

# The Independent.

GEORGE W. BERGE, EDITOR AND PUBLISHER

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## Degradation of United States Senate Is a National Scandal

The United States senate is now under the microscope. It is being examined with more than scientific interest by representatives of various publications that are striving to suit the popular taste. The record of every senator is being investigated. Already many interesting articles have appeared and more are promised.

Interest in the senate has been revived for two reasons. Its power over legislation is more keenly appreciated than ever, and many of its members are now known to be corrupt. In other days the public was quite as well aware as at present that, generally, senators are elected through the favor of special interests. In a sort of happy-go-lucky spirit, however, the people, if they thought about the matter at all, concluded that a senator might represent special interests in congress and yet be tolerably honest. It was an illogical conclusion, but it existed and held its own until senators, in the teeth of favor and protection, began to get into jail and into public scandals.

The corruption and degradation of the senate is really the most interesting phase of what might be described as the personal side of contemporary politics. The dishonesty of corporations is rather abstract despite the fact that "guilt is always personal." The dishonesty of United States senators has in it much of concrete human interest. That is why the newspapers and magazines are telling us that they can find out about senatorial shortcomings and possible wrong-doing. It is likely, indeed, that most of us take a rather malicious satisfaction in seeing the baseness of senators exposed. Like the famous "defenders of the national honor" they are found to be as whitened sepulchres.

But along with this mere human curiosity and ignoble satisfaction there is a desire to see the senate regenerated, for on that event depends the safety of our institutions and the welfare of the people. The senate blocks every real effort to legislate against the giant evils. Representing special interests and not the public, it favors even to

the point of countenancing dishonesty such legislation as will help the corporations, and it is superfluous to say that it combats all legislation that is designed to restrict the corporations. How this is done is the subject matter of the newspaper and magazine exposes. Take a single, and by no means the worst illustration, of pandering to special interests:

Senator Hansbrough, of South Dakota, was a "free silver" republican. This was much in his disfavor from the corporation point of view, but Hanna understood and liked Hansbrough and persuaded the political leaders of South Dakota to forgive him. He went to the United States senate as "a rabid anti-corporation man." In the fifty-seventh congress Senator Hansbrough pressed upon the consideration of the senate a bill granting to the Central Arizona Railroad company a right of way across the San Francisco mountains forest reserve. The bill passed the house and senate, but was condemned by the secretary of the interior and vetoed by President Roosevelt, who said:

"There is no reason why this railroad should be singled out to be favored beyond all other railroads by being excepted from the necessity of complying with the departmental regulations with which all other railroads are forced to comply."

The corporation record of Senator Hansbrough has not been nearly so offensive as the record of some avowed corporation senators like Senator Platt, Depew, Aldrich, Elkins or Foraker, but it has a particular moral. Sometimes the railways and corporations put forward "a rabid anti-corporation man" for the purpose of deceiving the voters. That has been done more than once in Nebraska, no political party being free from the taint. It is not always possible to "scotch" the man, but the fact that such trickery is common should teach the people to be vigilant, to remain awake, and to use every honest means of sending to the United States senate men who will be loyal to public interests rather than to special interests.

## How Booms are Manufactured

The fame of many politicians and actors has been made by the versatile press agent. Chauncey Depew became a great man through the medium of newspaper puffs, but after many years the bubble of his reputation burst against the rude spears of a legislative investigating committee.

At the present time Nebraska is enjoying the excitement of a press bureau boom. The casual reader, picking up at random republican newspapers published in Nebraska, finds that most of them are booming a certain Norris Brown for United States senator, and he instantly concludes that there exists within republican ranks a universal sentiment in favor of Mr. Brown's election. There is nothing to show that these laudatory notices have been prepared at a hotel in Lincoln, Neb., and sent out to republican newspapers. The casual reader, therefore, sees nothing to arouse his suspicions. The result is that he is inspired by a generous enthusiasm which he thinks is communicated to him from the minds and hearts of his fellow republicans in all parts of the state. He does not know that the stimulus comes from professional manufacturers of enthusiasm and booms.

Norris Brown is attorney general of Nebraska. At the request of about thirty counties in the state he defended the tax cases against the railways. In these cases the state was interested to the extent of many thousands of dollars. Evidently the attorney general could not refuse to take charge of the cases, being impelled thereto by his duty as defined in the statutes and by public demand. If he had refused to appear in the suits he would have been neglecting his duty

and inviting public indignation. Had he failed to win it would have been a matter of intense surprise. Consequently there was not much reason for a paean of praise in honor of the attorney general. And when it is discovered that the chief singers in this anvil chorus are literary blacksmiths who manufacture booms on demand the true status of the present boom will be better understood.

About ten months ago The Independent called upon Attorney General Brown to enforce the maximum rate law of the state. The law was not dead. Its operation had been suspended temporarily by the United States supreme court on the ground that its schedules were confiscatory in the years of commercial depression. Had the attorney general reopened the case the chances are he would have been able to convince the court that in prosperous times the Newberry rates are just and reasonable. But the railways feared the maximum rate law because, if made operative, it would have deprived them of much rich plunder.

To keep down taxation the railways brought the tax suits, and there was no escape for Norris Brown. He was forced to fight the cases, which, by the way, have not been won, although it seems certain that the United States supreme court must affirm the decision of Judge Munger. But the maximum rate case was not in court. The only way it could get into court was by the action of the attorney general, and the attorney general refused to act.

The attorney general also refused to enforce the anti-pass law of the state and he surrendered his railway passes only when com-