

# EDITORIALS

## The Omaha Guide

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Race prejudice must go. The Fatherhood of God and the Brotherhood of Man must prevail. These are the only principles which will stand the acid test of good citizenship in time of peace, war and death.

Omaha, Nebraska, Saturday, APRIL 6, 1935

managements want to wave the white flag and surrender their economic position, that is their business.

### THE CROOKED LAWYER

No profession should hold to higher levels of honor, integrity and plain honesty than should the law. The right to practice in the courts of justice carries with it a vast and inescapable obligation to the public. Most lawyers live up to the essential standards—a few do not. And these few, as Courtney Ryley Cooper points out in an interview with Attorney-General Cummings, appearing in a recent issue of the Saturday Evening Post, are much the enemies of the public as the gangster they defend.

Mr. Cooper cites almost incredible instances of lawyers who are retained by known criminals and are given large sums of money to use in any way they like—so long as acquittal is obtained for the underworld client. Such lawyers worry little about evidence or justice—they know that bribery is a more effective weapon. They train their clients like actors, so that when they appear on the witness stand they can make "saged" answers to any question. They obtain perjured alibis—and buy off prosecution witnesses. In Mr. Cooper's words, "It is all fakery, crookedness, chicanery."

Bar associations, the judiciary and honest individuals are working tirelessly to rid society of this type of lawyer. But, as the interview points out, all such worthy efforts are doomed to failure without aggressive public support. Many people are inclined to be amused by the unethical lawyer—they even go so far as to admire the "cleverness" with which he manages to circumvent the ends of justice. So long as this attitude obtains, the shyster will prosper—and the ethics of the legal profession will suffer accordingly.

The law is the very life—blood of society. Its honest administration is our main defense against medieval social darkness. The crooked lawyer menaces us all—and his good office—at high price—on behalf of the most despicable criminals are carried on at the expense of the entire public.

### FIRST FIREPROOF BIRD'S NEST.

A news item from a Southern city stated that "the first fireproof bird's nest ever seen in this country, so far as is known, was discovered the other day on the roof of a hotel. The nest was constructed entirely of small pieces of wire and there was not a twig or a piece of string to it."

One would almost think that the birds that built this nest had heard of the recommendations of the National Board of Fire Underwriters, which advocates fire resistive construction as a primary means of reducing the great toll in life and property taken by fire each year. We will always have fires—but improved construction standards can do much to mitigate the damage done.

Dwelling houses of frame construction offer an invitation to fire, as the hollow walls permit flames to spread throughout the entire structure. Even such buildings can be made fire-resistive to an extent by means of comparatively simple precautions. Many fires start in cellars and soon communicate to the entire house. This can be prevented by a ceiling in the cellar of cement plaster on metal lath, extending across from foundation to foundation. The door at the head of the stairs should be of sufficiently heavy construction to resist flames for some time. Additional precautions are fire stops in walls at each floor level and fire resisting roofing.

Large buildings, such as factories, warehouses, office buildings and those housing mercantile establishments, should be constructed of as nearly as possible with fireproof materials. It is highly important that all vertical openings such as elevator and dumbwaiter shafts and stairways be entirely enclosed. Any doors into them should be of the self-closing type. A means of automatically ventilating such shafts at the roof should be provided.

The first fireproof bird's nest was news—it will be bigger news when a town or city can report that all of its buildings are of fire resistive construction.

### MUSSOLINI'S MATCH

Diplomatically, Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia has proved to be the match of Mussolini, Italy's dictator, thus demonstrating that all of the knowledge of statecraft is not confined to the white race.

Very carefully, the Italian government prepared to show that Ethiopia was in the wrong. With just as much care the African emperor showed the world that Italy was the aggressor.

If Italy now goes through with her plans to grab a substantial slice of Abyssinian territory, it will be without a shadow of justification in the

eyes of the world, chiefly because of the clever diplomatic maneuverings of the tempor and his advisors.

Moribund as is the League of Nations, it is nevertheless an excellent sounding board for world long ago and to join the League. By appealing to opinion. Abyssinia was wise enough to see this the League in her present difficulty, the African kingdom has placed Italy on the defensive, when she hoped to remain on the offensive.

This diplomatic defeat, coupled with the increasingly precarious condition in Europe, may very likely deter Italy from taking more drastic action against Ethiopia.

### HITTING A VICIOUS SYSTEM

The vicious sharecropper system of the South was given another blow last week, when the committee on Minority Groups in the Economic Recovery issued its exhaustive report on the agricultural plight of the South.

It repeats what has been said here many times, that tenant farming is a menace that is ruining the South and reducing blacks and whites to a condition worse than slavery. With 71 per cent of the cotton farms and 58 per cent of all farms in the South farmed by tenants, with AAA cotton curtailment driving thousands off the soil onto an inadequate dole, with meager diet dooming millions to rickets and pellagra, with the foreign cotton market steadily declining, the South is doomed unless it ousts once and for all the vicious plantation system.

The obvious solution of the problem is to break up the plantation system and turn the tenants into small landowners by giving each family a small piece of ground and making financial provisions that will prevent this land from falling into the hands of real estate sharks. It will do no good to merely give land to these hapless thousands and make no provisions for staking them until they can become self supporting. The small farms should be equipped with house, mule and tools and kept tax free for at least the first two or three years.

The government might better spend two or three billion dollars in this way than to spend an equal sum on an inadequate dole that not only demoralizes these workers, but must be continued year in and year out.

The Southern sharecropping system has been a dismal failure. It should be ended. Cotton is no longer a profitable crop, now that a score of countries are producing it in large quantities. If it cannot be sold, why raise it at all beyond our national needs?

It will be far better for the South, aided by the Federal government, to strictly limit cotton production and foster the growing of other products for which a market can be secured. At least one-quarter of the present farm area of the South could well be devoted to raising crops: vegetables, fruits, meat and milk, to nourish a people debilitated by decades of an enforced diet of fatback, corn pone and molasses.

Much of the ignorance and backwardness of the South is due to its vicious economic system. Break that up and blacks and whites will prosper, become healthier in mind and body, and real civilization will have a chance to flourish.

### THE HARLEM RIOT.

New York's Harlem has given us another demonstration of what results from a peculiar economic aspect which all large cities, especially those sections in which we chiefly reside, are victims of. The public press charge the riot to the striking of a small Filipino boy by a white merchant. The merchant said that the boy had stolen a pocketknife. Somebody ran to the street and said that the boy had been killed in the store.

After this wild and untrue information, then all was confusion, several killed and hundreds injured. As a matter of fact, that wasn't the cause of the riot. The cause of the riot was and is the condition of economic indifference with which Harlem is treated by those who control the economic life of Harlem.

The responsibility for this treatment rests in particular upon Harlem's black leadership and what is true in Harlem is true in Chicago. It is universally true in other large cities of the country. We haven't the courage and manhood to properly contend for the things we are justly entitled to. We haven't the foresight as a race to discern the things we are not getting.

We accept the shadow for the substance and make ourselves contented. What Harlem is suffering from is no less a menace than in the thickly populated Southside of Chicago in which thousands of us dwell. The principal streets for an area of forty blocks where we are filled with stores which we support but are operated by white men, who do not even employ members of our race, and a very limited few of them find it necessary to advertise their wares in our newspapers.

Yet, we as a group of people, support their establishments and educate their children in addition to maintaining for them a residence outside of our district. If we could think right, if we could discern our own economic advantages, these conditions could not exist in our communities. Yet it must be borne in mind that rioting and destruction of property are not the answer or the remedy to be applied. We must do some right thinking, backed up by right acting and this can be accomplished through the inauguration of a racial program definitely carried out and embracing those principles which will improve our social and economic advantages in the

various communities in which we live.

—From The Chicago Defender.

### SENATOR TYDINGS UNINFORMED.

Senator Tydings, of Maryland does not appear to quite understand the reasons for such high proportions of colored people being on the relief roll. We don't know just what atmosphere the senator lives in. His ignorance of things which the ordinary person should know may be due to the fact that he is a senator far removed from what the President calls the forgotten man.

For your edification, Senator Tydings, there are many reasons why the proportion of colored people should be higher on the relief roll than that of the whites. The first reason, Senator Tydings, will be found in the dishonesty, greediness and selfishness, hatred and prejudice of the white man himself.

If this isn't quite plain to you, Senator, it can be explained to you in this wise—and probably we had better start in your city, the city of Baltimore first, with our explanation. You have a city of several thousand, well educated and upstanding colored people; how many of them are holding positions as a result of your influence?

How many of them in the state have you appointed to positions? As a matter of fact, Senator, what has been your contribution as a public official toward reducing this high proportion of colored people on relief roll in your home state? In the city of Baltimore, Senator, what influence have you exerted with the public officials of that city toward securing positions in the police and fire departments for colored men? Our information is, none, and we get it from a very prominent newspaper published in your city.

It would appear, Senator Tydings, that your complaint about the large proportion of colored people on the relief roll is somewhat in bad taste. We further learn from this newspaper, Senator, that in the city of Baltimore "there is not a colored policeman, municipal or state clerk, plumber or carpenter in Baltimore or Maryland. Not a single fireman or garbage cart driver."

If these are true facts—and we believe they are because we have great respect for the editor of the paper which published them—then you, Senator, should be the last man to complain about what the federal government is doing when you and your state are doing little.

Now, Senator Tydings, you can get the complete answer to the rest of your questions, by applying what you are doing for them and multiplying it by what is being done for them by other states where the public officials think as you think. That will be all, Senator.

—From The Chicago Defender.

### THE FRUITS OF COOPERATION.

A practical example of the essential work done by agricultural cooperatives is afforded in the case of dairy products producers in an eastern state.

During depression, consumption in the largest market served by these farmers dropped 40 per cent. At the same time, production kept to a stable level, making it necessary for the producers to find new outlets in order to dispose of the surplus.

A pooling arrangement was then put into effect. Outlet for the surplus was found by turning a part of the total production to manufacturing units. Milk used for manufacture commanded a lower price than that sold to the consumer in the fluid state—and that inequality was satisfactorily adjusted with in the pool by deducting enough from the price received by those who sold fluid milk to compensate the members whose milk went to manufacturing.

The plight of the unorganized farmer when demand falls, is well known. He is absolutely powerless—he can do nothing save continue to produce and take whatever price he is offered for the part of his crop that is wanted. When that farmer joins with other farmers and all work together in allocating production, stabilizing prices and exploring new markets, the picture changes altogether.

Cooperation has saved a legion of farmers from ruin during the past few years. And now it is slowly, but steadily, helping to bring agricultural recovery.

### THE AMERICAN CHARACTER

"The extent of insurance protection in America is the best evidence I know that this country is fundamentally sound," said Henry Swift Ives, recently.

That is an especially apt observation when applied to life insurance, which is the average man's first line of defense against hazards of the future. Last year the public paid premiums to keep in force life insurance totaling One Hundred Billion. Many of the premiums paid represented real sacrifice—men and women went to extreme lengths to maintain their policies in force, knowing that they might be their only protection against even greater adversity in days to come.

America is the most heavily insured nation in the world—and that in itself is a testimonial of the ancient American quality of independence. The man who buys an insurance policy, and pays for it with his hard earned money, isn't the type of man who willingly becomes a ward of the government. He wants to provide for his future and that of his family through his own work, thrift and foresight. As long as that attitude exists, we will have little to worry about so far as the American character is concerned.

### IS GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP THE SOLUTION?

Two diverse factors have centered attention on the question of government ownership of the rail-

road industry.

One is the frank opinion of Federal Coordinator of Transportation that the government should eventually take over the lines.

The other lies in the possibility that the government may require a large amount of railroad mileage, if loans made to weak systems by government are not repaid.

This question, like all others, will eventually be solved by the public, and every citizen should do a good bit of thinking about it. Entirely aside from any problem of principle, practical considerations give rise to extreme doubts as to the standards of service that would result from government operation.

During the war, government, in the name of emergency, took over the lines. Service suffered at once. Great delay took place in the moving of freight, and thousands of tons of perishable goods were thus destroyed. The attitude of the government officials in charge was usually arrogant—the public was offered bad service on a "Take it or leave it we don't care which" basis. It is true that the war produced unprecedented conditions—but that is not enough of an alibi to excuse the chaos into which our basic media of transport was plunged under federal management. Nor does it excuse the tremendous deficits which were created—at the expense of all taxpayers.

American railroad service, under private ownership, is the best in the world. Rates are low, and service is unexcelled. The lines have made consistent technical progress in advancing safety, speeding up trains, eliminating car shortages, and so on, in spite of many profitless years. If government ownership is tried as the "solution" to our railroad problem, the entire public will feel the adverse effects—and the taxpayers will find out how expensive political operation of a great industry can be.

### FATAL ERRORS

Traffic accidents were more numerous and more severe in 1934 than any previous year.

Eight of the worst driving mistakes responsible for last year's tragic record are listed by the National Bureau of Casualty and Surety Underwriter as follows:

- 1.—Driving too fast for conditions, a cause named specifically in 22 per cent of all accidents resulting in fatalities charged to drivers alone, and a distinct and sometimes controlling factor in accidents attributed to many other causes.
- 2.—Driving on the wrong side of the road.
- 3.—Violating right-of-way rules.
- 4.—Cutting in.
- 5.—Passing on curve or hill.
- 6.—Failing to signal or signalling improperly.
- 7.—Driving off roadway.
- 8.—Reckless driving.

Pedestrians made fatal errors too. Four of the worst were:

- 1.—Crossing between intersections, a mistake that accounted for more than 25 per cent of all pedestrian fatalities.
  - 2.—Crossing against the signal light at intersections.
  - 3.—Playing in the street, an error made chiefly by children, resulting in 16 per cent of all pedestrian deaths.
  - 4.—Coming from behind parked cars.
- Motorists and pedestrians—Avoid these fatal errors in 1935—and you will be doing your part to reduce the traffic toll.

### POLITICAL ATTACKS—AND THE INVESTOR

"A decline of nearly 40 per cent in the market value of common stocks of sound public utility operating companies has occurred since the October, 1932, levels," said John E. Zimmerman, President of the United Gas Improvement Company, recently. "This per centage of decrease, if applied to the five billion of utility common stock, represents a loss to investors of nearly two billion dollars."

"The announcement of the Tennessee Valley Project, the heavy increase in utility taxation, the publicizing of the TVA yard stick—each resulted in material decrease in the market value of common stocks of operating companies. This is all the more significant in that these decreases were made even in the face of a steady improvement in the sales of electricity."

A survey of utility financial reports indicates that a large number of important systems are today selling more power—yet are earning less money, and are suffering a further decline in the worth of their securities. On the one hand, we are bleeding the companies white through taxes and special charges, and on the other we are subjecting them to bitter unfair and uneconomic political attacks. A situation such as this, effecting an industry worth billions which gives employment to many hundreds of thousands of workers, constitute a grave threat to general industrial recovery.

### OUR STAKE IN MINING

In a recent address, Congressman Murdock of Utah brought out some interesting facts concerning "America's Stake in the Mining Industry."

The mineral wealth of the United States is more varied and abundant than that of any other region. The mining industry represents an investment of between twelve and fifteen billion dollars.

It is a surprising fact, as Mr. Murdock pointed out, "every state in the union is engaged in the mining industry and its direct influence is felt by every citizen."

Mining is one of those few basic industries which are necessary to the progress, stability and prosperity of the nation.

## ECONOMIC HIGHLIGHTS

Happenings That Affect the Dinner Table Checks and Tax of Every Individual.

"The full impact of business discouragement is being visited upon members of Congress," says the United States News. "The tide of protest against restrictive legislation is rising."

The public attitude toward the last Congress was one of sympathy and patience. Extraordinary legislation was proposed and passed with a modicum of opposition from businesses and individuals. Unprecedented actions were accepted by the public without argument. There was relatively little criticism of Congressional moves and almost no criticism of the President.

Today the situation is very different. Congress is being damned, reviled and denounced. And criticism is reaching out towards the White House, which, less than a year ago, was almost sacrosanct. Those who oppose restrictive laws have apparently decided that the time when silence could do any good is past; that they have everything to gain and nothing to lose by pressing their side of the case with force and forthrightness.

An excellent example of this change is found in the response to the Public Utility Act of 1935, usually referred to as the Rayburn Bill, because it was introduced by Representative Rayburn of Texas. If this bill passes, almost every utility holding company in the nation will be forced to go out of business between 1937 and 1940—and, in addition, during that interim practically every operating utility company will be subjected to the iron clad control of a federal commission. So sweeping are the bill's provisions that an operating company could not engage legal counsel, purchase supplies or make an advertising contract without first obtaining the consent of the federal regulatory authorities.

The bill's prospects for passing were extremely poor a short time ago—it was in committee, and relatively few Congressmen showed any enthusiasm for it. Then the President issued his famous statement to Congress on holding companies, threw the full weight of his influence behind the bill. Congressmen fell in line, and it seemed inevitable that the bill would pass in practically the same form it had been introduced.

Then the "tide of protest" rose. Utility companies sent letters to their stockholders, urged them to write to their Congressmen. They ran advertisements opposing the bill, and pointing to what its effect would be. An association composed of utility investors, large and small—they number 10,000,000 and have a stake of 12 billion dollars in the utility industry, according to News-Week—brought out its heaviest artillery. Result: Senate and House postoffice forces had to work nights in order to handle the thousands of letters to Congressmen opposing the bill.

Upshot of the flood of correspondence was a resolution, introduced by Senator Norris, to investigate the source of this "propaganda." That, in view of many unbiased newspapers, was rather ridiculous—it is no secret that utilities and their investors are opposing the bill in order to protect their property. Congressman Fish of New York rose in the House, said that the President's message was in itself propaganda of the most potent kind—asked, by intimation, why others should not have the right to present their side of the issue without question.

The consequences of all this is that the bill will not, unless all present signs are wrong, pass in its original form. Utility leaders are the first to admit that certain individual holding companies have abused their powers—but they believe that the way to remedy the situation is through regulation, not destruction.

Other major pieces of legislation are finding opposition from many directions. The social security program, for example, is being bitterly debated—and when it comes up for Congressional consideration there is going to be warfare. That, in the opinion of most commentators, is a good sign—fearless debate and newspaper comment are the safeguards of democratic government.

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Nature is repeating herself. Last year she brought the greatest drought in history to the great

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