

The Farmers and the Political Game at Bismarck

By Earnest Dale

Always before election, gentlemen who make it their business to sit in high places, spend much time shaking hands with and assuring those who produce all the wealth of this state, that they are the only true friends the farmers ever had.

For many years they have done this and so sincere have they seemed to be that they have created an impression among farmers that surely some good, progressive laws would be made.

But they never passed any such laws. Always they came back without having done anything worth while.

So the farmers decided to go themselves and call personally on these friends of the people while they were at the business of law writing, remind them of their promises and urge their demands.

They did this at the last session of the legislature. Men representing the different farm organizations, farmers' clubs and other farmers from almost every part of the state gathered to discuss their interests, urge their demands and get some of the laws they had been promised or learn the reason why.

They spent a week with the gentlemen who were representing them and when the legislature adjourned the farmers had not gotten the laws they wanted, but they had found out something about the legislature that they did not know before.

These farmers went to Bismarck with a definite program that they wanted made into law. They needed friends—many friends among the legislators, but to their surprise and chagrin, they found that now they had not so many friends as at election time. Men who only a couple of months before would walk all the way across the street to shake hands, would not now speak to them. Friends were scarce—altogether too scarce, among the legislators and the

more insistently the farmers demanded progressive farm legislation the fewer friends they had!

Then they began to wake up. "Something is wrong here," they said. "When men elected with our ballots, paid with our money, men who at election time lead us to believe they were our friends and true representatives, refuse to do any part of our bidding, then something is grievously wrong."

But they were not altogether friendless. They found in the lower house about 35 men who were willing to make the laws they wanted. These thirty-five men did not all belong to the same party. Part of them were Democrats, and part Republicans. Party seemed to make no difference here.

But one thing was noticed, practically all these 35 men who were willing and anxious to pass the laws the people wanted, were farmers and would be benefited by such laws. But they were powerless because in the same house were more than sixty legislators who did not want these laws. Not all of them were of one party. Some were Democrats and some Republicans, but all were opposed to the farmers. They seemed now to be the farmers' enemies and would not again be friends until election time.

Now this sixty men who refused to act in the interest of the great majority of the people of the state, were men who would not be benefited by the laws the people wanted.

They were lawyers, bankers and businessmen, or the friends of other gentlemen who were lawyers, bankers and businessmen.

To make the laws the farmers wanted would not be good for the business of themselves and their friends. So they did not make those laws.

Something was wrong here. Somebody had made a mistake! Who made it? Was it the lawyer-banker, busi-

nessmen legislators who refused to pass any laws that would not be good for the business of themselves and their friends, though it might be just what the majority wanted? Or was it the farmers who had voted for and sent these lawyer-banker-business gentlemen to make laws for farmers?

There was but one conclusion. The farmers had made the mistake. They had not elected men on the wrong ticket, because some of both party tickets were willing to pass the laws that would benefit the whole people. But they had elected men who could not make the laws the people wanted without hurting their own business or the business of their friends—the corporations that control the state.

This was bad business. With their own votes they had elected the wrong men. They had not elected their friends. They had elected too many of the friends of the corporations. Party made no difference. The farmers had some friends in both parties. But big business had more friends in both parties. What the farmers needed here was more farmer friends in the legislature, no matter what party they belonged to.

How did it come about that these farmers had placed more of their enemies than of their friends in power, over them? Surely they had not intended to send men to make laws, who from the very nature of their business, could not make the laws the whole people wanted.

And then they remembered that the farmer is a pretty busy man about election time. In most cases he has no way of knowing whether or not the man who wants his vote will be his friend after election or not. Party is no protection. Big business owns and controls most of the papers and big business is very much awake. The voter has on way of finding out much about the men who want office, except what they tell about themselves and what the papers say, and he can't

depend much on the papers because they and their friends—other business gentlemen, usually make the papers say what they want them to say. He listens to all, and when election comes, votes for the men whom he has been led to believe are his friends. But when election is over and the farmer comes to these legislators elected by his vote and paid out of the taxes laid upon him, with a program to be made into law, he finds that the big business interests of the state have three friends to his one.

Now the farmers who went to Bismarck last winter with their pockets full of petitions could easily see that they were not going at it right. There must be a better method. Instead of several hundred farmers spending their time and money petitioning friends of the corporations after election to do something for them, it would be much more effective for all the farmers to spend a little time and money before election investigating the business connections and records of the men who want to be elected. They have determined to organize and make a united effort to find out who are their friends before they send them to Bismarck.

They would no longer have to take what candidates choose to run or believe what candidates say about themselves, but would be able to choose intelligently.

This they are doing. They have formed themselves into an organization called "The Nonpartisan League." It is the work of one summer. When the season closes this league will contain practically all the farmers of the state. They mean business. They will neither be side-tracked or confused. And when the votes shall have been counted after the next election there will be found administering the affairs of this state a body of men who will honestly represent the people of an agricultural community.

A GOOD CITIZEN

"Community civics helps the child to know the meaning of his community life, not merely a lot of facts about it," says a bulletin just issued by the United States Bureau of Education. This bulletin was prepared by four members of the Committee on Social Studies of the National Education Association—Dr. J. Lynn Bernard, School of Pedagogy, Philadelphia; F. W. Carrler, principal of Wilmington (Mass.) High School; Arthur W. Dunn, specialist in civic education, United States Bureau of Education; and Clarence B. Kingsley, of the Massachusetts Board of Education.

"The significance of the term 'community civics' does not lie in its geographical implication," says the bulletin, "but applies this point of view to the national community as well. Emphasis is laid upon the local community because it is the one with which every child-citizen has most intimate relations, and for that reason it is easier for him to enter into actual co-operation with it."

The authors of the bulletin make clear that the term "citizenship" is used broadly. The "good citizen," they say, "is a person who habitually conducts himself with proper regard for the welfare of the community of which he is a member, and is active and intelligent in his co-operation with his fellow members to that end."

Community civics, according to the bulletin, should be taught in the elementary grades of the public schools and should be continued in a more comprehensive course in the first year of the high school. "Many pupils do not enter high school at all, and those who do should already have begun to acquire habits of civic thought and action. The greater majority of the high school pupil makes possible the

development of phases of the subject that are impracticable in the elementary school."

"Many courses in civics fail," the authors think, "because they fix attention upon the machinery of government rather than upon the elements of community welfare for which government exists. They familiarize the pupil with the manipulation of the social machinery without showing him the importance of the social ends for which this machinery exists. A lesson in community civics is not complete unless it leaves the pupil a sense of his responsibility, and results in right action. To attain these ends is perhaps the most difficult and delicate task of the teacher."

"Much civic instruction," declares the bulletin, "has been ineffective because it has left the pupil to work out for himself the application of general principles. The translation of principles into conduct is more difficult than the comprehension of the principles themselves. While we urge that the citizen should engage in these activities as far as opportunity offers, it is necessary to cultivate a motive sufficiently strong to lead him actually to do so. This motive is to be found in the common interest, which includes his interest, at least until such time as an ideal altruism may lead to the placing of the interest of others and of the community above the interest of self."

SITTING IN JUDGMENT.

The admonition "judge that ye be not judged" is valid only at those rare times when we are feeling humble and insignificant. On these rare occasions we find the attitude: "Who am I that I should pass judgment upon my fellow-men?" But the normal attitude is: "Who are my fellow-men that I should refrain from passing judgment upon them?"

INCAS KNEW BETTER

Few Americans realize how far the history of the South American countries extend back to antiquity. While Rome flourished there is reason to believe that the Incas, that race whose relics indicate a high state of culture, enjoyed nearly all the fruits of an advanced civilization.

For instance, among the Incas of Peru, prosecutors who failed to bring the guilty to justice were themselves liable to the same penalty.

Judges were required to decide every suit within five days after it was brought, and there were no appeals. But official visitors were continuously investigating the work of the judges. Every judge had to make a monthly report showing what he had done.

Every native, at marriage, which was compulsory, was allotted the use of a tract of land, with seeds and tools, sufficient for the support of himself and wife. To this an addition was made when each child came.

Lands of the aged, the sick, the widow, the orphan and the soldier on duty were tilled by neighbors as a common obligation.

All wool-bearing animals were owned by the state and the wool went into public warehouses, whence it was dealt out to each family in quantities sufficient for its wants and woven into clothing by the women. Only the decrepit and sick were excused from work.

Some natives were detailed to work in the mines; others to be artisans. Twenty thousand men worked for 50 years quarrying, carrying and fitting into place, without mortar, the huge stones that were used to make the palace and forts of the capitol city.

Records were kept of every birth and death; once a year a census of population was taken, and at longer

for use in a time of scarcity, resources of the nation.

When engaged in public work, each native was supported out of the public wealth. He did his turn and was replaced, leaving him then free to do his own work at home. Men were specially fitted to their task and care was taken to safeguard their health.

By means of great stone warehouses in all parts of the land, reserves of food and supplies were kept in the object of it, and placing

"When a man was reduced by poverty or misfortune (it could hardly be by fault) the arm of the law," says Prescott, the historian of Peru, "stretched out to minister relief, not the stinted relief of private charity, nor that which is doled out, drop by drop, as it were, from the frozen reservoirs of 'the parish' but in generous measure, bringing no humiliation to the object of it, and placing him on a level with the rest of his countrymen."

"No man could be rich; no man could be poor, but all might enjoy, and did enjoy, a competence."

Even in war, the civilization of the Incas was of a high order. "The soldier was forbidden to commit any trespass on the property of the inhabitants whose territory lay in the line of march. Any violation of this order was punished with death."

Long before postmen had been known in Europe the Incas, along their splendid roads, built small houses at short intervals. In each house dwelt an athletic man, trained in running. Messages and sometimes small parcels of dainty fruits or flowers were hurried by these relay carriers, at full speed. There is a record of one 1,200 mile "express" run having been performed in twenty days.

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