

IDEALISM IN POLITICS

Some Queer Notions as to What the Expression Means

It is the fashion to poke fun at political idealists and to laugh at the notion of any useful accomplishment at their hands. It is, of course, true that those who have acquired the habit of contemplation of the infinite and devote their lives to the penetration of the inscrutable, whatever their personal virtues, are apt to be found sadly at a disadvantage in dealing with the "practical men" of a wicked world. It is evident enough that because one glorifies and practices purity and truth he is not thereby necessarily qualified to judge wisely of the proper construction of a sewer. And it is a sad fact that an exemplar of sweetness and light is very likely indeed to be grossly deceived by pretenders to that cult whom he trustfully takes to his bosom. It is the habit of the adepts in the ways of political darkness to refer to those seeking for better ways as well meaning, innocent and perhaps godly persons who will be useful citizens of heaven but who make a sad mess when they monkey with the affairs of this sinful world. And thoughtless mankind readily accepts these promptings of the devil.

The error lies in a misconception of the nature of political idealism, which does not contemplate the exercise or assume the possession of all the serene virtues but merely requires that the idealist shall not steal. Any person who will not steal or knowingly promote the election or appointment of thieves, and who will moreover exercise ordinary common sense in protecting himself from imposition, and who will also recognize and fulfill his civic duty to assist, where assistance will be effective, in the selection of his political agents, has all the qualifications of a political idealist. The standard is not so high but that most of us should be able to reach it.

A "practical politician," also, is a person who endeavors to so direct the expenditure of public money, and especially of money expended for salaries and wages, that it shall inure to his benefit or that of some one behind him as against that of the public whenever his interests conflict with those of the public. How important this is will be realized when we reflect that the amount appropriated in this city alone for salaries—which does not include "wages"—amounts this year to nearly \$3,000,000. In the eyes of the "practical" man the control of this salary fund is all there is of "politics." All that the idealist proposes is that this fund, and all public funds, shall be expended solely with reference to the public interest, and with no reference at all to the interest of any individual, corporation or political party. This precludes the appointment to any position of influence or emolument in the public service of any person as a reward for party service or who is

suggested or known to be favored by any public service corporation or any other corporation or individual whose business involves trading with state or municipality or whose occupation is among those usually requiring license from police boards. The reason for this is that none of these persons will usually actively show concern with appointment or election to public station except to promote their private interest as against that of the public or to obtain some unfair advantage over a competitor.

Political idealism also forbids one to vote for the candidates of any party whose organization accepts contributions from any of the interests mentioned in the preceding paragraph, because it is self-evident that such contributions will be made only for the purpose of promoting private interests against those of the public. And to assure themselves against deception political idealists demand that the names of all contributors to campaign funds be published—with the amounts given—as well as a sufficiently itemized account of expenditures, it being made a felony to falsify the books or to disburse any money beyond a trilling sum, without a voucher signed by the person receiving it. And they hold that all party organizations which refuse or neglect to do this must be presumed to be secretly taking money from those from whom they ought not to receive it. And that is about all there is of political idealism.

GET COMPETITION IN LIGHT AND HEAT

Corvallis Citizens Are Jubilant Over Granting of New Gas Franchise.

Corvallis, Ore., Aug. 16.—The city council has just passed the gas franchise asked for recently by James Steel, of Salem, giving him the right to manufacture gas in Corvallis for 25 years, and the residents of this city are jubilant. They will now have some choice as to lights and heat, also, so Mr. Steel says, gas will be cheaper for heating purposes than wood at \$4 per cord. The maximum price for gas is fixed at 75 cents per thousand cubic feet.

Work is to begin on the construction of the plant within two weeks and the factory will be located on the bank of the Willamette. The building is to be 40x70 feet, two stories high, and the entire plant will cost about \$23,000.

The distribution system will require about ten miles of pipe and Mr. Steel thinks that he will have about six miles laid and ready for use before the rainy season is on. It is thought the chance to use gas may

cause a drop in the price of wood, which is up to \$4.50 per cord now. The main points of the franchise are that the company must pay the city of Corvallis for the first five years, \$100 per year, and one per cent of the gross earnings per year the remainder of the life of the franchise. If the city wishes to purchase the plant after the first five years, it may, the price to be arbitrated. The company is to give a bond in the sum of \$5,000 and allow the inspection of its books by the city authorities.

HENRY LONG FELL DEAD ON THE TRAIL

Four Bearers With Difficulty Get Body, Weighing 240 Pounds, to Camp.

Silverton, Ore., Aug. 16.—Henry Long, who has lived nine miles east of this city for many years, died while walking from the Clackamas Hot Springs to the fork of the Molalla, where teams were waiting to convey the party home, a distance of 30 miles.

Mr. Long, in company with George and Roy Thomas, had been at the springs for some time hoping to recover his health, and on the morning of his departure remarked that he had not felt better for some time. He left an hour ahead of the other men, thinking they would walk faster and probably overtake him before he reached the end of the trail. When within about five miles of the Molalla he was found lying face down on the ground and it is supposed that his death occurred instantly from heart trouble.

A few moments later two other men happened along the trail and on a stretcher roughly arranged with poles the party carried the unfortunate man to the end of the trail where his team was waiting to convey him home. Mr. Long was six feet and two inches tall and weighed 240 pounds, and it was with great difficulty that he was conveyed down the mountain trail a distance of five miles to the camp.

The deceased was 62 years of age and has been a resident of Oregon for many years.

ALBANY WILL HAVE MODERN GAS PLANT

Albany, Ore., Aug. 16.—James Steel of Portland, a brother of the state treasurer, has been granted a franchise by the city council to construct a gas plant within the city of Albany. The charge is not to exceed 75 cents per thousand.

It is stipulated that should the city see fit to purchase the plant within five years from the date of its building it will be obliged to sell to the city.

Mr. Steel agrees to have the plant in operation by the first of December, and says that the introduction of gas for heating and light will greatly lessen the cost of fuel and have a tendency to lower the prices paid for heating purposes.

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