

The Independent.

Vol. XV.

LINCOLN NEB., JANUARY 28, 1904.

No. 36.

INARTISTIC FALSIFIERS

Crude Attempts of Republican Press Bureau to Apologize for Nebraska "Redeemers"

The Independent's first page article three weeks ago regarding the beauties of republican "redemption," and the consequent alarming increase in the state debt, has smoked out the republican "bureau of information" at the state house. Sunday's State Journal (24th) contained a column and a quarter of even funnier special pleading than that which made the "kettle case" famous. And Monday's Star contains an editorial rehash of the Journal article.

"The fusion organs," say the collaborators of this tissue of fact and fancy, "are already beginning their campaign to demonstrate that the republican party has pursued an extravagant policy in the state." No campaign is necessary to demonstrate that. All the average taxpayer has to do is to consult his 1903 tax receipt.

"Republican leaders," the special pleaders go on, "are not greatly concerned, however." Doubtless. They have a mullet-head following that can be depended upon to "vote 'er straight." Still, if they are really not "greatly concerned," why waste so much valuable space making explanations which do not explain?

"They admit that the debt has grown somewhat since the beginning of the last republican regime"—why not "redemption?"—"but insistence is placed on the fact that the fusion administration allowed the state buildings to deteriorate," etc. Now, there's gall for you! The "deteriorating" fires which destroyed the penitentiary and Norfolk asylum are with "insistence" and by inference charged up to the "fusion administration"—even though these occurred through the carelessness—criminal neglect—of republican officials, after Nebraska had been "redeemed."

"The claim is made" (but the "claimant" wisely conceals his identity) "that a comparison of the expenditures of the fusionists with those of the republicans will show that much of the increase has been due to the additions made to the permanent state investments." Another characteristic republican statement, purposely intended to deceive the mullet heads. Calling a building a "permanent state investment" may be theoretically sound, but the intention is to have the mullet head think that the big investments made by Treasurer Mortensen for the permanent educational funds—in Massachusetts bonds, state warrants, etc.—have caused part of the \$535,000 increase which the "redeemers" have added to the state debt.

The republican campaign bureau then gives a tabulated statement of "extraordinary expenses due to unforeseen and previously contracted debts from January, 1901, to November 30, 1903, which were added to the state debt are as follows:

| | |
|--|---------------------|
| For rebuilding and refurbishing the state penitentiary, which was burned Feb. 28, 1901..... | \$118,200.00 |
| For wolf bounties partly accumulated under fusion administration..... | 40,000.00 |
| Deficiency from fusion administration which a republican legislature had to make good in order to preserve the state's credit..... | 182,735.97 |
| For return of First Nebraska regiment from San Francisco..... | 47,370.75 |
| For addition to Hastings asylum, the inmates having increased from 542 in 1897, to 1,013, Jan. 1, 1904..... | 55,000.00 |
| For nine supreme court commissioners and their assistants..... | 89,800.00 |
| For pan-American exposition at Buffalo..... | 10,000.00 |
| For permanent location of Nebraska state fair..... | 35,000.00 |
| Total extraordinary exp. | \$578,106.72 |

Adroitly calling attention to the \$1,576,389.86 of state floating debt on November 30, 1897, but artfully concealing the fact that it was \$1,936,273.47 on November 30, 1896, showing a reduction of \$359,883.61 made by the

populists in one year, these republican apologists are forced to admit that the "redeemers" have increased the debt \$535,729.40 in the last three years. They dare not deny that the populist officials in four years made a net reduction of \$208,825.75 in the floating debt and wholly wiped out the bonded debt. Hence, they trump up the table above as a special defense. Let us see if it is good.

The penitentiary item cannot be allowed. Republican carelessness caused the fire, and the rebuilding is a legitimate charge against the "redeemers" in giving an account of their stewardship.

The wolf bounty claim is legitimate in a way, but is offset by a similar one of \$60,000 paid off under the fusion administration. Here the arrant demagoguery of the "redeemers" crops out. Listen:

"It is proper to state that the wolf bounties had been accumulating for years, under a law which made their payment obligatory. A fusion legislature failed to make sufficient appropriation for the payment of these claims, in an effort to make a grandstand exhibition of economy. A republican legislature made provision for the payment of the accrued debt and then repealed the law."

The "wolf bounty" law was enacted in 1877. It provided that upon production of a wolf scalp to the county clerk and certain other satisfactory proof, the county clerk should issue a certificate, which, after filing with the state auditor, would be paid by warrant upon the state treasurer. The Eugene Moore-sugar bounty case, however, long ago settled the question of paying bounties where no appropriation has been made therefor. No warrant can legally be drawn unless the legislature has made an appropriation to cover it—and whenever a wolf bounty appropriation was exhausted the claims necessarily piled up.

At first, perhaps, there was some reason for the law, but in later years it was kept for log-rolling purposes, until Representative E. H. Kittell of Sherman county—an Old Guard populist, by the way—introduced a bill in the last legislature for its repeal.

These redemption apologists would leave the impression that the last \$40,000 was to cover claims of many years standing, when the fact is that the populist legislature of 1891 appropriated \$15,000 while the republican legislature of 1895 and the populist legislatures of 1893 and 1897 failed to make any appropriation to pay the claims. Hence, by 1899 a large number of claims had accrued and the republican legislature that year took pleasure in appropriating \$60,000 all told to pay bounty claims—because that would increase the populist expenditures—a paying for a republican "dead horse" as it were. Hence, the wolf bounty item is \$20,000 on the wrong side for the "redeemers."

The question of "deficiencies" has been discussed by The Independent so often that it would seem that every reader must fully understand it. Reference to the auditor's statement for 1901 (pp. 9 to 30) shows a total of \$149,112.05 "to pay miscellaneous deficiency claims," but through some hocus pocus this seems to have grown over thirty thousand dollars under the "redeemers'" manipulation. But the \$149,099 itself is so manifestly unfair that a little dissection will not improve the case the apologists try to make out. For example, pages 27 to 30 show a list of claims aggregating \$13,280.88 "deficiencies" for "officers' expenses and fees for taking convicts to the penitentiary." Nebraska sheriffs have reason to remember how this "deficiency" occurred. It can be told graphically by a table:

| | |
|--|----------|
| Appropriations for "fugitives from justice, officers' fees," etc., various sessions: | |
| 1885—Republican..... | \$23,750 |
| 1887—Republican..... | 40,000 |
| 1889—Republican (Records destroyed) | |
| 1891—Populist..... | 40,000 |
| 1893—Populist..... | 20,000 |
| 1895—Republican..... | 40,000 |

| | |
|----------------------|--------|
| 1897—Populist..... | 50,000 |
| 1899—Republican..... | 1,500 |
| 1901—Republican..... | 15,000 |
| 1903—Republican..... | 15,000 |

Had the republican legislature of 1899 made its appropriation \$15,000 instead of only one-tenth that amount, there would have been no "populist deficiency."

So much for this item. Another is the penitentiary "deficiency" running up into a good many thousands. Reason:

| Year. | Appropriations. |
|-----------|-----------------|
| 1885..... | \$ 75,770.60 |
| 1887..... | 201,422.15 |
| 1889..... | NC records |
| 1891..... | 168,348.00 |
| 1893..... | 129,335.00 |
| 1895..... | 138,700.00 |
| 1897..... | 63,100.00 |
| 1899..... | 32,950.00 |
| 1901..... | 116,072.50 |
| 1903..... | 216,750.00 |

Warden Hopkins was allowed the convicts' earnings and \$30,000, by the republican legislature of 1899 to run the penitentiary two years. Warden Beemer was given \$87,600 by the republican legislature of 1903 for the same purpose. Yet these apologists talk about "populist deficiencies" and want to account for the big state debt increase by reason thereof! What consummate gall!

It is a fact that the "deficiencies" resulting from populist expenditure of the 1899 appropriation are somewhat larger than usual, but not noticeably so. The republican legislature of 1899 purposely cut the vital appropriations short—as for fuel and lights, board and clothing, etc., but were very liberal with wolf bounty appropriations. However, let us look at some "deficiencies," which, like the poor, are always with us:

Prior to 1895 deficiencies were included with other items and cannot be separated without consulting the original records and prior to 1901 deficiency items were not separately classified, but were made under the particular head where created. The account stands thus:

| | |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1895..... | \$ 39,415.58 |
| 1897..... | 13,677.36 |
| 1899..... | 38,646.15 |
| 1901..... | 149,112.05 |
| 1903..... | 121,287.76 |

When, however, we consider the "fugitive from justice" and penitentiary part of the "populist deficiency" of \$149,000 met by the legislature of 1901; it is not much larger than the "redeemers'" deficiency met in 1903—and that, too, in the face of Candidate Mickey's solemn assurance on the stump in 1902 that "we will close the books without a deficiency." He lied a little over \$121,000—but that's not so bad for a Christian who can make a successful tie-up with the brewers at Omaha.

But that isn't all. Poynter's administration was allowed to spend appropriations aggregating

| | |
|-----------------------|----------------|
| | \$2,591,373.60 |
| Add deficiencies..... | 149,112.05 |

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Making a total of..... | \$2,740,485.65 |
| The "redeemers" were given by the legislature of 1901..... | \$2,875,289.51 |
| Add deficiencies..... | 121,287.76 |

| | |
|---------------------|----------------|
| Making a total..... | \$2,996,577.27 |
|---------------------|----------------|

But please remember that the legislature of 1903—the new revenue law making body—authorized the "redeemers" to spend \$3,740,280.70, and God only knows how big a bunch of deficiencies the next legislature will have to meet.

Hence, the conclusion is irresistible that the "populist deficiency" cry is a poor defense.

The item for return of the First Nebraska may be charged to the fusionists. They contracted that debt and are not ashamed of it. But, having no state funds to pay at the time, temporarily borrowed the money from patriotic Nebraskans, the biggest contributor being the man who was defeated for United States senator by the Journal's efforts.

The addition to Hastings asylum cannot be allowed because a large part of the increased population there

resulted from the Norfolk asylum fire and consequent transfer of patients.

Two-thirds of the supreme court commissioner item is legitimate defense. One-third is offset by the fact that three commissioners and assistants were provided for by the legislature of 1897.

The pan-American appropriation of \$10,000 is only one-tenth as big as the one made in 1897 for the trans-Mississippi exposition. Hence, this defense is \$90,000 "in the red."

Whether the state fair item is a good defense, is left for others to judge. The Independent looks upon that transaction as strongly tinged with "graft"—but will not object to its being admitted in evidence.

Summing up the apologists' defense, the penitentiary, "pop deficiency," and Hastings asylum claims are nil. The return of First Nebraska is good and so is about \$60,000 of the supreme court claim. The wolf bounty and pan-American claims, however, put the "redeemers" in debt \$110,000. And the state fair is offset by the governor's mansion and site for Milford soldiers' home.

That leaves the "redeemers" in debt some three or four thousand dollars, but let's call it square. Both sides are about even on extraordinary expenditures not inspired by downright extravagance. Hence, the increase in the state debt, \$535,000, in three years, must be attributed to something wrong with the "redemption."

"But," continue the apologists, "there is another rational explanation to the increase of debt. In 1897 the appropriation for the support of the state university... amounted to \$252,500.... In 1903... an appropriation of \$779,500 was necessary. This item again accounts for nearly the whole increase of state debt during the past three years" (\$535,000).

In the language of the street gamin, "wouldn't that jar you!" The uninitiated might fall into this trap—especially the mullet head—but it would seem that no man with the slightest knowledge of state finances would.

The state debt, dear reader, is made up at present of the outstanding general fund warrants. The great bulk of university appropriations are made against the following funds: Temporary university, agricultural and mechanic arts, U. S. agricultural experiment station, and university cash. No warrant, except against the first named, could ever by any possibility be classed as a "debt." Against the last three no warrant can be drawn unless there is cash in the treasury to meet and pay it.

How could warrants drawn against the temporary university fund cause an increase in the amount of outstanding general fund warrants? O, bosh; and, O, fudge! John Doe could with equal propriety excuse his getting deeper in debt by affirming that Richard Roe is spending a large amount of money!

The "redeemers" and their apologists must be hard pressed when they can tell no more artistic lie than that. One ought to expect a hand-painted affair with carved legs, but this is ruder than a slab bench in a backwoods school house.

"It must be borne in mind," say the apologists, "that the state's revenues during the entire period were raised under the provision of a revenue law which was universally conceded to be inadequate, which was inelastic and which could not be adapted to the state's growing needs. In other words, the state and its necessities were growing all the time while the revenue law remained unchanged and could not be stretched to meet the increased demands. It is true that there has been a slight increase of revenue under the old law on account of the natural growth of the state in wealth, but it has been in no sense commensurate with the growth of legitimate expenses and has never approximated to the point where a reduction of debt was possible."

It is not "universally conceded" that the inelasticity of the old revenue law was incurable. By removing