

COOS BAY TIMES

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WHAT IS LAW?

ALL WE HEAR in these latter days of the majesty and supremacy of law, is not too much taken for granted as to the all-sufficiency of law, as a regulator of human affairs, the basis of individual liberty, and of good government, of, by and for the people? "What is law?" may seem a simple, almost foolish question, yet it is a question the answer to which is higher, broader and deeper than the law itself. Law is a manufactured article, ground out and shaped in legislative mills, to fit the needs and meet the demands of the present day or year. These laws are but correctives of wrong doing that may be taken cognizance of by the agents of the law. The law has no power to prevent wrong doing or to reform the wrong doer.

Respect for the law—we might better say the fear of the law, is of no virtue in itself and no mark of manhood or good citizenship. The law has no application to, is not thought of or recognized as of personal application by the great body of the people. The old expression, "a law-abiding people," is a misnomer, void of meaning. Whoever considers the bearing of law on his acts, is already guilty before the act is committed, and guilty still, if the intention is not carried into execution, because of the law.

There is a higher law than all acts of congress or legislatures, the law, the rule of right and justice between man and man, where this higher law is observed in thought, word and act, the laws of all the law books are as worthless as waste paper.

When a boy, I read in an old time almanac as follows: "A man well along in years was elected a justice of the peace, his education was very limited, and of law, he knew nothing. He did not think he should take the office. He was acquainted with a judge of one of the higher courts, and told him his troubles. The judge advised him, "you take the office, when a case comes before you, get all the evidence you can on both sides and decide the case just as you think is right, never mind the law at all." This man held the office for many years, and he seldom had a case appealed to a higher court, and never a decision reversed. This might truly be called a court of justice governed and controlled by the higher law of right. All that law is, is the definition of what constitutes a crime, and affixes to the crime a penalty. It is perhaps a deterrent to crime but it can only take positive cognizance of crime, after the act, and even then there must be officers to enforce it, witnesses to prove and a judge to pass sentence, or the law is dead and useless. If then, the law is without virtue as an agent of reform, where are we to look for the dawning of that better day, for which we are all looking and hoping. It has been said with truth, that a child to be well born, should have the selection of its parents for several generations. We shall never raise the level of humanity by pressing down with laws and prisons. The power to rise and grow must work outward in the life from a living principle within. When right and justice toward all of human kind shall have become so much a part of life in all fathers and mothers that it shall become an inherited instinct in their children, then will those words of Christ stand as the rule of life, "Whatsoever ye would that man should do to you, do ye even so to them."

We speak today in scorn of the gambling table and the stock exchange, yet they are only full grown developments of universal business life and practices. Look at Pittsburg, where workers have developed wealth, that in the hands of a few is being exploited in world-wide extravagance.

Pittsburg sends out more car loads of manufactured goods than any city in America, yet it is the center of corruption, keeping criminal, divorce and bankrupt courts in constant operation. Pittsburg had law, law books, law offices and lawyers, courts and judges in full supply, but business life and business interests ran over right and justice, and laughed at the idea of being controlled by law. Under present conditions law is helpless and ineffective.

Here and there it catches an offender, and straightway the whole land rings with the glorification of law, while the lawyer who has caught some sinner with uncovered tracks, makes a reputation for heroic courage, and attains to office for reward.

Until right can be made a part of the inborn life of the people, there will be no better life than now. Self-respect is lost in self-interest, the foundation of a higher life must be laid in that high order of self-respect that forbids a man to wrong his fellow man, and holds the right of every other as equal to his own. When this shall be the universal rule, hereditary righteousness will soon become a world-wide attribute.

We have today, the same as in Moses' time, the sins of the father are visited upon the children, we need to change this until the law written on the heart, of which Paul speaks shall be the law of right and justice. But before that law can be written on the heart of coming generations, it must be a part of the life of those now living.

It is an easy way to throw the responsibility of present conditions on the law and its officers, but until the law of government of self shall be the rule of life wrong, injustice and corruption will still prevail, although laws may be fitted to govern every act of life. In Chicago a judge of one of the city courts adopted a method of handling criminals of certain classes, he passed sentence, then, if they pledged themselves to a better life, he paroled them, and gave them a chance to recover their manhood and self respect.

More than ninety per cent of these, both men and women held to their pledge and were saved from the degradation of a jail, but this did not suit some saloonmen nor the lawyers, if this continued and became widespread their hope of gain was gone.

This action was claimed to be illegal and outside the laws, influence was brought to bear and the judge who believed in humanity more than in the letter of the law, was transferred to another court and his work abruptly closed, although he was doing more good than all the reform societies of Chicago put together. A judge does not require so much profound legal knowledge, as he does a good measure of the saving grace of common sense.

The congress of the United States has ordered the motto "In God We Trust" shall again be placed upon the coinage of the nation, that was a right and proper thing to do but I sometimes think they should have made the motto read, "The Dollar Is Our God, In God We Trust."

This would express the fealty and devotion of our people, and the true object of worship, Great stress is laid upon the words, "the reign of law," to change the designating word, we have more than a rain of law, we have a perfect deluge, our courts are drowned in law, lawyers and judges are mixed up in, as it were barbed wire entanglements and justice stands by, blind and helpless. Law, I often think, is a mark of barbarism, rather than of civilization.

C. A. SMITH ON STREET PAVING

Prominent Coos Bay Lumberman Gives His View of Marshfield Situation.

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., June 16.—Editor Coos Bay Times, Coos Bay, Oregon:

I am informed that a petition is being circulated for the paving with asphalt several blocks on Front street. It really seems to me that the time has as yet not come when the property in Marshfield will warrant paving of any kind. Take for instance our twin cities and several cities in the west, of which I know; for instance Spokane and the hustling city of Seattle all had between twenty-five and fifty thousand people before any paving was done, we using dirt and gravel streets and Seattle plankings. As you probably know, paving is an expensive proposition and asphalt paving is the most expensive of all considering first cost and up keep and its life. I really cannot understand why as much asphalt paving is used as there is unless it is because much greater effort is made by the people in that business than in any other class of paving business. Now, my dear Mr. Editor, you have being manufactured every day right in Marshfield a material which is not only cheaper, but in my judgment superior to any other class of paving, namely wood. It seems that every city has to experiment. The urgency with which the different classes of paving is presented to the city council almost forces them to make these experiments. We have passed through it here. It was not until within the last five or six years that our council finally came to the conclusion which the councils of London and Paris for instance, knew twenty years ago, that wooden blocks makes not only the cheapest but most satisfactory paving in every respect. I certainly sincerely do hope that whenever your people feel that they have become metropolitan enough to be able to bear this heavy burden, that neither asphalt nor any other except the wooden block paving will be used. As far especially as Front street is concerned, I should think that the question of any kind of foundation for paving, except a plank foundation should be studied with the greatest of care. Now, if you will bear with me although a non-resident, I venture to suggest if your city would plank its streets for another five or six years, this in my judgment will answer very nicely. If, however, it is firmly fixed in your mind that paving must be done, then by all means use wooden blocks, either fir or cedar cut four inches thick and six inches long laid on two or three inch plank, cedar preferably. This I should think would make a much cheaper paving than asphalt, will last a great deal longer, will need no repairing and be more satisfactory in every respect. By the way I noticed the few minutes I was in your city last week, that Broadway is in a very bad condition indeed. Should think that this street should be planked from Mill Slough north three or four blocks. Now, that lumber is cheaper than it will probably ever be again, it seems to me, would be an ideal time for your city to put down these necessary improvements before the rainy season sets in.

Yours truly,
C. A. SMITH.

NOTICE.

All property owners or tenants who have not had their stove-pipes and chimneys cleaned are urged to have them cleaned at once as the "Chimney Sweep" will leave the Bay before long and the opportunity will be gone. Some people cleaned their stove-pipes and let their chimneys go. The chimney sweep be cleaned as well as the stove-pipes as they are just as dangerous. The "Chimney Sweep" will climb on top of your houses and see if the flue is in good shape or needs cleaning. He does his work satisfactorily and his charges are reasonable.

J. W. CARTER,
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