

THE NEBRASKA INDEPENDENT

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TO READERS OF THE INDEPENDENT

I have sold The Independent to The Independent Publishing Company, and hereafter the paper will be run by that company. I am moved to take this action because I find that I cannot give the time to the paper that I should and at the same time attend to my law practice, which demands my entire attention. Then, again, my brother, who has been business manager of the paper, in a few weeks will go east to engage in business for himself and without him it would be additionally difficult for me to run the paper.

During the time that I have owned The Independent I have tried to make it a champion of the peoples' rights as against the greed and corruption of the corporations and other selfish interests that are continually endeavoring to steal away the government from the people. I have tried to make it absolutely an independent paper. I may have made mistakes, but I have honestly tried to seek out the truth and tell it and let the chips fall where they would. I have been criticised by both democrats and populists for not making it a party organ. I did not do it because I would rather be a galley slave than run such a paper. What we need is more independent papers and less partisan organs. Truth and the sacred rights of the people are more important than the interests of any political party and it was this righteous cause that The Independent has tried to serve.

The ownership of The Independent has brought no financial gain to me. It has been a great personal sacrifice to me. But I have reward enough in the hundreds of letters of commend-

ation and encouragement from my fellow-citizens all over the country, and also in the consciousness that all the political parties in Nebraska last year were compelled by the force of public sentiment to pledge themselves to carry out the specific reforms I battled for two years ago in my race for governor. What we want is these reforms for the people and not any office for any individual or the supremacy of any political party.

I am glad to say that The Independent will continue to be an absolutely independent paper and battle for the peoples' interests as it has done in the past. It will be enlarged and improved in many ways and its readers will be given even a better paper than I was able to make it.

I desire to thank all readers of The Independent for the cordial and loyal support given me while I have owned the paper. My relationship with the subscribers has been a very pleasant one and in returning to my profession I take with me the many "God-speed-yous" given me by the readers of this paper.

GEORGE W. BERGE.

SOLID OR VENEERED, WHICH?

The Nebraska legislature has the external appearance of virtue. Whether or not it is composed of genuine material or is simply wearing a mask of pretense and hypocrisy will soon be known. The republicans have an overwhelming majority in both branches, and are consequently able to redeem every pledge made by the party in convention and on the rostrum. Will they do so? Let us hope they will for the good of the state.

The Independent believes in the honesty of purpose and good intentions of an overwhelming majority of the voters of all political parties. The hope of popular government will have disappeared from the earth whenever any considerable minority of the voters of a great state can be found to violate their conscience in an election.

The rank and file of the republican party are honest men, having only the good of the state at heart. The officers that were elected by the party last autumn, were elected upon a pledge to enact certain and specific laws in absolute good faith. The people expect specific performance of the pledges made without equivocation or evasion of any kind whatever. Will they get it? If they do the party will have a just claim to the future confidence and support of the voters. But if it be found that the party leaders were insincere in their profession of reform, or are faint hearted in performance, then, in that case the party will pay the forfeiture in the next election.

When the voters are lethargic and indifferent upon issues the party spirit dominates the mind and they are indulgent toward their representatives in office. But when they are aroused

and determined they are exacting in the extreme and are incapable of condoning a betrayal of the trust they reposed in their representatives.

The members of the majority will be wise if they remember that in the last election the party took advanced ground, and succeeded in convincing a majority that the new leaders were right, and that the old leaders were in league with the corporations that had been plundering them for years. The rank and file of the party responded to the call of the new leaders and hurled the old grizzled veterans of the party from place and power. Absolute good faith alone will give the present leaders any future standing with the men to whom they owe their present positions.

What do the voters expect, and on what do they insist? First, effective legislation that will save them at least ten million dollars per year in excessive railway charges. Second, that the free railroad pass evil will be abolished root and branch, leaving no loopholes through that pernicious evil can be no longer practiced. This cannot be done without outlawing the newspaper mileage contract, and the half rate fare for ministers of the gospel. There is no honest reason why newspapers and ministers should receive subsidies from the railroads. And we assert that the newspaper mileage contract is given as a subsidy to the press and that the half fare to preachers is intended as a subsidy just as much so as the free passes that are given to executive legislative and judicial officers of the government. No half way measure will do. The free pass in all of its forms is not only intended as a bribe, but it has proved to be efficient as such generally. The free pass must go, root and branch.

The next thing that the people demand is the enactment of a state wide primary law for the nomination of candidates for office. Such law to be so framed that it will include the features that have been found good in other states such as Arkansas, Wisconsin and Texas where primary laws are now in force and effect. The question of railroad taxation will undoubtedly receive proper attention. But the people will jealously watch the action of their members of the legislature upon legislation effecting railroad rates, passes and taxation, and in an especial manner will they note the attitude of members on the primary election law.

The people generally regard the republican reformers as unseasoned timber liable to warp, crack or twist when put to the test of any considerable strain. It behooves them to prove that their professions of reform are not a thin veneering upon a green and unseasoned base, because if they fail to satisfy the honest demands of the people for relief from railroad govern-

ment and railroad extortion their career will be as short as it will be inglorious.

CANNOT ESCAPE RESPONSIBILITY

The minority in the state legislature cannot escape responsibility for failure to enact the laws demanded by the people, unless they will be able to show that they exhausted every resource at their command to secure such enactments. It will not do to shirk any of the duties of a legislator on the ground that the responsibility for legislation rests upon the majority. It is the duty of the minority to prepare and introduce such bills as they themselves would enact into law, if they were in the majority. To do less than this is to fail in the discharge of duty.

It affords the minority no sufficient excuse for indolence or neglect of duty that they are not adequately represented on the committees intrusted by the majority with the preparation of bills. They must bear in mind that all bills must pass the committee of the whole before being put upon their passage in either house. If the minority are thoroughly prepared with amendments to offer in the committee of the whole, they can challenge the majority party to furnish enough votes for the amendments they offer to perfect the bill and strengthen it in every essential particular. Upon their amendments they can at the proper time demand a roll call and make a record to go to the people with.

But in case they neglect to prepare and offer such amendments, they will forfeit the right to even offer adverse criticism upon such measures as the majority may see fit to enact into law. A legislative body is a place for work, strenuous work. And the minority, knowing the demands of the people as they do, by intelligent and unremitting effort, may be able to force the adoption of their amendments and thus improve the character of the laws that finally pass.

It sometimes happens that minorities in legislative bodies adopt a course of negation and criticism, but such course is always regarded as evidence of bad faith, and is never productive of good either from a party standpoint, or any other.

This country is entering upon a period of constructive legislation for both the states and the nation. Indolence, or inefficiency in a legislator at such a time is unpardonable. Opportunity is ever open to the minority to voice the demands of the people, which if they succeed in doing with greater precision and force than is done by the majority, they win laurels individually and strengthen their party.

Note the work accomplished by the great LaFollette, practically single-handed and alone in the last sessions of the United States senate. Every bushel of grain that is marketed this