

Iowa People and Events . . .

Brookhart's Interest in Russia

First engrossed in the study of co-operative institutions in this country, Senator Smith W. Brookhart of Iowa became interested in those that flourished in Denmark and in 1923 made an extended tour of Europe visiting that country, also Russia and the Balkan countries. On his return he was loud in his praise of the Russian people and their way of life and expressed fear that their success in farming would enable them to monopolize the European grain market, contributing thereby to the ruination of the American farmer, who would be deprived of an export market for surplus grain.

Edwin T. Meredith, the Iowa member of President Woodrow Wilson's cabinet as Secretary of Agriculture, and publisher of *Successful Farming*, Des Moines, criticized Brookhart severely, saying:

There is a conspiracy to misrepresent and discourage the farmer. Just what lies back of this pernicious scheme remains to be seen, but one of the big purposes is to make political capital out of this deceit which can be used to the selfish advantage of those taking part in it.

If Senator Brookhart were half as anxious to get the true facts as he is the so-called "virtues" of the Soviet government, we might accept his judgment as coming in good faith.

Every time Brookhart or anyone else seeks to lead the American public into believing that the American farmer is ruined, when such is not the fact, he is destroying the credit of the farmer and his integrity as a businessman, just as false rumors maliciously or selfishly circulated may start a run on a sound bank. It is time to deflate this falsehood.

Brookhart in turn denounced Meredith in speeches and insisted that Russian export of grain to other European countries would bring prices down, but said that "American farmers will give the Russians a fair deal, no matter how their bigger harvest affects us," citing that "the steel trust sells remuneratively at home while

meeting competition with big cuts abroad." Greatly struck by what he saw of co-operation among farmers in Denmark and Russia he said: "This is the solution of most of the farmer's ills."

It will be remembered that after the seizure of the Russian government by the Bolsheviki and the murder of the Czar and his family, the government of the United States was reluctant to be chummy with the Communists. Herbert Hoover, then the Secretary of Commerce, had turned down all overtures looking to trade with the usurping Russian government. It was about at this juncture that Senator Brookhart made his trip and paid the visit to Moscow. After his return he submitted to an interview in New York, in which he rather vehemently assailed the American policy of refusal to play with the Bolsheviki and asserted that we should immediately reverse this policy.

Brookhart painted a glowing picture of the conditions in Russia. He stated, as quoted, that he intended going to Washington and demand of the government the immediate recognition of the new government of Russia and the inauguration of friendly relations with that country. He said he would lay the matter before the president at once. He did proceed to the national capital and probably took up the matter there, but before he reached that city the president, whom he said he would see personally, was dead. President Harding died Aug. 2, 1923. Of course this upset Senator Brookhart's immediate plans, and just what happened is not of record, but subsequently Brookhart became an agent and paid employee of Amtorg, the Russian trading organization, set up by the Russian government in New York.

The desired "recognition" of the Bolsheviki was delayed until another administration at Washington, when Wilson, Harding, Hoover and Coolidge were out of the picture. Warnings were given President Roosevelt and others high in the government, but advisors about them saw no ill prospects in the new friendships formed. How thoroughly Brookhart, Roosevelt and

many others of like credulity were duped has since been revealed. Also, how valuable were Smith Brookhart's services and those of other Americans who assisted the Amtorg organization, can never be accurately known. But, to this extent, and indirectly, Iowa contributed to the establishment of the wide activities of the Communists into practically every state.

It is known that the Russian legation at Washington worked with the Amtorg enterprise, using the opportunity to firmly establish an extensive spy system throughout the United States, even extending it into high governmental circles. And, during the latter part of World War II, through a so-called Lend Lease arrangement this country delivered to Russia at Murmansk and into the Black Sea tremendous quantities of war materials, ships and supplies, besides sending to the Soviets large companies of our engineers and expert craftsmen, encouraged to believe that it would be to the advantage of this country to help the Russians in every way possible.

Grant's Praise of Crocker

Fourth street, in Des Moines, where they are building the great new memorial hall in honor of the Iowa soldiers of recent wars, was still one of the fashionable areas of the Capital City when in the early 1870's the great reunion of the Army of the Tennessee was held here. As the 20,000 or 30,000 veterans in faded blue uniforms marched up Walnut street, led by colonels and generals, a grand reception was held at Colchester Place, the home of Supreme Judge Chester C. Cole, half way up the Fourth street hill. It was here that Gen. U. S. Grant, president of the United States, grasped the hands of hundreds of Iowa people.

When Grant's arm became weary he asked the judge if he might get out in the fresh air. General Williamson lived across Fourth street and he brought out his carriage and span of fine coach horses and took the president out for a ride. At the latter's request, they wended their way to a certain home. Here the presi-

dent alighted and took off his hat. It was a large but a plain residence with a fancy fence around the lot. This had been the home of Gen. Marcellus M. Crocker, who had served in the Civil War. Grant was a man of few words and chary of his praise, but referring to General Crocker's qualities and ability, said:

"He was fit to command an independent army."

That was superlative praise from the man who had led the Union armies to victory ten years before. The words are carved upon the little sandstone shaft in Woodland cemetery in Des Moines that marks the resting place of one of Iowa's great lawyers and one of the notable generals of the Civil War. He was Iowa's most distinguished and best loved general. His soldiers re-named the Iowa brigade and called it Crocker brigade as it swept on to Vicksburg and to Atlanta. Des Moines soldiers named their veteran's post for him, and citizen's of the Capital city named a street, a school, a township and a park for him and one of its principal office blocks also bore his name, a town or railway station in Polk county long was called by his name, and a county once was proposed to be so named. Afterward, Crocker's sword was recovered, being lost for more than fifty years, and is now in a glass display case at the Iowa State Historical building at Des Moines.

Over on capitol hill south of the statehouse a heroic-sized equestrian statue of the general on horseback graces the Iowa Soldiers' and Sailors' monument, high above the base of the towering memorial shaft, the figures in bronze facing the northwest, commanding a view of the river and Des Moines, the city he loved. An oil portrait of Crocker is among the great of Iowa in the state's unrivaled portrait gallery in the State Historical building at Des Moines, viewed every year by thousands, and the Iowa tourist who pauses at Vicksburg, Mississippi, comes face to face with a magnificent bust of him upon a marker of the battle site where he led Union forces in the Civil war victory. Effort to do homage to the memory of this illustrious patriot has been little less than universal.

New Warren County History

The county history of the average Iowa county contains much that is peculiarly valuable in way of data upon the area covered. And the value is two-fold, for it not only recites events of the past but also contains biographical material not elsewhere available. During the 70's and 80's several publishing houses in the Midwest section had corps of writers and editors in most Iowa counties engaged in compiling material for these histories which now grace the library shelves.

The most recent to be published is that of Warren county, by the *Indianola Record-Herald and Tribune* printing establishment, compiled by Gerard Schultz and Don L. Berry. It brings up to date the county history and biographical data of that community. A feature especially pleasing is the section written by Mr. Berry covering newspapering in Warren county from August, 1855, down to the present time, listing the papers and editors who labored in the towns of the county, principally in Indianola.

1857 Advice Now a Reality

Almost 100 years ago Gen. Grenville M. Dodge, then a surveyor, recommended the construction of the line of extension of the Rock Island railroad west from Atlantic to Council Bluffs over a direct route; but construction of the line as surveyed would involve expensive cuts and fills, as well as much bridging. This practically was prohibitive, and the line was built around the hills with result of some heavy grades and greater length in trackage.

So, it has not been until nearly a century later that the original recommendation has been acted upon, and for two years the direct line surveyed has become the site of earth-moving work with modern machinery and expenditure of several millions of dollars. At last the grading, bridging and track-laying was completed and in September the shortened route opened for traffic, lessening the time between the points for passen-

ger trains one-half hour, and for freights one and one-half hours, with lessened transportation costs. Thirty-five miles of new railway was built, eliminating 10.2 time-consuming miles of trackage by the old route which is being abandoned. Also, there has been eliminated 1629 degrees of curvature and 127 feet of rise and fall, all accomplished by adoption of the original Dodge recommendation.

Several years ago the Rock Island made a similar cut-off in Appanoose county straightening their line through Centerville and shortening the mileage of their Southwest division.

Why 20 Year Limit on Farm Leases?

Why does the Iowa Constitution prohibit agricultural leases for more than twenty years? This provision is found in Article I, section 24, "No lease or grant of agricultural lands, reserving any rent, or service of any kind, shall be valid for a longer period than twenty years." What prompted the framers of the fundamental law to include this seemingly incongruous item? Leases for much longer periods are not unknown on city or town properties and lawmakers have never been alarmed about them. This much is known from the *Constitutional Debates* of 1857, (the provision was not in our earlier Constitution), page 213:

Mr. (Rufus L. B.) Clarke, of Henry: "I have a section which I propose to have inserted here, and I will state to the convention, that I have copied it, in substance, from the constitution of the state of New York. The occasion of its being introduced there was the occurrence of the anti-rent difficulties in that state. I think the provision must commend itself to the mind of every member of this body."

The provision is then set out as above except it was proposed to make the ban at twenty-five years which was then amended to twenty years. There was no debate on the merits and it was promptly adopted. What were the New York "anti-rent difficulties" circa 1857? What ever they were, they seemed to be famil-

iar to the convention delegates and the necessity to guard against them of prime importance.

The State Was Iowa

Excerpt from President Eisenhower's talk at New Orleans, Louisiana, where he helped celebrate the 150th anniversary of the Louisiana purchase:

"What once was the Louisiana territory, today embraces six of our 48 states . . . and large parts of seven others. It measures 900,000 square miles. It is bordered by a river almost unmatched in length and unsurpassed in majesty.

"The bounty of this area has been even more phenomenal than its size. Its total cost was only 23 million dollars—the cost today of a single navy cargo ship. For this outlay, what did America gain?

"Let me give you one interesting example:

"One single state—of the 13 involved in the purchase—recently the value of a single product yielded by the land of that state in one single year.

"The state was Iowa. The product was corn. The value was over 100 million dollars. And this sum is 30 times as much as was paid for the entire Louisiana territory."

The Church a Powerful Spirit

American Christianity, with all its faults, through its idealism and by the deeds and influence of redeemed men and women, in its earlier days wrought marvels of human betterment and happiness scarcely paralleled elsewhere.

We need again in the church the powerful spirit which changed vice into virtue, cleansed local communities, and extended its redeeming influence into the life of the state, the nation, and the world.—Frederick D. Leete.

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