

# CONDUCT OF HIGHWAY ENGINEER IS DISPLEASING

## Taxpayers League of Columbia County Adopts Resolutions Charging Gross Incompetency and Willful Extravagance in Handling Highway Affairs in This County---Petition the Highway Commission Not to Reappoint Mr. Bowlby.

To Honorable James Withycombe, Governor-elect of Oregon and Thomas B. Kay, State Treasurer Ben. W. Olcott, Secretary of State, comprising the Oregon State Highway Commission after January 11th, 1915, and to Hon. Oswald West, present Governor of Oregon, and now a member of the said Oregon State Highway Commission:

On the 14th of December, 1914, a Columbia County Taxpayers League was organized whereby the taxpayers from the various sections of the county met and perfected organization, having for its purpose and object the examination of the expenditure of public funds and a scrutiny of the general affairs of the county. At this meeting various committees were appointed to make certain examinations and investigations upon various subjects, among them being a committee to investigate the affairs of the road construction in Columbia County under the supervision of Major H. L. Bowlby, State Highway Engineer, and to ascertain the truth or falsity of the charges of gross incompetency and extravagance directed at the said State Highway Engineer in his work in this county.

This committee has met and examined the records and made a report to the organization containing facts and figures as taken from the records of the county and that report has been adopted by the Columbia County Taxpayers League. At a meeting of the League on the 28th of December, 1914, a committee on Resolutions was appointed by the league to draft resolutions directed to the Oregon State Highway Commission protesting against the re-appointment of Major Bowlby as State Highway Engineer and those resolutions as adopted follow, to-wit:

### Resolutions.

Whereas the committee on investigation of the affairs of the road construction in Columbia County under the direction and supervision of Major H. L. Bowlby, State Highway Engineer, has made its report to this league, which report is in words and figures following to-wit:

### Report of Special Committee.

To the Columbia County Tax Payers League: The committee appointed to examine into the records of the work of State Highway Engineer Bowlby in Columbia County, with especial reference to the construction of the Columbia Highway, have met and examined the records and find the following:

### Expensive Surveys.

That prior to the time of the bond election, about a year ago, Major Bowlby represented to the County Court of this county that the surveys of the roads proposed to be constructed from the proceeds of the sale of bonds and the tax levies for last year, would cost from \$10,000 to \$12,500. That the County of Columbia has paid up to December 1st, for surveys under the direction of the State Highway Engineer the sum of \$25,739.31 and that there was one month's expense of survey which was paid by the State and which has been estimated as approximating \$3000.

### Promise to Reimburse.

It was promised by the State Highway Commission that if the cost of the surveys should be first paid by the county and the county should then vote bonds to construct a system of highways, the State Commission would repay to the county all the money it had advanced for surveys and that such reimbursements should be made during 1914.

### Excessive Cost.

So far the State has repaid the county for survey money the sum of \$7236.27. It would therefore appear that the total cost of surveys in this county under the direction of the State Highway Engineer approximates \$28,750, the estimate of which was from \$10,000 to \$12,500 and that of the \$25,739 which Columbia County has paid for the surveys the State Highway Commission has repaid to the county \$7236.27, leaving approximately \$18,000 due from the State Commission to the county.

### Cost Underestimated.

At the time of the letting of the contract for the construction of the road from Tide Creek to Clatsop County the State Highway estimated that the cost of such construction would be \$280,000 at the figures of the lowest bidder on such

work to be done. So far there has been paid to the Consolidated Construction Company, the contractors on the road, the sum of \$194,185.43 and there has been held back from their pay 20 per cent of the money earned, amounting to \$48,546.36 so that they have earned \$242,731.79. Add to this the sum of \$25,000, in round numbers, for supervising engineering, brings the total cost of the road construction from Tide Creek to Clatsop County, exclusive of the surveying, to approximately \$265,000 and engineers in charge report the work as being 75 per cent completed. As to whether or not the work is 75 per cent completed we are not in position to know nor to ascertain, although we have been told by various persons who claim to know that the work is not more than 50 per cent completed. However the report of the engineers says that 75 per cent of the work is done.

In the matter of the comparison of the estimates with the actual work done and paid for we find the following:

### Clearing Estimate too Low.

That the estimate of the State Highway Engineer on the road from Tide Creek to Clatsop County contained the items of light clearing 87.5 acres and that up to December 1st there had been finished 78.6 acres. Heavy clearing the estimate of the State Highway Engineer was 32.4 acres and up to the 1st of December there had been done 127.7 acres. Grubbing the estimate was 7995 square rods and to the 1st of December 8348 square rods were paid for. Loose rock the estimate showed 34,500 cubic yards and there has been paid for 67,104 cubic yards. Soft rock the estimate showed 9,900 cubic yards while up to December 1st 36,642 cubic yards had been moved by the contractors. Taking these figures and comparing the estimates of the State Highway Engineer with the actual work done and paid for together with the fact that the heavy rock work along the route, especially in the neighborhood of Goble and Prescott has not been fairly started, we would say that it is quite impossible for us to estimate with any degree of exactness, whether the construction work is 50 per cent completed or 75 per cent completed.

### No Detailed Reports.

It was impossible for us to find any detailed reports of the work on any particular section of the road from Tide Creek to Clatsop County, so the figures we have obtained are taken from the work done on this entire work, and we have not gone further into the matter as these are what we consider the principal figures desired by the taxpayers, as showing whether or not the taxpayers of the county have been given good service by the State Highway Engineer.

### Extravagance Charged.

Many rumors have come to us as to carelessness and extravagance in the work of the State Highway Engineer but we have not taken the time nor trouble to run them down and the records do not show as much as they should about the details of the work nor the expenditures of the money.

### No Recommendations.

It is not our province to make recommendations in this report but simply to report the figures as they have been filed in the offices of the county of Columbia, and we submit them to you as we have found them and leave it to the people and to yourselves as to the service received for the money expended.

Respectfully submitted,  
H. J. SOUTHARD,  
GUSTAVE LANGE.

### Further Resolutions.

And whereas it appearing therefrom that the work of the State Highway Engineer has not been satisfactory to the taxpayers of Columbia County, nor has it been satisfactory or at least of such character as should be satisfactory to the State of Oregon or the State Highway Commission and that the results obtained from the money spent in the construction of the Columbia Highway in Columbia County from Tide Creek to Clatsop County, a distance of about 38 miles, are not in proportion to the amount of money expended, and that the said construction work is far from complete and all the funds derived from the sale of county bonds have been expended by the said State Highway Engineer and no road that can be used at all yet

finished, and that for the work to continue under the direction of the said Major Bowlby would be the equivalent of a petition in bankruptcy for Columbia County before any results could be obtained;

And whereas it appearing from the said report and other reports of the committee on roads and bridges that the funds of Columbia County have been expended in a most careless and extravagant manner and that such incompetency and suspicions of graft are very apparent to any taxpayer;

And whereas it appearing from said reports and from a general knowledge of affairs concerning said work by said Highway Engineer that it is proposed by said State Highway Engineer to require the expenditure of many thousands of dollars of the taxpayers money in Columbia County where it can be of no use and which will, if permitted, mean the abandonment of roads that have already cost many thousands of dollars and which are in good condition and parallel the proposed road to be constructed by said State Highway Engineer, and the said proposed road to be constructed by said State Highway Engineer would be an expensive piece of useless road and would practically destroy many valuable farms and greatly damage many others and would be of no practical benefit to the people of this county and would not open up nor have a tendency to develop any new country;

And whereas the engineering work under the direction of Major Bowlby shows that it has not been performed or done with any reference to exactness or reliability and shows that it was so done for the purpose of misleading the people and county court or else was done by incompetent and inexperienced men and much of the same has been discarded and changes have been made requiring much unnecessary expense;

And the said engineering work has been and is costing the people of Columbia County and the State of Oregon great sums of money which are unnecessary and which could and should be used in road construction instead of being squandered in useless and extravagant surveys;

And whereas it appears from all the facts disclosed by the records and from a general knowledge that the people of Columbia County and the State of Oregon have not been treated in a business like manner by the said Major H. L. Bowlby, and that his work in this county conclusively proves that the said Major Bowlby is unfit to hold the responsible position of State Highway Engineer and for the protection of the taxpayers of the entire State of Oregon some change should be made in the office of State Highway Engineer.

Therefore be it Resolved by the Columbia County Taxpayers League that the Oregon State Highway Commission be requested and urged to appoint some other person than Major Bowlby as State Highway Engineer, and that the change in said office be made at once in order to save thousands of dollars of the taxpayers money and in order that the building of good roads and road construction in the State of Oregon shall not be hampered by incompetent and extravagant engineers.

Be it further resolved that the members of the State Highway Commission be invited to inspect the records of the said Major Bowlby's exploitation in Columbia County and that they be also invited to inspect the work done and being done in this county for which nearly a half million dollars have been expended and for which no results are apparent.

Be it further resolved that a copy of these resolutions be forwarded to Hon. James Withycombe, Governor-elect of Oregon, Hon. T. E. Kay, State Treasurer, Hon. Ben W. Olcott, Secretary of State and to Hon. Oswald West, Governor of Oregon, with the request that they make thorough investigation of the charges herein contained before making the appointment of Major Bowlby as State Highway Engineer for the coming year.

Be it further resolved that a copy of these resolutions be furnished the public press of the State in order that wide publicity may be given to a matter of vital importance to every county and every taxpayer in the state.

Respectfully submitted,  
W. J. FULLERTON,  
W. P. MACLAY,  
MILDRED WATTS,  
GUSTAVE LANGE,  
Committee on resolutions.

### Publicity Requested.

A copy of the resolutions is hereby forwarded to Hon. James Withycombe, Hon. Thos. B. Kay, Hon. Ben W. Olcott and Hon. Oswald West Secretary instructed to furnish copies to all county papers and to the Oregonian, Journal and Telegram of Portland.

J. G. WATTS,  
President Columbia County Taxpayers League.

F. C. CAPLES,  
Secretary Columbia County Taxpayers League.

### Report on Roads and Bridges.

To the Officers and Members of the Columbia County Taxpayers League:

We, your committee appointed to look into the matter of taxation for roads and bridges, beg leave to submit the following report:

### Half Million Expended.

We find that the county has spent approximately one half million dollars in the construction of the roads and bridges during the past year and has nothing to show for it, except the bridges and a lot of half constructed new highways, and OBSTRUCTED and impassable old county roads, with damage suits and litigation staring the taxpayers in the face.

We believe the people have not received their moneys worth in the work already done and we do condemn the present method of disbursing road money without a more careful check on the manner in which it is spent.

### Estimates at Variance.

We find the estimates as furnished by the State Highway Engineer to the County Court as to the amount of material to be removed in the cuts and the yardage to be placed in the fills is so at variance with the actual amounts of the material so moved and placed, as evidenced by the reports sent into the County Court by the engineers in charge of the construction, to be very unreliable; and especially is this so in the matter of clearing the right of way, the engineers estimates show that there was less than 33 acres of heavy clearing which during the clearing process increased to 127.7 acres, as evidenced by the reports of the engineers in charge of the work to the county court.

### Many Changes Made.

We find that there has been so many changes made in location of roads from the original surveys and so much money spent for surveys and engineers in proportion to the amount actually expended in road construction, that it appears gross extravagance or incompetence or both. The original surveys and locations were worthless and money wasted making them or else they were fake surveys made to deceive the taxpayers and county officers. The proposed changing of the location of the road to the west side of the S. P. & S. Right of way from Scappoose to the Columbia City fill, which will necessitate the purchase of expensive rights of way and the removal of numerous buildings, together with the construction of five expensive bridges, when there is already a good road with steel bridges and fills all completed and have been made, some of them, the past year, paralleling said proposed road, on the east side of the track, seems to be an unnecessary and shameful extravagance at this time

### No Expensive Bridges.

We find there are no expensive bridges to be constructed in the county during the coming year except probably the bridge across Beaver Creek between Quincy and Inglis and except 8 or 9 bridges on the new Columbia River Highway in Beaver Creek Canyon which we see no possibility of completion this year.

### Slight Results Obtained.

Therefore taking into view all the circumstances connected with the construction of highways in this county during the past year and the amount of money spent without any attained benefits, (except the amounts expended under the supervision of the several district road supervisors) we think it would be good business policy and quite a saving to the taxpayers, and would result in more good to the county if we discontinued the appropriation of any more funds for the construction of highways except the amounts worked out in the several road districts by actual residents and taxpay-

ers in the county under the supervisors and the county court.

Respectfully submitted,  
W. J. FULLERTON,  
J. G. WATTS,  
F. C. CAPLES,  
Committee on roads and bridges.

### TO THE TAXPAYERS OF COLUMBIA COUNTY

On Monday, December 14th, a Columbia County Tax-Payers League was organized at St. Helens and the following officers were elected president, J. G. Watts, of Scappoose; secretary, F. C. Caples, of Columbia City; treasurer, E. E. Quick, of St. Helens.

The object of this organization is to reduce taxes, assist in the development of the resources of the county and assist the County Court and other county officials in an economical administration of County affairs. To give our support to all needful economical development now engaged in by the county, and condemn all unnecessary and wasteful undertakings.

We desire the co-operation of every tax-payer in the county, resident or non-resident, and as large a membership as possible.

It shall be the duty of every member of the League to keep a keen watch upon all county expenditures in his district, to see that the county gets honest efficient compensation for every dollar of public money expended.

J. G. WATTS,  
F. C. CAPLES.

### PARCEL BUSINESS DURING HOLIDAYS

Preliminary estimates by post-office officials place the number of parcel post packages handled during the Christmas rush at 100,000,000 and indicated that the total volume of parcel post traffic for 1914 will total 1,000,000,000 packages.

### HUMAN TARGETS IN THE FIELD

The belligerent armies in the field of war today number, all told, nearly 18,500,000 men, or 28,000,000 with all reserves and "new" troops counted, according to a French statistician, M. Yves Guyot. The expenditures required he estimates at an average of nearly \$2.50 daily a man, or about \$11,000,000,000 for one year of warfare. A single year of the present war, he thinks, will cost

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about the same amount of money as the total expenditure for all the wars of the former 50 years.

### SUGAR EXPORTS OF THE UNITED STATES

Nearly 200,000,000 pounds of domestic refined sugar were exported from continental United States during the three months ended October 31, 1914, or more than 100,000,000 in excess of the entire exports in 1910, the high record year of the last quarter century. Sugar exports in August amounted to 38,956,305 pounds; in September, 52,290,773, and in October, 135,372,686, a total for the three months of 226,619,764 pounds, against 44,000,000 in the fiscal year 1913, 125,000,000 in 1910, and 10,000,000 in 1903. During the fiscal years 1913 and 1914 practically all the exports of sugar were refined from imported raw sugar, and received a drawback equal to the duties paid on the raw sugar.

### INDUSTRIAL NOTES.

Out of 90 members of the legislature, 38 are lawyers.

Douglas county will pay \$141,000 less taxes than in 1914.

Linn county tax levy is reduced three mills from last year.

Five cents for a square-meal houses are being established in Portland.

Salaries and expenses of county game warden totalled \$47,000 for this year.

Jackson county spent during 1914, on good roads, \$600,000. Pacific highway cost \$325,000.

Polk county has agreed to pay one-third of the cost of a \$225,000 steel bridge across the Willamette, at Selem.

A great achievement of the fish and game commission is to stop the manufacture of buckskin gloves in Oregon.

Negotiations are pending between the Baker Commercial Club and the Union Pacific Railway to establish, in Baker, two factories.

The Commonwealth Conference at Eugene last week endorsed consolidation of all state boards and commissions under a few heads.

A coast representative of Libby, McNeil & Libby has been in conference with business men at The Dalles to establish a cannary there.