

GREAT FALLS DAILY TRIBUNE

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EDITORIAL PAGE

HASKIN LETTER

By FREDERIC J. HASKIN

THE ALASKAN RAILWAY

Washington, D. C., Feb. 26.—It looks as though Alaska will get her 500-mile government railway finished at last. At the request of Secretary Lane, the \$13,800,000 appropriation necessary to complete the road is billed before congress, and the chances are that the appropriation will be passed this session.

While affairs of war took first place in the national interest, the Alaskan railway machinery moved slowly. Materials were scarce, particularly steel, which had been almost entirely diverted from the peace-time purpose of making steel rails. Labor, too, has been scarce in Alaska since peace enterprises as in those of the United States. Now that labor and materials are more plentiful, Secretary Lane asks for the final appropriation in order that the project may be completed within the next three years.

The government railway completed will be the biggest aid to progress that Alaska has ever known. It will lay open coveted resources that have hitherto been inaccessible. The railway in full operation means convenience and prosperity to Alaska, and it spells the same things for the United States in slightly smaller letters. Furs, coal, gold and lumber are a few of the products which can be sent to the United States in greater quantities. Alaskan coal fields, properly developed will be of great value to the United States.

Alaska is often depicted as a wilderness of mountains and untamed nature. This is as true a picture of Alaska as a view of Yellowstone park is a typical picture of the United States. Alaska has miles of the most awe-inspiring scenery, but in between are towns and cities that are now as modern and typically American as any.

Anchorage is a single product of what is called development. It is doing for the great northwest. When the government railway was planned Anchorage was not even a name. Today it is a thriving town of several thousand inhabitants, as progressive a community as any in the northwest. The Alaskan town has electric lighting, a modern fire department, hospitals and schools—in short all the necessities and conveniences of its counterpart towns in the United States.

Alaskan progress has always been erratic. Rumors of gold or coal in an unexploited region, or any other project for making big money have almost invariably resulted in new communities, crude but vigorous. Wealth in the form of gold or silver is fulfilled a camp becomes a village, a town, often a city, in rapid succession. Where luck is bad, the settlement usually continues to exist anyway. Alaska's progress has always been erratic. Rumors of gold or coal in an unexploited region, or any other project for making big money have almost invariably resulted in new communities, crude but vigorous. Wealth in the form of gold or silver is fulfilled a camp becomes a village, a town, often a city, in rapid succession. Where luck is bad, the settlement usually continues to exist anyway.

As Alaska grows it will become not only a mining and fishing district but an agricultural land as well. Its dairy and truck farms which are now a side line

**INCOME TAXES.**

The time is at hand when the citizen of the United States if unmarried, and who received more than \$1,000 in 1918 must make accounting to Uncle Sam and tell him all about it. If he be a married man he can deduct \$2,000 from his income and a certain allowance for each dependant child before he has to pay any federal income tax. The present federal income tax probably affects very nearly one-third of the citizens of the United States engaged in gainful occupation. A great many of them will pay federal direct taxes for the first time this year. We have all been paying indirect federal taxes for many years and will continue to pay these indirect taxes just the same. They do not bother us much because we do not know when we pay them or just what they cost us.

The income tax is a just tax. It is also a popular tax—with those who are not called on directly to pay it. That is the majority of the voters. They are always in favor of "letting George do it." George does, but he quickly shifts his burden in most cases to Dick and Harry and Jane. But these individuals remain happy because they are not aware that they are paying George's taxes. It may be that where ignorance is bliss it is folly to be wise.

We all remember when this income tax law of the federal government was first imposed on us. It was a democratic party measure. They had just reduced the tariff, which is an indirect tax so far as its amount goes, but has this nasty quality that it costs the taxpayer a great many times as much as the government receives. The government gets the tax levied on foreign goods imported into the country and the consumer of these goods pays it in extra price attached to them. But he also pays a great many times this amount in the extra price the home manufacturer places on his goods because of the tax on foreign goods, and the government gets none of this tax. The maker of these domestic goods which sell in competition with foreign goods puts this tax entirely in his own pocket. That is why the tariff is so popular with manufacturers and those that supply the home market.

Well, the democratic party having cut down the tariff tax largely, sought to supply the deficiency in revenue so made, and they hit on the income tax to do it with. It was a tiny tax at first and very popular. It only hit those having an income of more than \$4,000 net, and was only one per cent at that. It did not hurt the big income fellows very much and it delighted the small income people who liked to see the men richer than themselves pay. But there is that quality about an income tax that it is a rapid grower, and rakes in more and more people within its provisions until it reaches close to a majority. It stops short of that because the average man and voter resents it when applied to himself no matter how much he approves of it applied to men and women more prosperous than himself. He cannot get it out of his head that the tax is taken out of the income of people more prosperous than himself, or into his head that he may pay it indirectly himself thru tax-shifting.

We find the rapidity of the growth of the income tax illustrated by the fact that when the law first went on the statute books a man in receipt of a net income of \$500 a month if married paid one per cent on two thousand of it or \$20 a year. Now he pays six per cent on four thousand or \$240, plus one per cent super-tax on one thousand or \$10, being a total of \$250 as against \$20 at first. Moreover the exempt class is reduced from \$4,000 married to \$2,000 married, and \$1,000 unmarried. It is getting to be some tax, all right.

The state income tax is moving along the same lines. So far it applies only to corporations. It exempted \$10,000 at first so it only hit the larger corporations. The present legislature has a bill to reduce the exempt class of corporations from \$10,000 net to \$2,500. The next legislature will probably wipe out the exemption altogether as the federal corporation tax has already done. Then it will be apparent that partnerships and individuals ought to pay income tax to the state also and they will be brought into its provisions also. Then the rate will be raised. That is the universal experience with the income tax. The government, state or national, always finds itself needing more money, and when it is in this predicament it finds the income tax the safest and easiest way to get it so long as the majority of the voters do not pay income tax directly. These, as a rule, are blind to the fallacy of their theory of tax-paying and do not realize that they help to carry the burden in increased cost of living. The blind majority who deem themselves non-taxpayers are particularly pleased with a stiff corporation tax, oblivious of the fact that corporations almost invariably deal in something they have to buy and add increased taxes to its cost. As a matter of fact they would stand a better chance of escaping the payment of an income tax if it was applied solely to individuals, and corporations and partnerships went free of it. However, they reason in a reverse way, and in this state all but corporations go free of state income tax so far.

its highest point this year. We reason that this is so because it is now so widespread that a further extension of its application would take in a majority of the voters, and no politician would dare do that. The rates are also about as high as can be collected especially as regards the large incomes. The largest already pay about 70 per cent. If this was increased to 100 per cent as some radicals advocate it would probably reduce the amount collected, for one thing, and produce other results exceedingly detrimental to the masses that they haven't even thought of, and which we have not space to go into here. We should say the federal income tax has about reached its limit of revenue production. But the state income tax has not. And in time we may have a county income tax, a school income tax, and a city income tax also. It is an idea that once adopted grows rapidly, as we said in the beginning, though its growth is based on the false assumption that the primary taxpayer takes taxes out of his income or profits instead of passing it on to the consumer of his goods or services.

THE PRICE REGULATION BILLS.

There is an old adage that fools rush in where angels fear to tread, and it finds exemplification in the sweeping bills introduced in the legislature at Helena by "Eddie" Booth and his colleagues who have been investigating the high cost of living by a junketing trip at the expense of the state, and as a result and remedy for alleged evils they found propose to put practically all business in the state under the control of a few politicians with power to regulate such business at their discretion and fix wholesale and retail prices at their pleasure. We don't think such reckless legislation has any chance of becoming a law, though one can never tell what politicians seeking votes will do, and there is a dangerous and false theory pretty widely held these days that a statutory enactment will do most anything from saving souls to changing human nature and the laws of the universe.

We have not time, and to say the truth we have neither the knowledge or the patience if we had the knowledge, to enter into a discussion of the evil effects of statutory price-fixing as it has been taught the world in the school experience, for it has been tried often enough in the history of the world. It is sufficient for the purpose of this article to say that the results of government price-fixing in commodities has been uniformly detrimental to society in the end. The federal government did a good deal of it in recent months as a war measure, and they are getting out of it just as fast as they can, and at heavy cost to the taxpayer. Fixing the cost of wheat will cost the taxpayer about a billion dollars probably or \$10 a head for every man, woman and child in the United States. Besides it left the wheat grower dissatisfied as well as the wheat eater. Fixing the price of copper and other metals has left that great industry demoralized and mighty uncertain of the future. Fixing a minimum price on hogs has had like results. Uncle Sam is backtracking out of the price-fixing and regulating business on commodities just as fast as he can, and marking off a great balance of cost to the taxpayer as a result of the experiment. It is true that he went into it not on the theory that it was a wise and profitable thing to do on its own merit, but because he thought it necessary to win the war at any cost, and the experiment was a legitimate part of the war cost, and a burden to be borne for that reason by society.

And while Uncle Sam is writing off the damage caused by his price fixing and regulating activities in time of war, "Eddie" Booth and his colleagues are proposing in times of peace to repeat the experiment in this state on all business. The proposition would be ridiculous and absurd if there is really any danger of it being done. We refuse to believe that such danger exists, although we note that a good many merchants and commercial organizations seem to be getting excited over the matter. A legislative body can do a good many fool things in the closing days of its session but we refuse to believe that sweeping legislation along price fixing lines for all commodities is within their capability of folly.

POINTED PARAGRAPHS

Wise people respect the man; fools respect good clothes. Necessity knows no laws, and it's the same with extravagance.

Hush money usually speaks for both parties in the transaction.

Some men find that Friday is just as unlucky as any other day.

Don't look a gift horse in the mouth. Sell him for what you can get and let the other fellow look.

Soon there will be no other second that accompanied by a dark brown taste and a headache.

Railway corporations are not altogether soulless when they allow only ten minutes for refreshments at the railway lunch counter.

There are men who will laugh at a woman for buying a nickel package of chewing gum, then proceed to blow a quarter for an imported cigar.

**OUT OF THE MOUTHS OF BABES**

Teacher—What is the first step toward the digestion of food?

Bright Boy—Biting it off.

"Mamma," said small Bobbie, who had just been chastized for disobedience, "am I a canoe?"

"Certainly not, Bobbie," she replied. "But what put that idea into your head?"

"Well, you are always saying that you like to see people paddle their own canoe, and I thought maybe I was yours."

Little Hazel was saying her prayers before retiring and having got as far as "If I should die before I wake," she hesitated.

"Well, what's next?" asked her mother.

"Why," replied Hazel, "I suppose a funeral would be the next thing."

TRAVELETTE

By NIKSAH

INSECT CONCERTS IN JAPAN.

One wide difference between the orient and occident is illustrated by the fondness of the Japanese for such amusements as listening to the voices of insects and looking at moonlight views. It is said to say that the rank very high as an outdoor sport in the United States of America.

And yet the Japanese love of insect music is not impossible to understand. Have you ever sat on a porch in the country on a moonlight September evening, when the crickets were strumming, and the tree-toads shrilling a soprano accompaniment, with perhaps a whippoorwill chiming in, and a great horned owl booming a thunderous, far-away bass at long intervals? There really is something very appealing about this chorus of autumn night voices. They all sound so harmonious and have a certain soothing quality. They go well with a quiet pipe.

The Japanese idea is to take this natural concert and improve upon it by selecting the performers and increasing their number. Insect concerts are held in great gardens, where there are beds of flowers and fountains, filled with aquatic plants. The concert is given by a society which is organized for the purpose. Non-members must purchase tickets of admission, and buy their insects in little paper bags. The singers include crickets and tree-toads, and several insects peculiar to Japan, some of which are especially gifted musicians.

Everyone who attends the gathering—and it includes persons of all ages and sexes—releases a bagful of bugs and toads among the shrubbery. The creatures, delighted to be free, soon set up their strange melodies on a vast humming chorus, while the guests sip tea and smoke and criticize the various performers just as do fashionable Americans at the opera.

**ETHEL BALKED ON BEING TOMBSTONE**

Miss Ethel Barrymore has received a lot of queer manuscripts from amateur playwrights and she has quite a collection of curious letters that she has had from would-be authors who wished to make her fortune and, incidentally, their own.

"One of the strangest letters I got from a man who lived somewhere in Nebraska," said Miss Barrymore, talking about her collection recently. Here's an amusing paragraph from his epistle: "I trust you will see your way clear to produce my play immediately because you can play the leading role as no other woman on the stage can and because I need the money. It took me eight long days to write this drama, and because of its sheer oddity I am, sure it will make a very big impression. Its title, as you will perceive, is 'The Land of the Dead,' and all the acts are laid in a cemetery by moonlight, tombstone sculpture, representing a young woman. You move about among the spirits of the deceased preaching the gospel of peace on earth. And you can do it best of all because the public likes you and will go to see you whether the life you play or not. Therefore, can't you send me the first installment of royalties in advance?"

It isn't necessary to say that the manuscript was promptly returned with the actress's thanks.

Miss Barrymore is making a tour this season in R. C. Cartou's comedy, "The Off Chance," and "turning 'em away" everywhere.

TRADE COMMISSION BILL MUCH CHANGED AT NIGHT HEARING

Amendments Offered by Its Author Make Measure Less Drastic.

Helena, March 1.—When senate bill 189, making the board of railroad commissioners ex-officio a state trade commission with power to control business concerns and to fix prices, comes up in the house for consideration it will be in such greatly altered form as to require re-reading.

The bill, upon which was held a public hearing Thursday, was considered last night by the house committee on ways and means sitting with Senator Booth, author of the measure.

Booth offered about 50 amendments, which have the effect of modifying the provisions making it less drastic but still leaving it far-reaching in its effects. The committee will report the bill out tomorrow with the recommendation that it be reprinted as amended.

**GOLF CLUBS OF STEEL.**

Of special interest to golf players is a club made with a steel instead of a hickory shaft, shown in the March Popular Mechanics magazine, which, it is claimed, possesses all the flexibility of the wooden shaft and has additional desirable features. The steel shaft is hollow, tapered toward the lower end, and is much smaller in diameter than one of hickory. This is said to give the player additional driving power, because of reduced friction when the club is swung through the air.

HEADS IMPORTANT MISSION TO FRANCE

Judge Edwin B. Parker.

Judge Edwin B. Parker of Houston, Texas, has been named to head the United States liquidation commission. This is a war department organization of five men who will wind up the business and financial affairs of the American army in France. The commission will arrive in France in the near future.

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**THE SITUATION IN GERMANY TODAY**

Arrow one indicates Ruhr district where miners are striking. Arrow two indicates Berlin, where U. S. troops guard food supplies. Third arrow at bottom of map points to Munich, where anarchist killed Bavarian premier and followers were shot.

1.—The Spartacist riots and the government troops are fighting in the Ruhr district, near Dusseldorf and Essen. The village of Rotterop is being besieged and shelled by the rebels. Most of the coal mines of the district are tied up by strikes, and if the fuel shortage in Germany becomes acute the allies may occupy the district.

2.—American troops are officially reported to be in Berlin, guarding the food supplies.

3.—At Munich, indicated by the other arrow, Premier Kurt Eisner of Bavaria was assassinated; Herr Auer, minister of the interior, was wounded; Deputy Osel killed and two other officials wounded.

The shaded portions of Germany indicate the extent of the territory that Germany has had to give up under the various armistice clauses. They include Rhineland, Palatinat, Alsace-Lorraine and Posen.

Eisner was slain by Lieutenant Count Arco Valley.

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