

THE VALENTINE DEMOCRAT

I. M. RICE,

Editor and Propr.

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THURSDAY, MARCH 2, 1905.

EDITORS STAND PAT

Speak Against Passes And For Direct Primary.

GREAT INTEREST SHOWN IN THE PROCEEDINGS.

State Press Association Goes Strongly on Record on Two Steps Toward Restoring Popular Rule in Nebraska.

Resolved, That the Nebraska State Press Association in convention assembled at Kearney declares its interest in and support of the question before the legislature for a direct primary law, and such legislation as shall speedily destroy the political pass system that exists in this state.

Kearney, Neb., Feb. 22.—The Nebraska state press association, after a night devoted to greetings, amusement and rest, assembled at the Midway this morning ready to take up the serious business of the session. The enrollment had reached 99 by this time, and the attendance of members was large enough and the proceedings were sufficiently charged with ginger to make it a notable session.

As a result of the work of the day the association went strongly and practically unanimously on record in favor of the direct primary method of making nominations and against the free railroad pass, which was denounced as a corrupting influence in Nebraska politics.

The annual report of the president, A. W. Ladd, fitted in perfectly with the proceedings that followed it. Mr. Ladd congratulated the editors of the state upon the elimination of "personal journalism" from their columns; also upon the evident lessening of party control noticeable among the newspapers of the state and the growth of a sturdy independence. He urged the throwing away of the old idea that an editor must follow the beck and call of the politicians. The press can never take its rightful place as the leader of public opinion until it gains a position of independence of bosses and political cliques.

The Pass Evil.

H. T. Dobbins, editor of the Lincoln Evening News, in discussing the pass question, told of the political conditions that had made it seem wise to the railroad managers to begin a wholesale distribution of passes among men who could be useful to them politically. Specifying as to present conditions, he said:

Year after year, for twenty-five and thirty years, certain men, prominent and influential in their localities, have been the recipients of these favors. Year after year they have brought into the state conventions delegations that once there became mere pawns in the game of political chess. There isn't a politician of prominence in your county who does not possess his pasteboard or who cannot receive trip passes upon application. As a result of this system the railroads, creatures of the people, have become their masters. Do you dispute it? The overwhelming testimony of investigators is against you. In a recent article in "Success" it was stated that in at least one-third of the states of the union the railroads are in control of the government without any real interference from the people, and Nebraska is one of them. Their

power to do this lies entirely in their use of the free pass.

I am not of those who believe that a single annual or a few trip passes will buy a man's allegiance to the political fortunes of a railroad. It is the pass received year after year, the cumulative effect of long usage, membership and fellowship in the society, that makes men subservient. Weak men, as a rule, are influenced by wealth and power, and once brought within the magic circle of this potent force they become as impotent to work their will as the venturesome fly enmeshed within the crafty spider's web.

It is a fact so well known as to be beyond dispute that free transportation is carried by our governors, our legislators, all of our state officers, the judges of our courts, United States senators, members of congress, mayors of the larger cities, members of city councils, men in all walks of public life. Ask any of these pass carriers and he will indignantly repel the intimation that its possession influences his public acts or is regarded by him as other than a courtesy. Railroad men don't believe this however, as is proven by the fact that they confine their largess to those men who are in a position to help or harm their interests.

The free pass was compared with the "free puff" in the newspaper, which is given to those who are able to do something for the publisher in return. Continuing he said:

Have you ever stopped to consider why it is that in a state so purely agricultural as is Nebraska, a state where the prosperity of each of us is dependent entirely upon the prosperity of the farmer, that six lawyers and two bankers represent us in congress, and not a single farmer? What influence is it that brings about this condition? It can all be traced back to the use of the free pass and railroad favor, which makes fish of one man's ambitions and fowls of another's. Why is it that in the legislature now sitting at Lincoln it is impossible, notwithstanding the fact that more than a majority of the members are farmers, to secure the passage of bills compelling railroad companies to furnish the same facilities to farmers' elevator companies that they do to old line owners? Why is it that earnest, honest men in the legislature have struggled for years to secure a reduction in freight rates and been unsuccessful? In 1902 the Nebraska farmer received four cents less per bushel for his corn, six cents less for his wheat, five

cents less for his oats and nine cents less for his rye than did the farmers of Kansas. These figures are from the government report, and the explanation lies in the fact that there is just that difference in the railroad tariffs of the two states.

Why is it that you and every other individual taxpayer in this state must list with his local assessor at its full cash value every dollar of property you own while the railway property in the entire state is valued by a board of state officers who owe their nomination almost as a rule to the favor of state conventions controlled by railroad politicians holding and distributing railroad free passes? What was it, do you think, that only last Friday, impelled the lower house of the state legislature to vote down overwhelmingly a proposition that it be made mandatory for this state board to value railroad property at the market value of its stocks and bonds, a method pronounced by the supreme court as just and fair on the theory that a property is worth for purposes of taxation whatever it is worth as a means of producing income? * *

What dry rot has seized upon the morals of our executive and judicial officers, of our legislators, that permits them complacently to violate the constitution and decency by accepting free passes from the railroads? Section 16 of the state constitution requires and every executive and judicial officer

and member of the legislature does take this oath: "I have not accepted nor will I accept or receive, directly or indirectly, any money or other valuable thing from any corporation, company or person," etc., the latter covering his official acts. They evade the effect of this by insisting that the taking of a valuable thing in the shape of a pass from a railroad company does not influence them, but I feel sure that if you had a case in court against a railroad company you would be very much disinclined to submit it to a jury, every member of which has a pass worth several hundred dollars a year to him. There is a very prominent gentleman down at Lincoln who has been frequently heard to say that the fact that a member of a jury which tried his damage suit against a railroad had a round trip ticket to Washington cost him, the plaintiff in the case, ten thousand dollars. He found out about the ticket after the case was tried. * *

As a result of the use of the free pass in the creation of an overlordship, we have this condition of affairs: No man can be nominated and elected to any high office in the state over the active opposition of the railroads; we cannot get through the legislature of the state measures that provide for a square deal; we are impotent to compel the railroads to serve the public so as to promote industry by insuring to all shippers equality of service and like rates, to grant all cities the same facilities they do to one, to treat Nebraska farmers as well they do Iowa and Kansas farmers; they dictate what taxes they shall pay and what rates shippers shall pay; they permit political manipulators to ride free and charge the business man and the farmer, without whose patronage they could not exist, a rate high enough to cover the cost of transporting all three.

And what are we going to do about it? How long are we going to permit an irresponsible boss in an Omaha railroad office to force men, in whose breasts ambition stirs, to come and see him first announcing their candidacy for office? How long are we going to sit supinely by and see our legislatures tied hand and foot by a clique of manipulators that has its center in the person of a railroad lobbyist? How long are we to allow the railroad companies to sit in judgment upon who shall conduct our public affairs, to act as toll collectors on our highways, to shirk their just share of taxation—in short to say how fast shall be our pursuit of life, liberty and happiness? * * We, as editors, ought to use every

means at our command to assist in the restoration of the control of the state government to the hands of the people, and the first great step in this work is the abolition of the free pass. We should help wrest from the hands of the railroad its most powerful weapon, and we can accomplish this only by presenting the facts to the people and to keep agitating, agitating.

In dealing with the same subject Edgar Howard of the Columbus Telegram ridiculed the idea that the acceptance of a pass carries with it no sense of obligation. In the discussion of the question Mr. Howard was assisted by numerous editors and they all jumped into the fray when Mr. Maupin declared that the railroads made advertising contracts with the country newspapers with the object of bribing them. As it is well known, every editor at the meeting went to Kearney on transportation paid for in advertising. When Mr. Maupin charged that these tickets were really an attempt to bribe their holders, the air was speedily filled with language and protests. The editors present made it plain that no matter what the railroads were attempting to do, they considered that their tickets were paid for when the advertising was done and that they were free to take any political action they pleased, or to make any reference to the railroads that they wished.

The Direct Primary

The editors went on record just as vigorously in favor of the direct primary law as they did against the political pass. Two papers were read on this question. H. M. Bushnell of Lincoln presented a strong historical discussion of the matter, showing that the direct method of making nominations is only a return to the old system of the fathers, which the politicians have managed to subvert for their own purpose. He cited the good results reached in the city of Lincoln, and gave other evidence of the wholesome effect of this reform.

L. A. Varner was not present, but his paper was read by the secretary. It was a telling answer to the principal objections urged against the primary. Both papers are to be published entire by the association.

They were followed by a considerable discussion in which it developed that the editors were at one on the main principle, and could differ only in matter of detail.—State Journal.

The Daily News published a cartoon in its issue of last Monday which, to our mind, exactly describes the real situation of the trusts, the Senate and President Roosevelt. The trusts and the U. S. senate are represented as coasting together down a hill when they suddenly come in contact with the President. The result is that Roosevelt is whirled several times in the air and strikes on his head some distance in the rear. This will be the outcome of the war made by President Roosevelt upon the trusts.—O'Neill Independent.

The North-Western Line.

One of the most interesting series of articles on the subject of the great railways of the country that has appeared recently, is that from the pen of Frank H. Spearman, recently published in the Saturday Evening Post, and since printed in book form by Scribners. The chapter descriptive of the Chicago & North-western Ry. has been published by the passenger department of that line in pamphlet form, for general distribution, and will be sent to any address on receipt of 2 cents for postage. 74

Cause For Sorrow.

Brown—Smith is down with brain fever. Green—You don't say so! Brown—Yes. The doctor says if he recovers his mind will be a blank. Green—Well, I'm sorry to hear that. He owes me \$10.

He who brings ridicule to bear against truth finds in his hand a blade without a hilt.—Landon.

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