Just sit down and think about what has happened in the last few years, and then try to imagine what is likely to happen in the future field of electric development.

When old Ben Franklin flew his kite in a thunderstorm and got a spark from a key tied to the string, he certainly started something. Today Omaha has more telephones than there were in all the world less than 40 years ago. During the day in which you read this Omaha will consume more electrical energy than was consumed in all the world less than a half-century ago. The capital invested in electrical development in the United States today is greater than the entire assessed valuation of the republic when Abraham Lincoln cast his first vote.

Yet, in spite of all this, not a single one of us knows what electricity is. We know only a small fraction of what it will do when we learn how to use it fully. Coming right down to brass tacks, we don't know very much anyhow, compared with what there is to know.

WILL M. MAUPIN.

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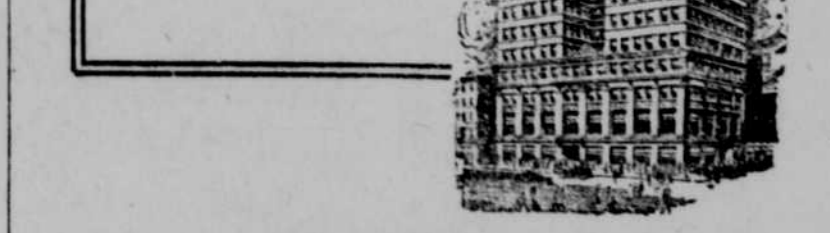
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V. A. BRIDGE, Cir. Mgr.

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 2d day of March, 1925.
W. H. QUIVEY, Notary Public (Seal)

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