

# The Independent.

GEORGE W. BERGE, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

Volume 18

Lincoln, Nebraska, June 8, 1905

Number 3

## Pass Holders Dodging To Deceive The Public

In their convention held at Falls City last week to nominate a congressman to fill the unexpired term made vacant by the election of Mr. Burkett to the senate, the republicans passed the following resolution:

"We favor legislation that will prohibit the giving of free transportation to all public officials and that will prohibit officials receiving and using the same, believing that the pass system is an evil, a burden on the transportation companies and against public interest."

The Independent is always glad when any headway is made along right lines. There is some headway made in the passage of this resolution by the republican convention, but not as much as the face of the record would indicate. Why did the convention pass that resolution? Did it do so because it honestly believed what it said, or because it was whipped into it by public sentiment? Is that resolution an honest expression by honest men working only for the public good, or is it an expression by a convention of politicians playing the game of politics? These are questions on which every voter wishes to be enlightened.

The Independent believes that there were delegates in that convention who went to the convention without passes, and who honestly and conscientiously are opposed to the free pass evil. But a majority of the delegates had railroad passes in their pockets when the resolution was introduced, and when it was passed. These delegates voted for the resolution, not that they favored it, but because they knew that the public favored it, and because they thought it was good politics.

No class of men in politics is more dangerous to society than this class. It is right and proper that delegates to conventions should respond to public sentiment, but this response must be sincere and with an intention to carry out the people's will. No one, however, can believe that delegates are sincere when their own individual conduct is out of harmony with public sentiment. If all pass holders, like men, would stand up and try to defend the free pass, the pass evil would soon be done away with. This, however, they will not do. The real trouble ahead for the people is to know who are sincerely opposed to the pass evil, and who are simply playing the game of politics. The Independent will point out a way by which every voter can tell, without fail, to which class any delegate to any convention belongs, and also to which class every candidate belongs. Find out whether he has a pass in his pocket. Find out whether in private life he has been riding

free, or whether he has been paying his fare. You can tell by this sign only. It is a sure sign, however, in every case.

What a spectacle it is to see a convention of free pass holders condemning free passes and favoring a law to abolish them! What a spectacle it is to see a convention of delegates demanding a law to make pass giving and pass receiving a misdemeanor, while most of them have the evidence of the misdemeanor in their pockets! The Independent insists that no effective anti-pass legislation can ever be obtained, and that the railways in this state, or, for that matter, in the entire country, can never be controlled until all men with free passes are excluded from nominating conventions.

But the resolution passed by this congressional convention does not go far enough. Why limit to public officials the prohibition of free passes? It is apparent that the convention did not grasp the real evil of free passes. The current of the free pass evil runs much deeper than the meaning of that resolution.

In the first place the free pass is wrong, and should be prohibited by law because it bribes. The free-pass system is a colossal bribe. The system has bribed mayors, city councils, legislatures, judges, state officers, and thereby the people have been betrayed, sold out and robbed of millions of dollars. The wrong done by the boodlers of St. Louis is insignificant compared to the wrong done by the free-pass system in nearly every state in the union.

But the evil does not end with the bribe. The free pass is wrong for another reason. It is wrong because it unjustly discriminates. Both public officials and private citizens must cease to ride on passes. Why should one man pay to ride on the trains and his neighbor ride free? Why should the rich man ride free and the poor man pay? The state gives the railways the right to transact business in the state. The railways are public highways. The state cannot permit any discrimination between its citizens. It is wrong to permit freight discrimination. It is even a greater wrong to permit passenger discrimination. Why did not the republicans in their congressional convention pass a resolution that meant something? We can find the answer in the convention itself. There were too many pass-holding delegates in that convention. Let a movement be inaugurated at once that will shut out for all time from all conventions all pass holding delegates.

### POWER OF POPULAR ANTAGONISM

The popular victories achieved in Wisconsin, Kansas and Missouri, in Chicago and Philadelphia, are teaching a golden lesson. They show that wherever public sentiment has been aroused against railway or corporation tyranny the people have made substantial progress in their contests to free themselves from extortion and injustice.

It is a lesson that will inspire the people with hope. It will convince them that the railways and corporations are not invulnerable, that their grip on legislative bodies can be loosened, and that their most skillfully contrived plans can be utterly defeated. There are those who fear the trusts have grown too powerful to be restrained and controlled, and this timidity leads them to believe that all antagonism by the people is doomed to failure. Were the people generally to adopt such a view the trusts would indeed become invulnerable, but indifference is everywhere giving way to a spirit of resolute opposition. Inspired by the recent success of popular movements against corporation rule, the lukewarm and pessimistic have joined the ranks of reform and will hereafter fight its battles with confidence and determination.

In staid, sleepy and apathetic Philadelphia, where bossism and ring rule had so long carried out the will of the corporations, the people were suddenly aroused by a scandalous "gas steal." The resoluteness, nay actual ferocity, with which the citizens began their fight on the United Gas Improvement company, was a revelation to the country. Some were inclined to think that the Quakers had taken their stand too late. Others held that at best the fight would be tedious and discouraging. Even the citizens them-

selves shared in this latter belief. They beheld mighty powers of greed and corruption arrayed against them. The committee of seventy was forced to seek legal help in New York because all the leading lawyers of Philadelphia had been retained by interests allied with the United Gas Improvement company. Even when Mayor Weaver rid himself of two officials who openly sided with the "gang," the people did not dream that the United Gas Improvement company could be frightened from its course. When the members of the common and select councils began to desert the "gang" and declare against the lease, the citizens did not expect an easy triumph, but suddenly the gas company retired from the field in a panic. Its president announced that even were the ordinance granting the lease to be passed over the mayor's veto the company would not enter into the contract.

At first the people were a bit mystified. They could not understand clearly why the United Gas Improvement company had been seized with such a sudden fright. In a few days, however, the reasons back of the move came to light. The United Gas Improvement company holds franchises in forty cities. On an average four of these leases expire every year and the company almost invariably seeks renewals of its contracts. The gas officials discovered that the Philadelphia agitation was extending to the other cities in which they transacted business and that there was great danger that they would be unable to obtain extensions of their franchises. They realized that even though they gained the franchise they sought in Philadelphia it would not compensate them for the franchises they would lose elsewhere. Then they hauled down the black flag of piracy and surrendered.

The Philadelphia episode is a lesson which the people of this country