

The Sentinel

A Weekly Newspaper With Plenty of Backbone

Elbert Bede and Elbert Smith Publishers
Elbert Bede, Editor

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FRIDAY, MAY 13, 1921.

RECALLING HARLOW.

The Sentinel is not greatly worried about the possible outcome of the proposed recall of County Commissioner Harlow, but in a matter of such vital import to every resident of Lane county, we feel called upon to express our opinion. In doing this we will say exactly what we think, even though in doing so it be necessary to tread upon the toes of some with whom we have worked in the past and with whom we are likely to work in the future.

As far as the proposed recall of Commissioner Harlow is concerned, our personal feelings towards Mr. Harlow are of no concern and what we have to say would be said regardless of how we felt personally towards the man. Although, as we have said, our personal feelings are of no moment, the Sentinel and Mr. Harlow have never been close friends. Neither have we had any friction other than such as naturally goes with asking the county court for something and often not getting it. Neither have we been on terms of unusual intimacy with the members of Lane county's road organization.

Mr. Harlow knows, and the members of Lane county's road organization know, that The Sentinel will at no time hesitate to expose extravagance, incompetence or favoritism on their part. Yet they do rightly expect a square deal, and as far as we are able to give it they shall have that from The Sentinel. Only that and nothing more.

The excuse for the proposed recall of Mr. Harlow is that he is domineering and stubborn and that he discriminates against the western, northern and southern ends of the county in road matters.

In our opinion, and we have in times past expressed ourselves to the same point, that is not a sufficient excuse for invoking the recall.

Anticipating that we may be called a member of the old guard and accused of defending ring politics, we state positively that just as long as a person in public office must stand for

villification from his fellow citizens, must have his faults enlarged upon and his virtues minimized, just that long will it be impossible to clean up politics.

Just as long as the recall can be invoked against an officer for no other grounds than those stated in the recall petition against Mr. Harlow, just that long will it be impossible to get the best citizens to seek public office. Just as long as a public official is defenseless against the onslaughts of those who feel themselves aggrieved by his actions, when no charge of incompetence or dishonesty is made, just that long will men of ability and character, men who value the opinion of their fellow man, shun public places.

Never under any circumstances should the recall be invoked except in case of graft, dishonesty, malfeasance or nonfeasance in office, or gross incompetence.

No one of these charges has been brought against Mr. Harlow. When the petitions were presented to The Sentinel for signature it was stated that no such charge was to be brought.

Since that time, however, we have been informed that dishonesty and extravagance are the real issues and the words of the petition but a subterfuge. If such is the case, then the wrong being done Mr. Harlow is still greater. He has a right to know the charges against him. Common, ordinary justice demands that. The law contemplates that. If any hide the real issue, if any strike him in the back, they are in a poor position to accuse Mr. Harlow of unfairness. The lowest criminal has an inalienable right to know the charge against him. Surely Mr. Harlow has not fallen so low in the estimation of his detractors that he is not to be permitted to enjoy the rights which the brutal murderer and the degenerate despoiler of a woman's virtue enjoy.

It is not right, it is not fair, it is un-American to strike at a public official through the recall for any other reason than dishonesty or gross misconduct or gross incompetence. The Sentinel always has opposed the recall when invoked for any other reason. It now opposes it on the same grounds and it always will oppose it under the same circumstances, no matter who the victim selected may be.

Lane county never has had a county commissioner against whom the recall could not be invoked for reasons fully as good as those stated in the present recall movement and we doubt if we ever will have commissioners who would not be subject to recall on the same or similar grounds. The recall movement has hardly gotten a good start and yet we have heard more reasons given why L. N. Roney, the proposed recall candidate against Mr. Harlow, should not be a commissioner than we have heard why Mr. Harlow should be removed.

The Sentinel suggests, in fairness to all parties concerned, that if the recallers are successful with their petitions, the records of both Mr. Harlow and Mr. Roney be investigated and published side by side, to the end that the voters may be fully informed. We know nothing against Mr. Roney. We know nothing sufficient to warrant a recall of Mr. Harlow. We are willing to publish the results of the investigation free of charge to all concerned. If we are to have a recall, let us have all the facts. Let justice be done to all concerned. The recallers can ask no more and no less. Believing that the road organization of the county is under fire in the proposed recall, that whether or not the members of the road organization are earning their salaries is a point at issue and that the criticism aimed at members of the road organization (without reference to the recall) warrant itemized statements as what the members of this organization are doing, and believing further that the full light of publicity should be welcomed by both sides, we have requested, and have been promised, complete itemized statements for a month's time of the county road superintendent, the county bridge superintendent and of the road supervisors of this section. The Sentinel will welcome comment upon these statements. A square deal to the taxpayer, as well as to those who get the taxpayer's money, is the aim we have in view.

As a matter of fact, we are led to

believe, the entire excuse for the recall is dissatisfaction with certain decisions of Mr. Harlow's in road matters, particularly in reference to roads in the vicinity of Junction City. This community always has held a sympathetic feeling for that end of the county in the matter of roads. On occasions this community has joined hands with Junction City in supporting some road program. The fact that The Sentinel opposes the recall does not mean that we endorse the decisions of the highway commission and the county court in regard to roads in the northern end of the county. We take no position at this time on the matter of such roads, but we do say, and we say it positively, that if mistakes in road locations, or road improvements (provided such mistakes have been made) have been only mistakes of judgment; if the members of the county court have not been influenced by ulterior motives (and no such charges have been brought), then there is no excuse for the recall.

Mr. Harlow was just as stubborn three years ago when once a position was taken; he was just as short in diplomacy; he was just as persistent in working for the end that he believed the proper one as he is now, and he was reelected by voters who knew those characteristics. Let them suffer the consequences of their action, if indeed they are not much better off than they would be had they elected some palvering politician who would have swayed with every breeze, who would have tried to please all, would have pleased none and accomplished nothing. We have more respect for the man who takes the consequences for doing what he believes to be right than we have for the one who waits to learn upon which side the greatest amount of favorable public opinion seems to lie, and then lies for that side.

Speaking without prejudice, if road matters are the reason for the proposed recall of Commissioner Harlow, what complaint can Cottage Grove make sufficient to justify the working of the recall. Compare Cottage Grove roads with the roads that were here when Commissioner Harlow went into office. Even the bridges for which we have been fighting for years are now promised us. One of them will

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