

Tractor Test and Power Museum, The Lester F. Larsen

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Tractor Museum Podcast: Father of Test
Law Explains It

Tractor Museum
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19 SEPT 1919 *J. W. Crozier*

Father of Nebraska's Tractor Law Explains It

Without a doubt the Nebraska Tractor Test Law, which has engendered so much interest among tractor men the country over, is a remarkable piece of state legislation. Unlike so many such measures, it aims to be fair to the industry upon which it is to have regulatory effect. Representative Wilmot F. Crozier of Osceola, Neb., who fathered and pushed the bill through the legislature, tells the trade in straight-forward fashion through the Implement & Tractor Trade Journal why he formulated this important law.

I TAKE pleasure in complying with your recent request for an account of my reasons for formulating and introducing, in our legislature, what is now known as the "Nebraska Tractor Law." I have watched the development of the tractor industry from its infancy, and have followed many a queer-looking contraption around the demonstration fields, that purported to be able to replace my long-eared mules in front of a gang plow.

The successive years of development proved to me, beyond a doubt, that the tractor, in some form, was the agricultural implement the American farmer had been looking for, for these many years. I began investing a little money in the things, that is, I invested in the cheapest one that had wheels. I soon found out that wheels and cast iron are of no value unless you have power to turn them when they are hitched to something.

After operating, or attempting to operate, two excuses for tractors, I finally invested my money in a machine that would really do what the company said it would. Then I began wondering if there wasn't some way to induce *all* tractor companies to tell the truth.

An Editorial Began It.

The real starting of this tractor law was an editorial written in a Nebraska farm paper under the date of July 20, 1918. It read in part as follows: "Many tractors now on the market are impracticable. They have one or more weak points which make them useless, and it takes only one weak link in the chain to make it of no value. Another reason why costly and valueless tractors are rusting in farmyard corners, or in fields where they refuse to run, is because irresponsible concerns are manufacturing tractors merely to sell and not to run."

This was the beginning of a somewhat lengthy correspondence between myself and the editor of the paper.

By Rep. W. F. Crozier

at least this is the beginning of a campaign, to eliminate these irresponsible tractor companies you speak of."

Now, lest there should be a disposition to assert that all tractor companies are responsible, etc., I will simply quote from a circular that lies before me, which was sent to me in



REPRESENTATIVE WILMOT F. CROZIER
AND HIS WIFE

1916 to induce me to invest my money in the stock of one of these get-rich-quick tractor companies. It says, "The _____ Tractor Co. estimates that with a force of 1,500 men they can produce 100 tractors a day which would mean 31,200 tractors a year. Producing and marketing 31,300 tractors a year would, on the previously indicated profits, equal a net profit of \$3,822,000 for the year, which would be 634 percent on the issued shares."

The Majority Are Honest.

Possibly we have found one of the "irresponsible" concerns mentioned. And if anyone wishes, I can give you some claims of other companies slightly less glaringly false. However, in my work with the tractor bill, through both branches of the legislature, I

great majority of tractor companies are honestly endeavoring to place on the market a machine that will come up to standards and will do what they represent it to do. I had one other fact in mind, namely, that the tractor industry is a national institution as far as the American farmer is concerned and no legislation confined necessarily to the boundaries of one state can completely fill the bill. However, since Congress is so slow to act on anything of this nature, till they get a great deal of pushing, I am in giving the push wherever we can.

Another relief that the Nebraska law is intended to give the farmers in connection with the maintenance of service stations. The following clipping from one of the state papers of last October will show the necessity for some relief. This clipping says: "How Nebraska farmers have suffered serious losses, and production of foodstuffs has been decreased through inability to replace broken worn-out parts of farm tractors at other farm machinery is told by H. Peters of Hay Springs in a letter written to the governor. He declares that the big implement and machinery concerns compel farmers to wait from ten to thirty days, or even longer, for necessary parts, and in the meantime grain becomes too ripe and shells out upon the ground. He suggests that the state council of defense issue an order forbidding any new machine company to enter the state for the sale of its goods until it has provided a complete stock of repair parts at proper facilities for getting them to the farmers."

Now we have taken up two reasons for the introduction of this legislation under discussion. A third is the matter of standardization. I notice in an editorial of yours under date of Aug. 16, you have covered this matter probably that I shall not attempt to discuss it further. However, if there ever

FATHER OF NEBRASKA TRACTOR LAW EXPLAINS IT

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was a need for a metaphorical yardstick, it is found when you get into the tractor game.

Aim Is Better Understanding.

In preparing this bill, I wish to acknowledge the assistance rendered by other members of the legislature, and engineers outside of an official capacity. I also wish to state that, but for my personal effort, certain features would have been injected into this bill, which seemed to me were unfair to responsible concerns.

If this law brings about a better understanding between the producer and consumer in the tractor industry, it will be the chief reason for the framing of this legislation. The farmer has always protested against certain practices in the tractor business, but he has protested singly. Now he speaks with a voice that, at least, is being given attention.

It was reported to me that one Eastern company intended to contest the Nebraska law in the courts. I am glad that it has reconsidered this decision. If there are any defects in the way the present law works out, or if it is shown to be unfair in any way to the manufacturer, I shall be glad to receive suggestions relative to the matter of a remedy or improvement.

WILMOT F. CROZIER.

