

INVESTIGATION OF C. NELSON SPARKS - AUTHOR OF  
"WHY AKRON IS A GHOST CITY."

A few weeks ago, many people of Portsmouth and vicinity received, thru the mail, a reprinted article from Liberty magazine, entitled "Why Akron is a Ghost City." This article was written by Former Mayor of Akron, C. Nelson Sparks. December 17th, I attempted to repudiate a few of the most glaring misrepresentations of this article, in a short talk over radio station WPAY of Portsmouth, Ohio, on the C. I. O. Industrial Council Program. Since that time there has been an investigation of the man who wrote the article. Had the Steering Committee of the Citizens Association of Scioto County, conducted a similar investigation before issuing this circular, I am sure that the mail would never have been cluttered up with such trash.

At the present time there is a lawsuit pending against Sparks, the Liberty Magazine Publishing Co., and Bernarr McFadden for libel in this article. The Citizens Association of Scioto County have certainly taken a long chance, distributing thru the mail, an article that is in process of litigation.

It is against my principles and is not my intention to "blacken" the name of any man, however in this case, with the welfare of so many people involved, it is necessary to review the life of C. Nelson Sparks, in order to discover the ulterior motive behind his infamous article.

The full name of the man is Charles Nelson Sparks, and he went to Akron approximately 25 years ago. His mission in going to Akron was to organize the brewers of that city in an association. Upon arriving in Akron he proceeded with this work, and at the same time made political connections. At that time, C.L. Knight, owner and publisher of the Beacon Journal, and William E. Pardee were the political heads of the Republican Party. Sparks became active with these men, and <sup>by</sup> 1918 the Republican Party was controlled by what was known as the Knight-Pardee-Sparks Machine, and through these means, he was appointed Postmaster of the city of Akron and later Safety Director. In 1931 he had a disagreement with leaders of the Republican Party, and ran as an independent candidate for Mayor of the city of Akron. He was actively supported by the Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, and was elected to that office. He took office January 1, 1932. At this time the celebrated "pink ticket" scandal arose. To underworld characters, consisting of lottery operators, gamblers and the like, a "pink ticket" was delivered which was to be the identifying mark for police officers to "lay off" raiding a particular

joint which possessed the "pink ticket". Information regarding this program became so generally known that Sparks made a goat of two policemen out of it, and Sparks personally made an affidavit charging one Joe Ach with efforts to bribe a policeman. The evidence regarding this was thoroughly sifted by the grand jury of Summit County in the early part of 1932, and the grand jury refused to indict Joe Ach, but voted to indict C. Nelson Sparks for bribery and attempted extortion. Overnight certain of the grand jurors were "consulted" and on the next day one of the grand jurors switched over, leaving one vote lacking to indict him. During the examination that was conducted in the Joe Ach case there was testimony that Joe Ach had given one Windsor, who was treasurer of the Sparks Club, a \$900 check, which check was produced by the Firestone Bank, and which Ach claimed was a contribution to Sparks campaign in order to obtain certain privileges for operating illegal enterprises in Akron.

This affair and other matters put him in such ill repute with the voters of Akron, that he was repudiated at the polls the following election.

In 1936 he tried to get the "Veterans of Foreign Wars" organized into a vigilante group in Akron. He was a member of this organization and used it solely for the purpose of his personal political ambitions until the veterans became aware of his moves and then they definitely sidetracked him.

He has been refused membership in Masonry, and became so vindictive regarding his inability to become a Mason that he has bitterly opposed them.

On the 21st day of April, 1938 he filed voluntary petition in bankruptcy, Case No. 46544 in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Ohio. He scheduled liabilities of \$43,030.35, and his sole assets on the 21st day of April, 1938 consisted of \$75.00 worth of wearing apparel, \$10.00 worth of pictures, and \$200.00 worth of office furniture, all of which he claimed as exempt. In his schedule of debts he listed banks, attorneys, insurance companies, a known gambler, advertising concerns, printing concerns his landlord, his club, a clothing store, a tire store, a furniture store, and PERSONAL FRIENDS from whom he had borrowed money.

This investigation has disclosed many other things that could be said to discredit this man, however I feel that the things that have been stated, will so catalogue him that no fair decent citizen will believe

or have any faith in what this man writes or advocates.

I wish to make a challenge to, and an agreement with, the following organizations or agencies in Scioto County. --The Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce -- The Portsmouth Daily Times -- The Scioto County Bar Association -- The Veterans of Foreign Wars -- The Masonic Bodies of Scioto County. If the above listed organizations will write to similar organizations in Akron, Ohio, and then read both the inquiry and answer at the next open meeting of the Citizens Association of Scioto County -- If I am furnished with exact copies -- I will read same at the next regular meeting of the C.I.O. Industrial Council of Portsmouth.

I would ask the local Chamber of Commerce to write to the Akron Chamber of Commerce, asking their opinion of Sparks. The Portsmouth Times is asked to communicate with the Akron Beacon Journal, a substantial and conservative Akron publication. The Scioto County Bar Association is asked to investigate the "pink ticket" scandal, and Sparks' connection with it, also the bankruptcy, which was filed by Sparks April 21, 1938 (Case No.45544). The Veterans of Foreign Wars are asked to inquire as to Sparks' status as member, and the personal opinion that the officers of that organization have of Sparks. The Masonic Bodies are asked to communicate with the same organization in Akron, relative to may statement concerning Sparks' application and attitude towards them.

In case my charges are substantiated by the above suggested investigation, I have one more suggestion to make. That is for the Steering Committee of the Citizens' Association of Scioto County, issue an apology, or "statement of regret" by means of the same mailing list that was used in circulating the "Ghost City" article.

(Signed) - Howard L. McNamara.

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