

BATTLES FOUGHT BY THE BEE--Hot Contests Waged

in Behalf of the People and for a Square Deal

The forty years of The Bee as a leader of public opinion has been a succession of battles fought in the interest of a square deal. Never hesitating to take up cudgels for the right, as it has seen the right, and never shirking a responsibility, The Bee has from its very inception taken an active part in every contest affecting the material growth of city, state and nation. It has espoused the cause of the weak against the strong, opposed every species of monopoly and championed every movement to advance the prosperity of Nebraska and the great west. It has fought the battles of the toiler and producer against corporate greed, and scored victories when the odds seemed overwhelming. Corruption in public place was exposed and driven from power. Abuses wherever they existed were fearlessly denounced.



Acknowledgments from Judge Silas A. Holcomb

Group City, Neb., Nov. 27, 1877
 Hon. E. Rosewater
 Omaha, Mo.
 My dear sir:
 Ever since I learned of the election I have been very busy attending to my duties as judge of this district, and have been waiting for the outcome of the election. Now that the result has been ascertained and my election as chief justice of this court is a fact, I feel it my duty to express my sincere appreciation of your efforts in behalf of the people and incidentally of myself during the campaign. It is a great pleasure to me to see the defeat of those enemies of good government.

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Board of Education Fight.
 The first contest in which The Bee was an active and decisive factor was the ratification of the law framed and championed by Edward Rosewater and enacted by the legislature in 1871, organizing the Board of Education for Omaha and abolishing the Board of Regents, which then had charge of the high school. This law made all public schools free and placed them in charge of the Board of Education. The Board of Regents, supported by the Omaha Republican, attempted to defeat the law, while The Bee alone championed the change calculated to "lay the foundation of an educational system which cannot fail to exercise the most potent influence on the future prosperity of the city." The election, July 19, 1871, resulted in a rousing victory for The Bee. Speaking of the result The Bee said: "Out of 1,049 votes polled at the special election yesterday, 101 represents the potential influence of the leading republican organ of the state, and a number of so-called leaders of public opinion. It must certainly be extremely gratifying to this grand combination against educational reform that The Bee is enabled to judge with mathematical precision the exact force they exert in any desired direction."

The adoption of this law was the foundation of the present Board of Education, and the success of the system since then strikingly verifies the prediction made by The Bee.

Fight for the Constitution.
 The first constitutional convention, which assembled in Lincoln June 7, 1871, submitted the result of its labors to the people late in August. Five separate articles were included, the principal ones being woman suffrage, prohibition and church taxation. The Bee approved the body of the document and fearlessly advocated its adoption, while urging the defeat of the separate propositions. The provision of the constitution reducing the number of office-holders roused the wrath of the spoliators and railroad subsidizers, who were encouraged and applauded by the Herald, Tribune and Republican, which at the same time damned it with faint praise. The anti-suffragists and anti-prohibitionists joined with them in a general assault on the whole document. Religious denominations attacked the provision taxing all property exceeding \$5,000 in value, and every pulpit was turned into an opposition stump. These elements, controlling the election machinery of the state, openly boasted, weeks in advance of the election, that the constitution would be defeated by at least 1,000 majority. Developments after the election proved that they had deliberately organized and successfully carried out a plan to set aside the verdict of the people. The schemers withheld returns from western counties in the Omaha postoffice, changed the figures, and thus brought about the defeat of the constitution by a fraction over 1,000 votes. This outrage on the ballot was confessed later by one of the leaders. A fair and honest count would have shown a strong majority for the constitution, and spared the state the expense and distraction of a second contest four years later.

Opposes the Federal Brigade.
 The steady growth and spreading influence of The Bee not only alarmed the owners of political organs in the city, but filled them with ill-concealed wrath. The Republican was then the organ of a compact federal ring, which had control of public land surveys and a vast amount of patronage. Smarting under the exposures of The Bee, the mercenaries sought to crush its power by the most unscrupulous means. Anonymous sheets filled with scurrilous assaults and personal abuse of the editor were issued and scattered daily through the city. Instead of injuring The Bee, they recruited supporters from all classes and advertised it as the foe of venality in official life.

The postmaster and deputy postmaster being stockholders in the Tribune and Republican endeavored to suppress The Bee by postal discrimination. During the winter of '71-'72, they began a systematic raid on the paper by delaying and sometimes refusing to deliver its mail and by annoying and bulldozing outside subscribers. Complaints of non-delivery of the paper by postmasters became so numerous that The Bee charged the postoffice officials with conspiring to violate the postal laws and deliberately destroying the papers delivered at the Omaha office. The exposure roused the wrath of the federal junta, and the editor was threatened with severe bodily pain unless he relented and repented. Threats did not frighten him nor change the policy of the paper, and a new tack was taken. They concocted a yarn that he had violated the postal laws and endeavored to have him indicted by the federal grand jury, but the scheme failed. The Bee continued the fight vigorously, while the federal ring improved every opportunity to insult the editor and injure his business and even went so far as to instigate assault and violence upon him.

During the month of February The Bee unearthed the theft of mail bags, which resulted in the indictment of Postmaster Griffen by the grand jury. He pleaded guilty to the charge on May 31, was fined \$100 and costs and retired from office.

The Rump Legislature.
 The impeachment of Governor Butler by the legislature of 1871 elevated William H. James to the governorship, and made Isaac S. Hascall, president of the state senate, next in the order of succession. James proved to be a veritable fence for the jobbers and corporate schemers. He was habitually dissipated, and his orgies at the capital became a public scandal and gave James the title of the "Inebriate governor." The Bee exposed and denounced the disgraceful conduct of the acting governor, which spread to other departments of the government, and for a time threatened to wreck the state. The Bee voiced the demand of the public for an extra session of the legislature, but James paid no attention to the clamor. The profits of the position were too great to be sacrificed by calling the legislature together as that meant impeachment and loss of power. But his opponents were active and vigilant. During the temporary absence of James from the state in January, 1872, I. S. Hascall assumed the duties of governor and issued a proclamation convening the legislature. James hastily returned from Washington and issued a counter proclamation, revoking Hascall's call, but failed. The legis-

lature assembled on the day designated, and organized. The legality of the meeting being questioned, it was submitted to the supreme court. A decision declaring the call illegal was handed down by two of the three judges, and James was left to complete his term undisturbed.

Kourt House Klan.
 The Douglas county campaign of 1873 was short, sharp and decisive, and one of the hottest local battles fought in this vicinity. The democrats had control of all county offices, and naturally schemed to continue in power. The Bee attacked what was dubbed the "Kourt House Klan," and made the campaign so lively and interesting before the conventions were held that the democrats resorted to the subterfuge of "a people's convention." The campaign turned mainly on Grebe, who was seeking a third term. His republican opponent was Alfred Burley. The opposition to a third term was not in itself sufficient to defeat Grebe, a strong and popular man, but numerous side issues were sprung which created disorders in the ranks of the Klan. His election and that of the entire ticket seemed assured, when, on the eve of the election, the following sensational dispatch was made public through The Bee:

OMAHA, Oct. 13.—S. H. H. Clark or T. L. Kimball, Denver: The vote of the shops will probably decide the election, and it is said it will go solid against Grebe for sheriff. He has served the road better than any sheriff we have ever had. Can't you give us this vote? I think you should if possible. If you agree, instruct proper parties to give him the vote and send me a copy of your telegram.

J. A. POPPLETON.
 The publication of this dispatch exploded like a bombshell in the camp of the Klan. The attempt to herd the railroad employes and vote them like so many cattle was vigorously resented at the polls, and Grebe went down in defeat with the rest of the bogus "people's ticket." It was a great victory for The Bee and a crushing defeat for the Kourt House Klan.

Anti-Hitcheock Campaign.
 The election of Phineas W. Hitcheock to the United States senate in 1871 was the beginning of a reign of office-brokerage never equaled before or since in Nebraska. A crew of political dead-beats, notorious ward workers and bulldozers was foisted upon the people with the sole object of dominating state politics. The federal brigade became so obnoxious to the people that years before Hitcheock's term expired there was a strong current of opposition to his re-election. The campaign of 1876 was therefore fought strictly on the lines of Hitcheock and anti-Hitcheock. Conventions were manipulated by federal officeholders banded together with the strikers of Jay Gould throughout the state, and they were no inconsiderable number. In fact Gould made a personal pilgrimage to the state in September to aid and encourage the Hitcheock forces by supplying the sinews of war. He openly boasted that Hitcheock was a friend of the road, and that he should be re-elected.

In Douglas county there were two republican legislative tickets in the field, the anti-Hitcheock supported by The Bee and the Hitcheock forces championed by the Republican. The election was a walkaway for the democrats, who were, however, pledged by the convention not to vote for Hitcheock.

It was soon demonstrated that Hitcheock could not be re-elected by any combination within his own party. He lacked the necessary number of votes and cast about among the democrats for supporters. The friendly praise showered upon him from time to time by the Herald created a suspicion that there was a deep design beneath the laudatory editorials. While the country and raked by the doubtful issue of the national election, the rumor was spread that the democrats were on a "still hunt" for an electoral vote. The Bee voiced the general belief that a bargain had been entered into by which Hitcheock was to receive sufficient democratic votes to elect, and in return he would transfer one electoral vote from the republican to the democratic column. That such a conspiracy was contemplated was given the color of truthfulness by the Herald's frequent assertion that if Tilden was counted out in the southern states "one honest republican would be found in the north to rebuke the infamy of his party" by voting for Tilden and Hendricks. This scheme was nipped in the bud by Governor Garber. The legislature was convened in extraordinary session December 5, the vote of the state canvassed and declared.

Election of Saunders.
 The senatorial contest of 1877 was an unusually

lively one. Hitcheock failed to bring about the caucus, and stood no chance of election without the assistance of the democrats. It was known that a combination of sixteen democrats had been formed to vote for him the moment he mustered the necessary republican votes, but the time came and passed and the democrats did not deliver.

Hitcheock's desperation took a new and startling turn before the first joint ballot was cast. His private secretary, the notorious Dick Adams, secured a number of letters and telegrams from a Burlington clerk named Flannigan, purporting to come from President Perkins. These letters authorized Briggs and Saunders to draw on the B. & M. treasury for all the money necessary to conduct their campaign. Hitcheock expected by these letters to demolish all opposition, but the legislature promptly ordered an investigation and exposed the villainy. The letters proved to be rank forgeries, for which \$800 had been paid the forger. A reaction set in, and before Hitcheock could recover, Alvin Saunders was triumphantly elected on the fourth day, receiving eighty-eight votes. The election was pronounced by The Bee "a triumph of the right," and occasioned great rejoicing throughout the state. In Omaha illuminations, fireworks and serenading bands gave vent to the general feeling of relief which was felt over the downfall of the corrupt dynasty.

Union Pacific Bridge Tolls.
 No battle ever fought for the producers attracted such widespread attention and support as that waged by The Bee against the exorbitant tolls extracted by the Union Pacific at the gateway of Omaha, over the Missouri river bridge.

The bridge was a veritable gold mine for the old company. Its original cost was less than \$1,200,000. Ten dollars was charged for carloads and 50 cents for every passenger. In 1878 the bridge was earning \$3,500 per day or \$1,277,500 per annum, thus yielding annual dividends of nearly 100 cents on the dollar. The rates were double those of any bridge over the Missouri and Mississippi rivers. It operated as an embargo not only on the commerce of Omaha, but was an onerous tax on every bushel of grain, every barrel of flour and every head of stock exported from Nebraska. The bridge monopoly became an important issue in Nebraska.

In the fall of 1878 at the republican state convention of that year resolutions were introduced by Mr. Rosewater denouncing the robbery and pledging the party to use every means to bring about a reduction of what was declared to be "unlawful, unjust and oppressive tolls." The filibustering tactics the railroad attorneys staved off a vote until a large number of the delegates had left for home, and defeated them by a resolution to adjourn.

In October of the same year a mass convention was held in Omaha in response to a call signed by forty leading citizens, headed by Herman Kountze and W. A. Paxton. The purpose was set forth in the call as follows:

"In view of the pernicious influence of corporate capital in the various political conventions, and deeming the interests of the city, county and state paramount to all political considerations, we have decided to support an independent legislative ticket."

Judge G. W. Doane presided and made the principal speech, followed by E. Rosewater and W. J. Connell. The convention endorsed several of the democratic nominees and completed the ticket with independent republicans. The democrats were elected by an overwhelming majority.

The county campaign was but a preliminary skirmish in the great anti-monopoly war then spreading throughout the country, but it demonstrated that 1,500 volunteers had enlisted in Omaha on ten days' notice.

As soon as the members of the legislature were definitely known, the railroads began the usual distribution of bribes in the form of passes. The railroad committees of both houses were packed in the interest of the monopolies, but an active and vigilant minority succeeded in bringing the question squarely before the senate and placing the members on record, although their resolution failed.

On the 1st of January, 1880, the railroad company announced, with a great flourish, a reduction of 50 per cent in bridge tolls, but it turned out to be a sop thrown to the city, as it merely reduced the rate on local passenger traffic from 50 to 25 cents. The steady growth of the anti-monopoly principles throughout the state, culminating in the election of Senator Van Wyck in 1881, was a warning which the corporations heeded by a reduction of excessive tolls all round,

In waging this war The Bee battled not only for Omaha, but Nebraska and the west, while the Herald and Republican defended every move and every imposition which crippled the industrial interests of the state.

Anti-Monopoly Movement.
 The irrepressible conflict between the producers of the country and railroad corporations, which spread throughout the west in the 80's, was an uprising against political and industrial dictators. The commercial highways of the country had consolidated, compensation was destroyed, and the products and industries of the nation placed under tribute by a dozen men. Their power became so great, their greed so appalling, and their exactions so burdensome that the life blood of western producers was sapped and drained to a dangerous point. The profits of the toilers were absorbed in getting their produce to market, and so many of the necessities of life were almost beyond the reach of people of moderate means. The railroad corporations did not stop there. They invaded every department of the government, became offensively prominent in all elections, infested the national and state capitals, bribed legislators, made and unmade laws at will, and substituted machine politicians for statesmen.

During the campaign of 1880 the anti-monopolists, though unorganized, held the balance of power and forced the issue in nearly all senatorial and representative districts. In Douglas county 1,000 republicans rebelled against the legislative ticket foisted on the party by a packed railroad convention. They raised the standard of revolt against monopoly domination and supported every man, regardless of politics, who pledged himself to stand by the people. The result was a complete rout of the cohorts of Jay Gould.

The legislature of 1881 was a strong anti-monopoly body. Control of the lower house was in the hands of producers, and much beneficial legislation resulted. The most important was the bill framed by Judge Doane of Omaha, which the opposition dubbed the "Doane tub law." It prohibited secret rates, rebates, draw backs and other privileges granted to the favored few; provided equal rates and service for all; limited charges to the tariffs in force in November, 1880, and imposed severe penalties for violation of the act. Another bill was passed requiring all railroads doing business in the state to incorporate under the laws of the state, to maintain general offices in some county through which the road ran, and keep books showing the amount of business done, names and residence of stockholders and the transfers of the same.

Election of Van Wyck.
 The election of General C. H. Van Wyck was a victory of popular self-government, and marked an epoch in the political history of Nebraska. It was the second great senatorial triumph of the people, for which The Bee justly claims a large share of the credit. For nearly ten years it had fought the good fight almost single handed. It had overcome the most malignant opposition, placed in the constitution a provision giving voters the right to express a preference for United States senator, contributed to the downfall of the federal brigade in 1877, and was largely instrumental in giving monopoly a body blow in 1881.

Holly Water Works Fight.
 Few contests in the history of Omaha were fought with such vigor, persistency and bitterness as that against the Holly system of water works during the winter of '79-'80. Early in the fall of '79 the noted Dr. Cushing, the advance agent of the Holly company, camped in this city and began operations. At first his proposition met with considerable favor, but The Bee, backed by many of the leading citizens, insisted that no system of water works other than gravitation would meet the necessities of Omaha. Cushing's plan was direct pressure from the settling basins on the river front, as well as from the treasury of the company. An exhaustive discussion and investigation proved that direct pressure was not suited to Omaha, and the best intellect and enterprise of the city combined in opposition to the Holly franchise. But while discussion waxed hot, Dr. Cushing was actively applying direct pressure to the members of the council. With Hascall as chief fulegman it did not require much effort to manipulate a majority of that body. For nearly six months the issue was uncertain. The Holly crowd mustered eight members. An ordinance was passed granting the Holly company the franchise, but the direct pressure crowd met an unexpected and unflinching opponent in Mayor Chase. His veto of the ordinance practically defeated it, as the gang was unable to muster the necessary two-thirds to override the veto.

The defeat of the ordinance made the question the chief issue of the municipal campaign in April, 1880. Cushing ostensibly retired from the fight, but in reality he was in it up to his chin. The Holly company furnished the sinews of war, which caused the machine politicians and ward rums to rally and work the primaries. Water pipes were brought to the city and distributed on the principal streets for the purpose of convincing the voters that the Holly people meant business and proposed to stay. Large gangs of men were employed for the sole purpose of working the primaries and for their votes on election day, but their labors were in vain. The Holly crowd succeeded in renominating most of their supporters, thus forcing an independent citizens' movement. Respectable and trustworthy citizens were nominated by the opposition and triumphantly elected. The election was an exciting one in many wards, particularly the Second, where Mr. Tiemen was pitted against Hascall. The poll was located in No. 3 engine house, where the Board of Trade building now stands. Hascall led his

own forces, while the opposition was marshalled by Hon. W. A. Paxton, James E. Boyd, E. Rosewater and others. During the first three hours the opposition mustered two to one against Hascall and convinced him that he was doomed. At 10 a. m. he mounted a box and announced his withdrawal from the contest. Hascall's retirement had a depressing effect on his followers, resulting in their overwhelming defeat in every ward where the issue was raised. They were buried by 2,233 votes, out of a total of 3,330 polled in the city.

The defeat of Cushing and the Holly crew was largely due to the uprising of leading merchants and manufacturers, who vigorously supported The Bee's active warfare on mercenary officials.

Woman Suffrage Amendment.
 The efforts of the National Association of Woman Suffragists, ably supported by many members of both sexes in Nebraska, to incorporate in the organic law a provision granting suffrage to women extended over a series of years and culminated in a preliminary victory in 1881. The legislature of that year agreed to submit to a vote of the people the desired amendment to the constitution. The amendment came up for decision at the polls at the general election in 1882. Preceding the election a unique and interesting campaign was waged by the suffrage sisterhood and their male supporters. A national convention was held in Omaha covering the second week in September. Every prominent suffragist of the east was in attendance and the enthusiasm worked up, measured by the applause which punctuated the speeches, might have convinced the uninitiated that Omaha, to a man and woman, was for female suffrage. The Bee opposed the amendment on two general grounds. It was convinced that the ballot in the hands of women would not conduce to the welfare of the state, and that female suffrage, if conceded, would tend to decrease the happiness of woman herself. From these premises The Bee combated the stock arguments of the suffragists, and in consequence incurred the enmity of individual advocates as well as the national association. The issue, however, was largely overshadowed by the anti-monopoly campaign waged by The Bee and its supporters. There was an anti-monopoly state ticket in the field and anti-monopoly candidates for congress in the three districts. To the support of the latter the energies of The Bee were directed. Nevertheless considerable attention was given the suffragists, not because there was any fear of suffrage success, but for the reason that the appearance of women on the stump and at the polls on election day lent spice and novelty to the contest. The amendment was defeated overwhelmingly. When the result was definitely known Miss Couzens of St. Louis addressed an indignation meeting in the opera house, charging defeat to The Bee and accusing it of various high crimes and misdemeanors in procuring the result.

Campaign of 1886.
 The memorable campaign of 1886, in the First district, gave Nebraska its first democratic congressman. The railroad machine forced Church Howe upon the republican ticket. Notwithstanding the earnest protest of The Bee and thousands of republicans, Howe was nominated amid the blare of brass bands and the wild hurrahs of his strikers at Beatrice. John A. McShane of Omaha was nominated by the democrats. The campaign was short, but uncommonly lively, and resulted in the overwhelming defeat of Howe. McShane carried the district by a majority of 5,076, and also a majority for the republican candidate for governor. The result was a crushing Waterloo for Jay Gould's man. The revolt was not confined to city or county. It extended from the Platte river to the Kansas line, and emphatically declared that a republican nomination, without regard to the character and record of the candidate, was not equivalent to an election. It was one of the greatest of the long list of victories scored by The Bee. The opposition of The Bee was grounded on Howe's record in opposing the counting of the Hayes presidential electors in this state in 1876 and his subsequent legislative career.

Treachery Defeats Van Wyck.
 The re-election of Senator Charles H. Van Wyck was the absorbing issue in the legislative campaign of 1886. A majority of republican county conventions and many democratic conventions indorsed his great work in congress, and the nominees were pledged, if elected, to vote for his return to the senate. But the tools of monopoly and the venom of partisan roustabouts combined in every district to defeat the man pledged to vote for him. Notwithstanding this bitter opposition of the corporate strikers in both parties a strong majority of the members elected were pledged to him. The senatorial contest in January was a remarkably bitter one. Every political roustabout, every lobbyist and procurer were enlisted, together with the railroad forces, to defeat the senator. Boodle was indiscriminately used by contractors and jobbers, and men who could not be bribed were threatened and bulldozed. Had it not been for the infamous decision of the presiding officer, Van Wyck would have been elected on the first joint ballot. The officer purposely ignored the rules and refused to allow changes of votes after the roll had been called. After the first few ballots, some of the men who publicly and privately pledged themselves, betrayed their constituents, violated their pledges and openly joined the enemy. For money or promise of office they defeated the will of the people, expressed in an overwhelming majority at the ballot box.

The City Hall Fight.
 In the spring of 1885 the city council and Board of County Commissioners effected a trade with Hon. W. A. Paxton by which the city obtained the present site for the city hall. During the summer plans for the building were secured from Architect Myers of Detroit. The Board of Education joined with the city and contributed \$25,000 toward the cost of the building, or one-eighth of the total. At the November election the question of issuing \$200,000 in bonds, the proceeds to be devoted to the construction of the building on the chosen site, was submitted to the voters and approved by a vote of 3,010 to 230. The contract for the foundation was let to Regan Bros., and afterward transferred to Brennan & Whalen. The work dragged along at a snail pace. The contractors stood in with the council ring, and the orders of the Board of Public Works were ignored. Finding that they could not make any money out of the job, the contractors disputed the plans of the architect and induced their friends in the council to abrogate the contract and reject the plans. Then followed litigation and a decision of the district court enjoining the council from changing the plans or expending the money voted on any other site without first submitting the question to a vote of the people. After years of delay and turmoil the question was submitted to a vote, with Eighteenth and Farnam and Jefferson square competing for the site. The campaign was brief, but exceedingly lively. The boomers of Jefferson square were overwhelmed by a mountain of votes. In this