

# THE MORNING SUN.

"IF IT'S RIGHT WE'RE FOR IT"

Issued Daily Except Monday, at Tallahassee, Florida.

Application made for entry as Second Class Mail Matter at the postoffice in Tallahassee, Fla., April 30, 1909.

CLAUDE L'ENGLE, Editor

## KEEP NEWSPAPERS FREE FROM TAINT.

It was said by one Florida editor-Senator in the Senate Wednesday night, that newspaper proprietors should not be prohibited by law from printing paid-for items as news items without anything to distinguish them from other and disinterested news matter appearing in their columns.

It was said on the same occasion, in the same place, by another Florida editor-Senator, that no honest newspaper man could knowingly support a bill that would compel newspaper men to put the word advertisement at the top of articles that appeared in their columns as news matter, but which were paid for.

These remarks were called forth by the consideration in the Senate of a House bill introduced by Mr. Conway, of Clay, providing that all articles printed in newspapers purporting to be news or editorial matter, and the publication of which was paid for by a person or persons, must have the word "advertisement" posted conspicuously and above those articles.

I know not what were the motives that prompted Mr. Conway to introduce this bill, for it is not given to me to look into a man's heart. But, as the bill is a good bill in purpose, effect and application, I must conclude that Mr. Conway had a good motive when he introduced it.

Considering well the practices that have, in late years, been indulged in by newspaper proprietors, and having in mind the true purpose of journalism, and the basic principles of honesty, truth and justice that underlie a high vocation—I beg leave to pronounce this bill of Mr. Conway's which now lacks but the signature of the Governor to make it a law—

The pure mental-food law of Florida.

With a spirit chastened by my experience as a newspaper publisher, which has been financially unsuccessful for the very reason that I have always adhered strictly to the doctrine I now proclaim—I desire to express an opinion directly contrary to the opinions of these two Florida editors, which I have referred to above in their capacity as Senators, which opinion is—

That newspaper proprietors **HAVE NO RIGHT** to print paid-for articles in their news and editorial columns, because these columns **DO NOT BELONG** to owners and publishers of newspapers, **BUT TO THE PEOPLE.** Publishers,

therefore, have no right to sell what does not belong to them—and that is, the space in the news and editorial columns of their newspapers.

Readers of newspapers have a right to exact that the matter printed in the news and editorial columns of paper they pay for is **DISINTERESTED MATTER** printed as **INFORMATION**, and not matter that is tainted with the desire of persons to give it publicity as evidenced by their willingness to pay for its publication.

When a publisher prints matter in his news or editorial columns that is paid for by another without giving the reader notice that its publication has been paid for, he deceives the public.

It is wrong for anyone to deceive the public, but the deceit becomes many times more odious, when it is practiced by newspapers, because people rely on newspapers for information about matters that concern them.

Paid-for news items should be marked plainly as to their character so that readers may be put on notice that what they are reading is interested stuff, and not disinterested news items or editorial expression. With this notice given to the reader, he may accept what he reads at its true value, and not be deceived as to its real character.

Newspaper men should be willing to label the matter that appears in their columns when it is not what it appears to be. When paid-for matter appears in the news or editorial columns it is not news or editorial matter, it is an advertisement by some one who has his own private interest to serve, and is willing for this reason alone to pay for its insertion.

The very fact that men object to having the word "advertisement" printed over paid-for matter appearing in the news or editorial columns of newspapers, shows an intent to deceive the public, and a newspaper allowing this to be done connives at and participates in the deceit.

The fact that advertisers are willing to pay more for advertisements appearing as news and editorial matter, shows that they know that they are fooling the people into believing that what they read is not an advertisement, but disinterested matter prepared by the publishers of the newspapers.

This is deceiving the public.

If I had not practiced what I am now preaching, I would now be in the newspaper business with a well-paying newspaper. I would not accept pay for news and editorial matter and look my subscribers in the face. I could have made money enough by charging for news matter that appeared in my newspapers, which are now suspended, to keep them going, but I believed that I made a contract with a subscriber when I accepted his subscription money—

To keep my **NEWS AND EDITORIAL COL-**

**UMNS FREE FROM THE DOLLAR-MARK.**

It would be better for newspapers to suspend publication than to continue by practicing deceit on their readers.

Newspaper men **HAVE NO RIGHT** to sell the news and editorial columns of their newspapers, because these, as I have said before, **BELONG TO THE PEOPLE** and not the publisher.

Before a newspaper can be admitted to second class mailing privileges, its publisher must make oath that it is published for the purpose of giving information of a general character; and when newspaper proprietors accept this special privilege from the people, they by this action acknowledge the right of the people to ownership in their news and editorial columns.

When they insert in these columns paid-for matter, they are not giving information of a general character, but information of a specific character, which it is to the interest of some person or persons to have appear as information of a general character.

By law the Federal Government has declared that the food that man eats must be marked exactly what it is. This is to protect and preserve the health of the body.

It is more important that the health of the body-politic should be preserved by having the stuff that feeds the mind marked plainly as to its true character.

This is why I call the Conway bill the mental-food law of Florida. This is why I pronounce it a good bill, editor-Senators, however successful they may be in a material way as contra-distinguished from my want of material newspaper success, to the contrary notwithstanding.

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