Newspapers by ancestry

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WHAT DO THEY TAKE?

Many times it has come to readers of the better class of newspapers, like The Independent, the question: What do men take when they become candidate for public office, file for a nomination, get on a commission or otherwise land, like a fly cinder, in the public eye, which causes them to lose all sense of proportion?

Men used to be chosen, now they choose themselves, and the result is simply terrific. Remember the oceans of paid self-praise used by candidates during the primaries?

But all of that explosion of words; all that self-glorification, was as nothing compared to a man who hangs on like death to an honorary commission when a Governor of a state chooses to remove him.

What do they take?

Surely, there is some potion in which such men indulge.

Most of the commissions authorized under the state government are more or less honorary in character, but as some of them involve considerable work, provision is made to pay members of such commissions a reasonable per diem to protect them from actual financial loss. Not every man appointed as a commissioner can afford to come to Helena, pay his railroad fare and hotel bills out of his own pocket. Others who have means are glad to contribute their time and expenses. Notable examples in recent years are men like the late Charles J. Kelley of Butte, who served the state in many capacities without ever filing a claim; Herbert [illegible] of Missoula is another. Elmer Holt, present Governor, served on the relief commission without drawing any compensation.

Thus all through the years, membership on a commission has been considered an honor tendered by the Governor; a recognition of the worthiness of the man appointed or his ability to perform the duty assigned him. It was an honor to serve the state of Montana in those days when men were men, when each was for the other and all were for the state.

But look at the brawls today.

What do men take which makes them act that way?

The present highway commission is a conspicuous example.

If the service of any member of this honorary body was displeasing to the Governor, at the inclination and pleasure of the chief executive, such member should gracefully resign. He would if he rightly considered the position as it was intended—a place of honor and trust to be given or withdrawn by the man who created such [illegible].

But not today.

Once in office a commissioner thinks he is above the Governor; above the Supreme Court; a personage without whose personal influence the state administration would crumble like a [illegible].

What do they take?

There are other men in Montana who can ably supervise the building of our highways, believe it or not. There are other men to whom contractors would submit just as good bids as to members of the present commission; there are other men for whom engineers and patrolmen, superintendents and maintenance men would work for the same money.

The present highway commission is not a body of technical men—they are just laymen: One condemned a strip of land down in Billings in the good old days so his cow could be driven home from pasture without a ten-mile walk; another did a fairly good job water-proofing the driveway around a garage in Missoula; another, while a young practicing physician in [illegible], made a well-worn path from his rear office door to a [illegible] house among the [illegible] out behind.

Now these men are highway commissioners and they won't resign; they even refuse to be thrown out. They have hired a staff of lawyers and dug in for the winter.

What do they take to get that way?

You can search us.

But down in San Francisco, where these commissioners wanted to go at public expense, there used to be a semi-subterranean bar tended by a German with long, blonde locks and a crystalline eye. Newspaper men used to go there often, creeping on the tips of their toes, and ask this man for a "Button Punch." It took some time to make it, but, we swear, it was the wildest product of the age. No man but one knows what is in it, but it must be the potion which lifts men like our highway commissioners to such lofty pinnacles of importance—a potion compounded of the stardust of cherubic wings, the glory of a tropical dawn, the [illegible] of a Madison [illegible], and the fragments of lost [illegible] by [illegible] dead and gone.

Editorial: Honor Should Be Only Pay For Commissioners

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