

The Sentinel

A Weekly Newspaper With Plenty of Backbone

Elbert Bode and Elbert Smith Publishers
Elbert Bode, Editor

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FRIDAY, JANUARY 7, 1921

KEEP A CLEAR HEAD, PLEASE, MR. SHARP.

Lest the object we have in view be misconstrued by Emmett Sharp and his friends before the statements about to be made are before them for consideration, we wish to state that what is about to be written will be said with only the kindest feelings for Mr. Sharp and are made in the hope that they may have a salutary effect upon his actions, thereby having an influence for Mr. Sharp's success as a commissioner and for the good of the county as a whole and this end of the county in particular.

The handling of a business as large as that of Lane county requires keen judgment, a cool head under the most aggravating circumstances, an ability to work with those who must cooperate in the conduct of that business and a certain poise and dignity in keeping with the importance of the office.

The truth of the old saying that those whom the gods would destroy they first make mad was never better illustrated than in the case of Mr. Sharp and his perferid oratorical effort upon the occasion of the recent taxpayers' meeting in Eugene. He stated that his blood was boiling and those who were objects of his indignation had no reason or opportunity to doubt the sincerity of that statement. We trust that he has since regretted some of the statements made under those circumstances, for if he has not he has not yet the proper slant upon the methods which must be pursued if he is to accomplish the many things which he hopes to accomplish—some of which we may well hope he may be able to put over. His denunciation of the actions of Cottage Grove hit many who are in full accord with his entire program. This fact and the making of statements which



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were entirely out of place in a public meeting have made lukewarm many who before were energetically behind him and have entirely alienated many who went so far as to wholeheartedly support him in the primary election. "We might have done better to have kept Spence on the job," is one of the mildest statements coming from one of those who had expected much of Mr. Sharp and was present at the taxpayers' meeting. We will spare Mr. Sharp a repetition of other statements made by those who expected something different from him.

Mr. Sharp's oratorical battery was trained particularly upon the editor of The Sentinel, who was accused of having done everything possible to hinder Sharp's program. What Mr. Sharp has to say of the editor of The Sentinel matters little except as it may show the inexcusable exhibition of anger in a public meeting and his failure to properly interpret what is going on in the county whose business he is now assisting to conduct.

The facts are that The Sentinel took no side in the primary election campaign, not wishing to foment unkindly feeling where two local men were concerned. After Mr. Sharp had gained the nomination, The Sentinel appealed to the voters for the election of Mr. Barnard for county judge on the ground that a man should be elected with whom Mr. Sharp could work in harmony. That action of The Sentinel, at least, met with the approval of Mr. Sharp at the time.

That editorial was not, however, intended to be taken as in any sense an endorsement of Mr. Sharp's program to disrupt the road building organization of the county and The Sentinel has up to this time made no comment upon Mr. Sharp's proposed method for conducting the county's affairs. Privately the editor of The Sentinel has expressed his opinion that road building could not be more successfully conducted under Mr. Sharp's plan than under the plan in force during the past few years. We felt, however, that Mr. Sharp, certain to be elected, should have a fair chance to endeavor to make good. We would much rather that harmony should prevail in the county court and our ideas be thrown into the discard than that our ideas should be put into effect by sacrificing harmony for four years. We felt that Mr. Sharp and Mr. Barnard, already friends, could get along harmoniously and that it would be possible for one to yield to the other and yet maintain harmony and that such could not be the case were Mr. Bown elected. Such harmony is necessary if Mr. Sharp is to properly care for his end of the county and accomplish much for the county as a whole.

As far as The Sentinel was concerned, or is concerned, we are willing that Mr. Sharp put all his plans into operation. The new court has not decided upon the road superintendency as this is written, but we are frank enough to say that we are inclined to believe that in the long run it might be better to give Mr. Sharp's plans a trial. First, there is the bare possibility, which we do not by any means concede, that his contentions are right. Secondly, and mainly, there are a lot of people who believe he is right and who will not be satisfied until after his plans are given a trial. If his idea of how road building should be conducted should prove a failure, we could within a few months go back permanently to the road superintendency system and we would not have this bone of contention to come up at every election.

If the Sharp system proved a greater success, we could then all get behind it, and The Sentinel, if found to have been in error, would not hesitate to take a front seat in the band wagon and beat the big bass drum. But because we are willing that Mr. Sharp's program be given a trial, that is no reason why we can not consistently disagree with Mr. Sharp and hold to our view that it would be a mistake (except to demonstrate the error of so doing) to disrupt the present road organization.

Now comes the taxpayers' meeting, at which time the editor of The Sentinel took the position that the county court, to whom we look for a successful conduct of our road program, and upon whom we will place the blame for failure or extravagance, should have a free hand in selecting

its own method of procedure; and the further position that the people of the county had not necessarily spoken irrevocably against the road superintendency system, basing such a contention upon the fact that half the voters had not gone to the polls, that Mr. Sharp's nomination was not an overwhelming one and that many had voted for him merely because they wanted to vote for Sharp or wished to vote against Spence, the Sharp platform being in such cases a matter of little concern.

Furthermore, the taxpayers' meeting of some two or three hundred, could not express the opinion of all the people of the county and it was not right that such a minority should absolutely bind the county court to do away with the road superintendency. Under such circumstances, even should Mr. Sharp later find a road superintendency, by that or some other name, a necessity, he would be prohibited by the vote of that meeting from exercising his best judgment. Furthermore, if the county court already had instructions from the people, why the need of further instructions from such a small minority of the voters?

Mr. Sharp may well feel himself bound to attempt to carry out the platform upon which he was elected. We expect him to make such an attempt. We expect him to attempt to get the votes of the other members of the court for his program, but if he fails to be successful in this, we expect him to do his best to make a success of whatever system is followed. If he could make the success of his system which he claims that he can he can do much to do away with inexcusable waste, extravagance and inefficiency under the system which is adopted. In doing this he can easily become as great a hero as Hercules when he cleaned the Augean stables.

We concede Mr. Sharp the right to his own opinions. We reserve the right to disagree with him and to offer our advice as occasions may seem to require. We are ready to do our best to help make a success of any plan the county court may adopt but we fail to see the logic of Mr. Sharp's contention that because he was elected on a certain platform we have no right to suggest to him ideas of how the county's business should be run which are in conflict with that platform. When the county court adopts his methods we are ready to give whatever assistance we can to help towards the success of those methods. Will Mr. Sharp agree to do the same if his plans fail to prevail?

Finally, any public servant, which Mr. Sharp now is, must get accustomed to smiling when the fur is rubbed the wrong way. Only one who can hold his head amid a tempest of criticism can hope to make a success and redeem his promise. To attack his fellow member of the county court, as Mr. Sharp did Mr. Harlow, may show fearlessness. Some might call it fearlessness to tackle a Bengal tiger barehanded. Fearlessness is a good quality when backed by calm judgment but by the action referred to Mr. Sharp foreed upon Mr. Harlow a condition in which he can not be expected to exert his energies to put over Mr. Sharp's program. Mr. Harlow is a man who is respected by the people of the county. He has not conducted all the affairs of the county in the manner we would have conducted them. Many times we have thought that he favored some other part of the county over this end of the county, but why not be fair and honest with him? We expect Mr. Sharp to be ever alert towards the interests of this end of the county. We will be greatly disappointed if he does not bring home the bacon. It is but natural that he should sometimes overstep in favor of this end of the county, not intentionally but because the interests of this end of the county must be foremost in his mind and because he sees the interests of this section better than he does the interests of other sections. Sometimes we have felt that Mr. Harlow favored the Eugene section in a way he must have known unjust to other sections of the county, but if we are honest in telling our thoughts, how many are there who are going to re-monstrate with Mr. Sharp if he gets for Cottage Grove more than his share? Until there is proof to the contrary we are going to believe that Mr. Harlow has tried to use his best judgment. Mr. Harlow has made some mistakes, just as Mr. Sharp is going to make mistakes, but Mr. Sharp himself charged those mistakes to inefficiency rather than to any intent to be unfair. Mr. Sharp has got to serve two years with Mr. Harlow. If Mr. Harlow's mistakes have been of the head, and not of the heart, the same amount of energy which has been expended in denouncing Mr. Harlow in public meetings might better have been used in presenting facts and figures which would have shown Mr. Harlow the error of his way and have led him in paths better suited to the welfare of the county.

Inviting opponents out back of the court house to have it taken out of them, as Mr. Sharp did, may appeal to the mob but is a display of a weakness which is unbecoming in one elected to a position where there are more kicks than boosts, where denunciation flows freely and praise congeals at the spigot, where clear thinking, a cool head and a nimble wit get away with the bacon.

Let us reiterate that all that has been written has been said in the kindest spirit and with the same forbearance displayed at the meeting at Eugene. We have many reasons for wishing to see Mr. Sharp make a successful county commissioner, even in the event that he is able to put his whole road building program into effect and we trust there may be no more such occurrences as the one of which we have spoken.

[Since the above was written, news has reached here that the county court has reemployed Mr. McKy as road superintendent for a period of six months. The advice given is just as applicable and we trust the new court will use every effort to do away with any excuse for charges of extravagance and waste of money, which have been prevalent in the past and which undoubtedly have had some foundation, as is usually the case in all public work.]

Telephone Rates and the Decline in Prices

The Telephone Company has asked its patrons in Oregon to pay more for their telephone service. It has placed the facts and figures of the situation before the Public Service Commission for their investigation and verification. The increases will not amount to much to individual subscribers, but the aggregate will permit the company to properly maintain and develop its service.

We have shown the commission that we are operating at a loss. Our expenses are greater than our earnings. The owners of the property are receiving nothing from their Oregon investment and the interest due on debts which should properly be borne by the Oregon properties are not being paid from Oregon receipts.

At the hearing before the Public Service Commission not a fact or figure presented by the company was disputed or disproved. The only material contention made was that increases were perhaps inopportune in view of the apparent decline in general commodity prices.

The company is asking for a reasonable return upon its existing investment, without regard to the uncertainties of the future. The company files periodical reports of its operations with public authorities and its future investments will be the subject of constant consideration and future adjustments, if necessary.

Salaries and wages make up 72% of our current expenses. We hope they will not be reduced and do not think they should be.

In the five years, 1916-1920 inclusive, we have increased the wages of our plant people \$307,000.00; our traffic (operating) employes \$681,000.00; commercial employes, \$98,000.00, a total of \$1,086,000.00 per annum.

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- RESOLVED—To see Columbia Highway, Mt. Hood, or some beauty spot of Oregon's glorious scenery every week end.
- RESOLVED—To visit those "Best Friends" who live at a distance more often in future.

These resolutions are easy to keep because a Ford Sedan will keep them for you. It will take you and the entire family—even the babies—everywhere you want to go, regardless of weather conditions. In wind or rain storm or cold, all will be as comfortable and warm and free from all drafts as if at home by the fireside.

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