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BELLEFONTE, PA. THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1899.

# Who Can You Believe? Who Will You Believe?

Glaring Newspaper Contradictions Confusing the Public---What is the Truth?

# MORE STARTLING EXPOSURES

The voters of Centre county are in a quandry over the glaring contradictory statements published in recent issues of "Keystone Gazette" and "The Centre Democrat," and the question frequently is asked, "Who is telling the truth?" about the county's financial condition. If the statements made in the last issue of the Keystone Gazette are true and correct, the Centre Democrat has been guilty of gross falsehood, has abused the confidence of its readers and should not circulate in the homes of upright, truth-respecting people. No matter what the politics is, an unreliable newspaper, and its editor along, are to be spurned, avoided as a dangerous weapon in any community.

Realizing this, we believe that every honest man in Centre county, no matter of what politics, will welcome any effort that will enable them to arrive clearly at the undisputable facts.

If what the Keystone Gazette says is true, Coms. Riddle and Fisher have done remarkably well and are entitled to re-election. If the Centre Democrat is telling the truth, neither of these men are fit to be re-elected, and the Gazette has been guilty of talsehood. Persons interested in this direction are urged to give the following careful consideration, verify every statement on which a doubt may arise, and then draw their own conclusion and the Centre Democrat will cheerfully abide by the result :

#### A \$17,000 BLUNDER.

#### \$5,000 REPUBLICAN DEBT.

From THE CENTRE DEMOCRAT Sept. 28th,

In 1890 the last Democratic Board, Messrs. Goodhart and Adams, came into possession of that office, and they found the county in debt to the amount of \$5,267.63. This was the amount of \$5,267.63. This was the legacy left the people by the former republican board, Henderson and Decker, who ran the county into debt by dabbling too deeply in political methods. They reduced the taxes to 21/2 mills for county purposes in order to catch votes and then did not have enough money to pay the running expenses of the county. In this dilemma they resorted to the misappropriation of the road, school and poor funds, a violation of the law, to pay county orders. They tried to hoodwink the taxpayers for a time, but it did not work; it is as much a mistake to levy too little as too much.

The political dodge did not work, and the people elected a democratic board. In 1896 that board went out leaving the county with assets over liabilities of \$13,701.70, or a gain for the county of \$18,969.33 in six years, or an average gain of \$3,161.55 per year. It must be remembered that during this time the tax rate was only

\$12,000 REPUBLICAN SURPLUS.

From the KEYSTONE GAZETTE, Oct. 6,

In their arguments they pretend to penetrate into the past and by juggling figures hope to hoodwink the c by extracting statistics favorable to their party. We will go with them. The further back the darker it looks. For example: In 1890 after a Republican board had been in office for three years, it turned over to a Democratic board assets of \$17,871.70. and liabilities of \$5,267.63, OR A SURPLUS OF \$12,604.07. In 1896, after the Democrats had been in office six years, they turned over to the present board assets of \$31,177.91, and liabilities of \$17,476.21, or a surplus of \$13,701.70. This shows that in six years the Democrats made a gain of only \$1,097.63, or an average of only \$182.94 per year.

The Republican board received at the beginning of 1897 from the Democrats a surplus of \$13.701.70, and at the end of two years they had assets of \$37,633.33, and liabilities of \$14.-161.15, or a surplus of \$23,472.16. Thus in two years they increased the surplus of the county from \$13,701.70 to \$23,472.16, making a gain in two years of \$9.770 46, or a gain each year of \$4,885.23.

How does this compare with Democratic gain of \$182.94 per year? The above are from the official figures in the court house and cannot be disputed. If the Democratic organs tell the truth they will say these figures are correct, but they do not want the people to know the facts so they continue to play the part of a devil fish-spit out ink to darken the water in order that their pursuers may not know where they are.

The positive proof in these matters will be found by consulting the Annual Statement for the year 1890, published Feb. 1891, from which we make the following fac-simile reproduction. The originals can be found in the Prothonotary's and Commissioner's offices and printed copies are still in the hands of many voters, and can be found in any newspaper office, and especially are on file in this office. The following we certify as a correct re-copy, and it clearly shows who told the truth :

#### From Annual Statement for 1890: Published February 1891

FINANCIAL STATEMENT.

LIABILITIES.	
al. due Ex. Co. Treas Cyrus Goss	1506 73
il. due Proth'y L. A. Schaeffer comwilti	187 00
d. due L. A. Schaeffet for reporting	64 55
Judgt's	
didue C. P. Hewes legal services from	
" Huntingdon Reformatory	379 28
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DIMINIAL Y DECISION A LOT COM WILLS WAS	4 FAT AC
for inquest bilissundry unpaid bills	
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a. due John Rupp for stationery Res	
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timated Commissions	. 80 00
operations allowed C. A. Faulkner by	1300 00
State '89	. 311 44-\$2313933
tstanding taxes from '90	10090 50
	2375 29
	150 63
o Co. from State tax of '90	
tes in hands of Att'y for collection	23/4 44
tes in hands of Comr's that are col.	525 24 45
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ylum bills due from twps	1502 00-\$17871 70
bilities in excess of assetts,	0. 0. 0.1707170
(County indebtedness)	
(county indeptedness)	\$ 5,267 63
SUMM	ARY.
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road " " "	*************
boro and road funds arising from I	quor Heanao's
nount in hand of Treasurer Jan 5, 1891. ownship funds paid out on County or	quoi ricense samo
ownship funds paid out on County or during 1800,	dera for County
during 1800	acra for County purp
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**-\$7663 co** We, the undersigned. Commissioners of Centre county, do hereby certify, to the best of our knowledge and belief, that the foregoing report is a true and correct statement of the receipts and expenditures of said county for the year 1890, and order the same to be published.

G. L. GOODHART, COMMISSIONERS. J. B. STROHM, ATTEST: R. F. HUNTER, Clerk. We, the undersigned, Auditors of Centre county, do hereby certify that we have mined the books and accounts upon which the above statement is based, and find

The correctness of these items is certified to by no less than six prominent citizens of this county, who are known to most every voter. Among them is James B. Strohm, whom the Gazette so frequently alludes to as the "brainy man"

of that commissioners' board, and now the republican candidate for Register; also the name of S. T. Gray, recently deceased, father of Wm. E. Gray, Esq., chairman of the Republican County Ticket this year. If the Gazette is correct in its sweeping allegations, of a \$12,604.07 republican surplus in 1890, all these gentlemen must have made up a false statement that year by over \$17,000 in the county's finances. The Poor Overseers, Road Supervisors, School Treasurers, who were in office in 1890, can testify how they were turned down by those Commissioners, when they demanded the money due them, because their funds had been used to pay county orders at that time, and caused much distress. The above statement shows that that republican board in that way misappropriated over \$7000 of these various funds of the districts, which is set out in the above statement, because the county funds were all spent. How then could they have had a surplus of \$12,000? Is it even probable? For this misappropriation of public funds there is a heavy fine and even imprisonment; and at that time one of these republican officials, with tears in his eyes, and by solicitation of influential friends, plead with the incoming board not to proceed as the law specified. This latter statement is a fact not generally known to the public, but the writer knows it to be absolutely true. These things are mentioned to remind the people of the critical condition of the County's affairs at the time Editor Harter deliberately and defiantly declares there was a surplus left by that republican board of over \$12,000. Careful, prudent men prefer exact facts to unsupported declarations, and especially upon such important matters.

WHO HAS BEEN TELLING THE TRUTH? WHO CAN YOU BELIEVE?

# ANOTHER MISREPRESENTATION.

Next we propose to quote another section from the same issue of the Gazette in which Commissioner Daniel Heckman is misquoted as follows:

"The Centre Democrat last week devoted over one column of its first page to a discussion of the "dog fax," stating that the present board of county commissioners was assessing dogs to increase the county's surplus in order to make a good showing for themselves. The article concluded by saving that the two republian members of the board had given Mr. Heckman to understand that he was not expected to take an active part in the transaction of the business of the office as they were fully competent to take care of it themselves. We could hardly believe our own eyes when we saw it, as the members of the board have always appeared to us as being on the very best of terms with one another, and in order to satisfy our curiosity we approached Mr. Heckman on Wednesday and, addressing him in German, asked him whether Messrs. Riddle and Fisher had made the statement attributed to them in the Democrat, to which he replied

"Nossir, sell is en mistake." (No, sir that is a mistake). "I will tell you how it is," he continued. "We simply followed the custom of former commissioners. We assess the dog tax in April. We cannot tell what damage dogs may do during the year but we come as near to it as we can. Last year there was a balance of \$246.89 which was promptly turned into the treasury, and the tax-payers didn't lose a cent. These are the facts in the case and I will stand by them.

Mr. Heckman's statement is straight-forward and to the point. If the reader is not satisfied he is at liberty to examine any authority in the office ; and if he doubts our statement as to Mr. Heckman's language he is at liberty to interview him for his own

When the writer spoke to Mr. Heckman in regard to the above, he charitably pronounced it a mistake on the part of the Gazette. He says Mr. Harter asked him if he was consulted in making the Dog Tax levy and said he was, meaning in that particular instance. Then he cited to us scores of important matters transacted in that office-appointing assessors, awarding contracts for repairs to the court house and the jail, etc-without his knowledge, of which he only learned days thereafter, although he was about at the time and could have been consulted. In order that Mr. Heckman may be put right in this matter he makes the following statement, over his signature, for publication :

#### COMMISSIONER HECKMAN'S STATEMENT.

I am the Democratic minority member of the present Board of County Commissioners. From the first session, in the transaction of much of the important work in that department, and in the disposition of contracts and patronage, I was frequently ignored, seldom consulted, and given to understand that they, the realways amicable and the most cordial. Personally, we are the best of friends. In the levying of the Dog Tax, to pay Sheep Claims, I recognized that more money was collected than was necessary for that purpose. The Gazette misquotes me; I prefer to say, that it misunderstood what I said.

(Signed)

Here is another pretty contradiction for the Gazette. It is charitable indeed to say that there was a misunderstanding. The proper way for that paper to have done would have been to have secured a direct contradiction, over Mr. Heckman's signature, then there would have been no mistakes and unsupported, heresay conversations reported. As it is, the Gazette's story is contradicted and the reader is left to judge between these two gentlemen as to who is correct. Considering Mr. Harter's motive, also his position in the first part of this article on county finances, the reader has some pointers to assist him in arriving at the truth. One day while repairs were being made about the court house, Mr. Heckman got tired of seeing a lot of rubbish lying about the building and engaged Jim Woods, of Bellefonte, to bring his horse and cart around and haul it away. When he came, Com. Fisher appeared on the scene and stopped him, telling him that they had republicans who could do this work and they the board would not pay him. This is simply an instance of how much influence or standing, or opportunity was given Mr. Heckman in conducting the business of that office. It is a little matter, almost too small to print, yet it is very significant. Another point, we never heard of an instance where Mr. Heckman's integrity was questioned. "Danny Heckman is honest," is a common expression.

### MORE STARTLING EXPOSURES.

#### How County Funds Were Used Extravagantly---Political Favorites Awarded "Jobs" Gazette's Challenges Answered.

Many a man has made a point, even won a fortune, by a "Bluff." It is the last resort, but don't always win. For, blustering bluff and bragg the following challege is amusing, from the last issue of the Gazette:

"Not able nor willing to tell the truth, the Democratic papers of the county have indulged in a special abuse of the present Republican board of commissioners and have charged them with having unlawfully collected dog tax, and indirectly charged them with having made repairs to the court house in an illegal manner. They intimate that these repairs were made by favorites who were paid larger sums than were necessary to make such repairs."

"These newspapers have not said who these favorites were. They have not told wherein the contracts were unlawful. They content themselves with making insinuations of wrong but do not state where it rests,

"In order that no mistake may be made now, on behalf of the Republican members of the board, defy the Centre Democrat to specify when, where and to whom any money

reas paid rerongfully or illegally. If either of these papers know of an instance in which any commissioner has committed any wrong, let them speak out. It is the act of a coward to hunt and insinuate a wrong without giving particulars, but they hope by this method to convey an impression that a great wrong has been committed which, for reasons not explained, they refuse to reveal. To conceal a crime is a crime. and we now charge them with willfully with-holding from the public information which they should give out. To refuse is to acknowledge themselves either willful liars or selfconfessed criminals."

Brother Harter reminds us of "Ajax Defying the Lightning." No doubt he pictured in his mindseye how the Centre Democrat would wither away at this trumpet blast. We think we have satisfactorily demonstrated in the first foregoing portion of this article as to the question of "Who can you believe?" We most cheerfully accept his invitation to point out their misdoings in detail. Now for a bit of variety; we will show you how to dispose of a bluffer, by citing instances where it convinces us that the present Republican Board of Commissioners, Riddle and Fisher, spent county funds for political purposes, "wrongfully and illegally."

#### WRONG-DOING SPECIFIED:

1st: Political Plastering, \$5.00.

I am a plasterer by trade and am a resident of Bellefonte. During the spring of 1899, I was employed by the Commissioners to cement the front wall of the Court House where the plastering had fallen off. At that time I asked to have the job of whitewashing at the county jail, but they did not want to give it to me, and said that I should go on and do the plastering, and "take my own time to do it." I offered to do the jail whitewashing for \$15.00, then the Republications. Tom Visher, same and kicked about me "touting down the time to do it." I offered to do the jail whitewashing for \$15.00, then the Republican Commissioner, Tom Fisher, came and kicked about me "putting down the price of work" and said that I had no business to do such a thing." I told him that was none of his concern, as I could make big wages at that price, and it was his business to have work done for the County as cheaply as possible, to save for the people wherever he could. I did not get the job. I got the plastering because they thought I could do that work, where others failed. I am imformed that they paid another man \$20.00 for the whitewashing job. (Signed) MARTIN COONEY.

The contract for this work was given to Wierman Noll, a republican, of near Bellefonte, and the two Republican Commissioners drew an order of \$20 to pay him. Mr. Heckman opposed this contract because Cooney's offer was \$5 less, and refused to sign the order for the pay. Martin Cooney can be seen at any time in the billiard room, at the Brockerhoff House-this information is for the Gazette.

2nd: Job Worth \$150.00, Paid \$275.00.

Last fall, a contract was given to James McCafferty to reset the stone steps at the court house. This story is told :- "This was a disappointment to Thos. McCafferty, the republican tipstaff, who would like to have had the job, and that Riddle and Fisher got beautifully "torn up" by him and he made threats as to what he would do at the election. They became uneasy over the threat and figured out a job at repointing the stonework at the jail for Thos., to keep him in line this fall." It is a fact that, without apparently consulting other mechanics he was awarded the job at \$275.00. Skilled mechanics, in this town, told the writer that it was not a first class job in numerous respects-in material used, workmanship, not pointing the top pilasters, etc. About that we can not judge, as it is out of our line. To show that an exorbitant price was paid, read the follow-

"I served as one of the Board of County Commissioners from 1891 to 1897. During the last year in that office James McCafferty, of Bellefonte, made a proposition to the Board to "point" the stone work at the county jail, do not remember the amount distinctly. The other Coms., can recall that. At the time we were making many other repairs to county property and thought that this work was not so urgent and could be done later.

(Signed) GEO. L. GOODHART James McCafferty was next seen. He stated: "I made a proposition to the Democratic Commissioners, Goodhart and Adams, to repoint the jail in a firstclass manner for \$150." Next we inquired of Mr. Adams, as to the repointing the jail. He said :- "James McCafferty at different times made the proposition to our board, to repoint the jail stonework, for \$150." Both these gentlemen can be seen in Bellefonte any day. Is this not evidence that this contract was farmed out to political favorites for "infloonce," at a loss of about \$125, with probably a poor job in the bargain?

#### 3rd: Bridge Blunder, \$29.14.

In the Annual Statement for 1899, under the heading of "Bridge Account," the following item appears :

This is said to be a clear violation of the law on bridges, by parties who know something about those matters. It is maintained that the county has no right to spend any money on making repairs on a township bridge like that, and if they had why dont they keep other bridges of the different districts in repair? The fact of the matter is, they paid this hill by mistake, and after they discovered the erreor they decided, to "let him have the money" that belonged to the county, and "we won't do it again." In this connection we would advise them to look up No. 127 Penna. State Reports page 197 and read what Chief Justice Williams, years ago, said in a well known decision in such matters. Here are a few sentences: "But the law does not make provision for its (bridges) care after its erection. That duty remains on the township, and the finished bridge, when open for travel, becomes a part of the highway and passes for such under the care of twp officers. Its (the county) duty is simply to build the bridge, where the two cannot, and that duty done, has no further responsibility for its maintenance." This instance indicates that they did not understand their business and the county treasury is short \$29.14 in consequence.

#### 4th: Using Public Monies, \$300.00.

Ledger "F" and the Coms., "Minute Book" shows that in August 14th, 1899. Matthew F. Riddle had overdrawn his account over \$300.00, and at the first of October 1899 the amount of money that he still had belonging to the country was over \$200. This, no doubt, in the eyes of the Gazette is no wrong, a common practice among certain republicans; for a U. S. Scnator from this state who also spells his christian name "Matthew," also did practically the same thing with the funds in the State Treasury, and was in great danger of being sent where the dogs would not bite him for this personal appropriation of public monies. These two Matthews seem to have the same weaknesses, and evidently have forgotten the teachings of the orginal and beloved "Matthew" of Biblical fame. See page 8. 5th: Excessive Yearly Dog Tax, \$1000.00.

For several years past these Coms., have been levying twice as much dog tax as was sufficient, twice as much as the law specifies, thereby using \$1000 of this money to pay county orders each year. You know this is wrong. You know you did this to help make a surplus in the county fund to boom yourselves for a re-election, at the expense of the dog owners. You evidently did not think your course would be detected, or you would not have done it.

## 6th: Unnecessary Increase in Taxes, \$5000.00.

Under the former Democratic Board, for six years, only a 3 mill tax was laid and they started with a \$5,000 debt and finished in '96 with a surplus of \$13,000. Their Annual Statement, issued February 1898, shows a surplus of \$14,560.00, yet in spite of that fact increased the rate a half-mill in 1898, thereby compelling the people to pay into their hands, in consequence, \$5,351.95 more than was levied for many years. What need was there for this, with \$14 560.00 surplus? Have not Riddle and Fisher unduly taxed the people? Was this good financiering? What reasonable explanation can be given for placing this burden on the people?

To go on further in this line is useless. We have met the Gazette's sweeping charges and, as requested, given our answers in detail. Many came to our office and volunteered information of the same nature; but there is no necessity, neither the time nor space to enumerate what we consider all of the official shortcomings of Commissioners Riddle and Fisher. The public now can locate the "Devil Fish" that has been "spitting out ink;" as it is not its first appearence in these waters. Almost one month yet remains to answer these statements.

TO THE PUBLIC: - In a short time you will be called upon to vote for county commissioners to conduct the public affairs for over forty thousand people in Centre county-officers who expend annually over \$50,000.00 of money collected directly from you in the shape of taxes. To you, it is the most important office of all. We have given you some idea of the efficiency and ability of Riddle and Fisher, the two men who practically controlled that office the past three years. We have only dealt with them as public officials. You have their past record, and upon that you should decide as to whether you deem them worthy of your confidence and support for three years longer, or whether a change is preferable.

# SURPLUS MAKERS---INCREASED TAXES.

TAX LEVY FOR o YEARS.

As there is much discussion at present as to the amount of tax levied for the county in recent years the following tabulated statement will clearly show the amount of funds demanded by the various boards. Remember, this list does not include the tax levied on Unseated Lands, and property assessed for State purposes, of which the county receives a portion. We have also set out the financial condition of the county for each year, to-wit :

Republican Board in Office County. .#23100 10 Debt \$ 5267 63 Democratic Board in Office

they did it. The increase in taxes, and the money taken from the sheep fund, for those two years, is a source of revenue that was not justifiable, as it was not necessary, and a source from which no other board derived any revenues. This amounted to the following sums:

Total of excessive and unnecessary

Total republican gain in two years...\$9770.46 Lessexcessive taxation, above shown 7837.02 Actual gain if on a 3 mill basis, 2 yrs. \$2453.44 per yr...\$1216.72

The above shows that if this republi-

The above shows that if this republican board in Office 1898 3\( \) 3\(