

Intermountain Tribune

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T. L. DUGGER, EDITOR AND PROP

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PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion, it can be safely said, is the most potent factor in American politics, to-day. A reform has never been secured in government nor never will be, except there is a well defined public opinion behind it.

We now have the direct election of United States senators. Why? The national house of representatives passed a resolution to submit an amendment to the Federal constitution making U. S. senators elective at five or six different sessions before the senate agreed to submit the matter to the people. Public opinion literally forced the senate to act favorably.

Public opinion in opposition to human slavery caused the Civil war and the war was fought to a victorious conclusion, because a majority of the people supported the government, even when they knew that victory for the government meant freedom for the slaves.

Public opinion caused a division in the republican party, last year, which made the election of a democratic congress and president possible and resulting in the reduction of the tariff, a matter which the people had been demanding for several years. President Wilson could never have exerted the influence over congress which he has in the enactment of new tariff, if congress had not known that the President was supported by a vast majority of the people.

When Oregon adopted the Initiative and Referendum and the Direct Primary including the direct selection of United States senators, it was hardly thinkable that the idea would spread until public opinion forced the adoption of the amendment making direct election alike lawful in all the states. Yet the little bit of leaven, started in the far northwest resulted in a successful but most quiet and peaceful revolution in our government.

Strange as it may appear, the creation of public opinion is never attributable to the politicians. Reform ideas seem to develop among the thinking, voting masses of the people. Then the politicians take up and voice the ideas, often claiming them as the fruit of their own gray matter.

Until public opinion dominates the masses of the people, a majority vote cannot be had upon any subject. Therefore, when a new idea or a reform in government is evolved, a campaign of education—the formation of public opinion is inaugurated. Why? To get the majority of the people behind the idea or reform.

Almost all ideas of reform in government, originated during the past half century, have come up from the farmer folk, through the grange and other kindred farmer organizations. Practical politicians do not, as a rule, evolve new ideas of government. They are, simply, good interpreters of public opinion. They grasp the ideas coming up from the people and appropriate

them as products of their own brains and the most successful politician is he who is most sensitive to public thought, becomes first an agitator and then a leader in promulgating the idea or ideas.

Why, even in the town or school election, agitation, the forerunner of public opinion governs. No matter how good or just an idea may be, unless a majority of the people can be swayed to take it up and adopt it, it amounts to nothing unless it be the groundwork to pave the way for a future reform.

Then it is quite proper for farmer folk, through the Grange and other farm organizations to discuss matters pertaining to government. Not every thought advanced by the granger orator will prove to be worthy; but it may be the crude conception of what, afterwards, may become the basic idea of an important governmental reform.

Public opinion owes its origin to the product of some individual thinker. His idea may be crude, but discussion and agitation eliminates the crudeness and adds amendments until a really worthy reform idea is born, which is so fair and so just that it appeals to a majority of the people and is, eventually, made a law of the land. The idea, which is the subject of ridicule and derision today, may become the adopted law of the land tomorrow.

Until public opinion is behind a law, it is but a dead letter on our statute books. An unpopular law is never nor cannot be enforced vigorously until public opinion is behind it and upholds the hands of the executive officers. We have laws against murder, arson, theft, etc., which are vigorously enforced. Why? Because everybody demands that they shall be enforced. We, also, have laws requiring a property owner to make an honest return of his property to the assessor for taxation purposes. Yet everybody knows that this law is violated in thousands of instances every year and never or rarely, if ever, are men punished for the violation. Why? Because almost everyone endeavors to have his property listed at a low value, in order to reduce his annual tax payment. Again, we say that public opinion is the most potent factor in American politics and this is justification for the assertion.

SENATOR LAFOLLETTE

An effort is being made to read Senator LaFollette over into the democratic party. The reason assigned is, the Senator voted for the, what may be called, democratic tariff measure. He stated that the bill was infinitely better than the Payne-Aldrich tariff and was, in a measure, what the people demanded.

It appears, then, that Senator LaFollette is to be punished, because he dared to vote in accordance with what he deemed was for the best interests of the country and that he was willing to forget partisanship long enough to do what he deemed was right.

The democratic party should receive Senator LaFollette with open arms. Such men are an honor to any party and are sure to receive the plaudits of the people, because they dare to do right as they see it. Senator LaFollette knew that he was acting in opposition to republican policies and party interests. Yet he placed honesty and fair dealing above party advantage. It is said he lost the probable republican nomination for president by his action.

Senator LaFollette is an honor to American statesmanship. A man who dares to vote in accordance with what he knows is right, nevertheless it means to him, a loss of party prestige and, perhaps, party ostracism,

is an honor to American citizenship. The democratic party should be proud to receive him within its folds. His action proves him to be an absolutely honest man, uninfluenced by party dictation.

The Tribune will be glad to support Senator LaFollette as a successor to President Wilson.

New York's Choice of Evils

One can understand, though not excuse, the readiness of many people in New York state to condone the offenses of Gov. Sulzer when one is informed of the methods of Tammany, which would prevail if a man of its choice became Governor. These methods are illustrated by Tammany's dealings with a contract of work on the new aqueduct from the Catskills to New York City.

The lowest bidder was a Kentucky corporation, but actual awarding of the contract was likely to be indefinitely postponed unless the Kentuckians "accelerated" proceedings. They did so, according to court testimony, by paying \$30,000 to James E. Gaffney for "advice." Mr. Gaffney is the friend and partner of Charles F. Murphy and is the same man whom the Tammany boss wished Governor Sulzer to intrust with the expenditure of \$50,000,000 on the state roads. If he had got the job, there is no doubt the \$50,000,000 would have been spent, but there is a grave doubt whether the state would have got good roads.

The people of New York are driven to choose between a man who misapplied funds given him in trust by his friends and who, when dictated, tried to hide behind his wives skirts, and a gang of men who use political power systematically to rob the people and then use some of the plunder to perpetuate their power. The people are not safe in the hands of Mr. Sulzer, for he has proved lacking in integrity, and they may well feel that policy, not conscience, restrains him from robbing them. But they are sure that Tammany, if given power, would rob them.

New York probably would fain discard both Sulzer and Murphy as rulers, but whom shall it put in their places? It imagines the choice to be between the known and the potentially dishonest and seems to choose the latter. But is that necessary? Surely there are other honest and capable men similar to Justice Hughes among its millions. It is not necessary to sustain a Sulzer in order to defeat a Tammany.—Oregonian,

Almost every man and woman has faults; for it is said in Holy Writ that none are perfect. Perhaps he or she, whose faults you hold up to public criticism, are of lesser gravity than your own. The Bible injunction, "Pick the beam from your own eye before you seek to take the mote from the other fellow's (thy brother's), eye, is true is true walks and conditions of life.

It is said certain portions of the mountain toll road, have been neglected until some places are almost dangerous. Certainly if people are required to pay to travel over a road, the road should be reasonably safe and in reasonably good condition. The road company should live up to the conditions of the contract made with the government, else throw up the whole proposition.

A law placed in our statute books, which is not enforced, had better never been enacted. It leads to a disregard, not only for this particular law, but for all other law as well.

About all of Sweet Home people who were passing their summer outing at the hop fields, have returned.

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