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WHITTEN HOPES

MCELROY LIVES TO

GO TO PRISON

FORCEFUL ADDRESS ON AMERICAN LEGION PROGRAM

Tells of Fight to Wrest Kansas City from Clutches of Tom Pendergast and Henchmen

A prominent member of the group of Kansas Citians who only recently succeeded in wresting that city from the clutches of Tom Pendergast and his henchmen, Col. Frederick E. Whitten, Kansas City attorney and World war veteran delivered a forceful address on "Responsibilities of Government," last night on the American Legion program at the Southeast Kansas Soldiers' reunion.

Col. Whitten indicated there are still several in office who will be ousted and jailed before the cleanup drive is brought to a close. His they feared the masses, they desired to place responsibility, they wanted efficient and speedy administration. There were others who feared the consequences of centralized power, who desired to protect the minorities, avoid dictatorship, check privilege, and preserve the sovereignty of the people. A compromise was effected between these two schools of thought, which was the constitution of the United States.

"This issue has continued to the present time as the chief issue before the American people. The debates between Hamilton and Jefferson, the states rights issue, and universal suffrage, were fought along these lines.

Then came the industrial age, with great industries under centralized authority. The slow process of representative government, although a safe process, was open to criticism. Citizens pointed to the efficiency and progress of great business institutions and argued that government should follow the example of big business. Those who questioned the advisability of centralized power were openly criticized as being back numbers. America was too enlightened and freedom too secure, for any despot or dictator to gain ground and deny the people their rights. The words of caution of constitutional days were forgotten, and in the interest of speed and efficiency centralization became popular.

“The people of Cincinnati, in adopting the centralized charter plan, insisted upon certain safeguards, proportional representation and the protection of minorities being the most outstanding. Kansas City, on the other hand, failed to enact in her charter the safeguards necessary to protect representative government in that western city. There were those in Kansas City who advocated a tax commission and proportional representation. The police at that time were under state control, so the question of a police commission was not considered.

All dictators, whether in this country or in any other country or in any age, to force their will upon the people must first control the law enforcing bodies, the army and the police, and second, the power to tax and raise funds to carry on.

“No one doubts the advisability of centralization of responsibility in purely administrative affairs. But a city manager who, in addition to administrative affairs is given the

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voice quivered in rage as he mentioned the names of Pendergast, H. E. McElroy, ousted city manager, who now is critically ill; ex-Governor Park, and other “hirelings” of “Big Tom.”

“McElroy is trying to beat justice by dying,” Whitten shouted, “but I hope he lives to be placed behind prison bars, where he belongs.”

Col. Whitten received no compensation for his address here, except actual expenses. Mayor Charles S. McGinness, chairman of last evening's program, who introduced Whitten, acknowledged this and extended, in behalf of the reunion association and the entire city, a vote of thanks “from the bottom of our hearts” for his generosity.

Last evening's program opened with a half-hour stage show by the Cherry Bell Rangers, which was broadcast over station KOAM, Pittsburg, and announced by Leo Howard of this station's staff. This group later played for a “barn” dance at the high school gymnasium. C. F. Vandeburgh, sales manager for the N. Sauer Milling company, spoke briefly at the opening of the radio broadcast.

Many veterans attended a basket dinner, which preceded the evening program.

Ray E. Pierson of Burlington, state commander of the American Legion, in a brief talk on “Americanism” said, “There's just as many ships going to those (ism) countries as there are coming here. Those people who don't like it in the U. S.A. can ride one of those

outbound ships.” This brought a thunder of applause.

“The Legion is not opposed to any particular ’ism. We’re opposed to all ’isms but Americanism.”

Other numbers were as follows: Drill—American Legion Girls’ Drum and Bugle corps of Cherryvale.

Concept—Cherryvale Municipal band.

Drill—Cherokee American Legion Drum and Bugle corps.

“America”—Led by A. W. Frank. Invocation—A. W. Frank.

Musical Selections—Cherry Bell Rangers.

Col. Whitten’s address, in part:

“At the risk of becoming academic in this discussion, I first want to discuss the source and the ideals of American government, known throughout the world for the last sixty years as the American experiment. I do this because we must ever bear in mind our mission or our goal, and that is the preservation of the sovereignty of a sovereign people. That issue first became a pointed one in colonial days. The American colonies demanded the rights of Englishmen, not independence, at the outset. They had experience with the usurper of power, the dictator and tyrant of early American days. The revolution followed, with independence.

“The issue confronting the founders of the American constitution following the revolution, was the preservation, in a sovereign people, of the right to representation and the right of self-determination. With their past experience in mind they sought by proper checks and balance to keep the sovereign power in their own hands. The debates during that strenuous period give evidence of this issue.

“There were those who favored a strong central government, because power to tax and control the police, can easily, and usually does, forget his obligation to the masses of people, and seeks to serve those responsible for his selection. That is exactly what happened in Kansas City.

“The council, in violation of the charter, was elected along party lines, and the candidates selected by a political boss. The council named the city manager of the boss’ choice. The city manager, acting as the spokesman of the boss and his followers—better known in Kansas City as the machine—became responsible only to the machine, which resulted in the disfranchisement and the lack of representation of 45% of the people, who were represented by candidates that were defeated.

“The second city election in 1930 under the system in vogue in Kansas City, and without proportional representation, resulted in a clean sweep for the machine. The council from then on took care of its business behind closed doors, in a private dining room in an exclusive club, before going to council meetings, where the business of the evening was perfunctorily hurried through without debate. No one with authority was present to speak for the large minority which was not represented in the council.

“By a decision of the supreme court of Missouri the police were turned over to the city, which meant to the machine and from then on became the police force of the machine, and not of the citizens of Kansas City.

The city manager, boasting of the fact that he was responsive only to the leaders of his political party, used the police force to intimidate and harass any citizen who protested against conditions. City inspectors condemned buildings of any businessman or citizen who raised his voice. No relief could be had in the courts because the judges of the courts of common jurisdiction were named by the same political machine.

“The police first came under the control of Kansas City’s public enemy number one, to pay off the debt of the machine to this gangster and his henchmen. Ex-convicts found their way to the police force, and became active in this body. Kansas City became the haven of notorious criminals, who preyed upon the public with impunity.

“After conquering Kansas City, the machine spread to the state. It was necessary to awe out-state Democrats with an overwhelming machine majority in Kansas City. To increase this majority, the lists of voters had to be increased. This was done by padding. This padding was accompanied by agreements between disloyal Republicans and machine Democrats.

“The control of Republican precinct workers made it easy to stuff ballot boxes, mis-mark ballots, certify improper returns from the precincts, and pile up a huge ghost vote. The result was the smashing victory of the machine in 1936 at the general election, and the resulting convictions in the federal court of vote-fraud conspiracies. It is now admitted that the ghost vote in Kansas City totaled better than 70,000.

“The convictions in the federal court convinced out-state legislators that Kansas City was disfranchising

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70,000 living citizens with her ghost vote. The new governor, Lloyd C. Stark, determined to end this practice by naming a new election board for Kansas City. This precipitated a fight between the governor and the Kansas City machine, because, without the ghost vote the power of the Kansas City machine was destroyed in the state primaries. The governor, assisted by the grand juries in the federal court, and the new state grand jury under the leadership of Judge Allen Southern, is | challenging the power of Kansas City's machine by destroying the source of revenue; by suppressing crime, racketeering, and wholesale gambling in Kansas City.

"Without the aid of indignant rural Missouri, and the courageous and fearless governor, I am of the opinion that Kansas City's case would have been hopeless for many years to come. But the battle between the governor and the boss has brought to light the real cause of Kansas City's shame.

"I am satisfied that had proportional representation been a part of our charter most of Kansas City's difficulties could have been avoided. The victory of the machine in 1930 under P. R. would have placed at least three representatives of the minority in council. Debate in the council would have brought to light many of the abuses that "Star Chamber" tactics made possible. Then, again, under proportional representation a higher type of citizen would be encouraged to seek a councilman's seat than are usually in the picture under our present charter. Our run-off primary under Kansas City's present charter usually leaves a citizen with a choice between two evils, and discourages, if it does not preclude, the chance of good citizens being elected.

"In my judgment, Kansas City's desire for speed and direct responsibility without the safeguard, which should always accompany the delegation of power, has resulted in her present low estate.

"I am unwilling to admit that there are any finer or more intelligent people in Cincinnati than there are in Kansas City. Why it is then that Cincinnati has enjoyed 15 years of efficient government while Kansas City is regarded as the cesspool of democracy? I think my answer is the correct answer. Any man who seeks to curb the power of the

sovereign people by denying them full representation in their government is an enemy of the people and an enemy of good government. Proportional representation more completely insures full representation than any other known process. Take the lesson of Kansas City and safeguard your great heritage of freedom."