

THE OBSERVER

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Entered at the postoffice at La Grande, Oregon, as second class matter. SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

Daily, single copy 5c
Daily, per week 35c
Daily, per month 65c

ONE CENT A DAY FOR HEALTH.

Everyone has been interested in the work being done in Panama in the construction of the canal. Startling as have been the results of the engineers and builders, the work of the sanitary department has been even more wonderful. In a region noted as the most unhealthy in the world, in which our predecessors, the French were unable to succeed because they could not keep the workers alive, the American army surgeons, by the use of scientific facts known to all, have succeeded in lowering the death rate among American residents far below that of our most favored American communities.

According to Colonel Gorgas, the chief sanitary officer of the canal zone, the death rate among 10,489 Americans has been only 4.48 per thousand. While this result has been mainly due to the control of yellow fever and malaria, and while it is true that the American population consisted of picked individuals, largely men and women in the prime of life, yet even with all these conditions recognized, the record, as the American Medical Journal points out, is a remarkable one and is probably without a rival. And all this, says Colonel Gorgas, has been accomplished at an expense averaging 1 cent per day for each individual.

If the result can be secured at this cost in the center of a tropical jungle, what would not a similar expenditure do for our American cities? One cent a day is one-fifth the cost of one five cent cigar. It is one-fifth the price of a daily street car ride. It is one-tenth the cost of admission to a moving picture show. It is one-fifth of what we pay for a glass of soda water or a package of chewing gum. In one cent a day too much to pay to protect the life and health of an American citizen?

INHERITANCE TAX.

Following up the income tax bill proposed by the Democrats, Senator Wesley L. Jones of Washington has offered in the senate a bill to tax inheritance.

Senator Jones' bill provides for a graduated inheritance tax on all estates same that bequests to the immediate family of the testator are to be exempt to the amount of \$25,000 and are to have the benefit of a lower rate. Senator Jones' schedule of rates provides for a tax of one per cent for estate under \$5,000, two per cent from \$5,000 to \$50,000, five per cent from \$50,000 to \$250,000, 10 per cent from \$250,000, and so on up to the assessment of 40 per cent on estates from \$7,000,000 to \$15,000,000

and 50 per cent on estates in excess of the latter amount.

Senator Jones' theory is identical with the idea which has been pursued in the proposed exemption from tax of all incomes under \$2,000, namely, that the moderately well-to-do and the wealthy are able to pay and therefore they should be made to pay an additional share of the cost of government. It is a theory which has been put into practice in Canada in regard to the inheritance tax and used to a certain extent in Great Britain and European nations in the income tax although the exemption applies to incomes very much below the amount of \$4,000 which is proposed for this country.

One feature of the Jones' proposed may strike a popular chord: It would be a potent factor in the prevention of the continuation and growth of large fortunes such as are held by the Astor estate, J. P. Morgan, Rockefeller and others of the type. Many thinking people regard the perpetuation of these tremendous incomes with the added increment which will come with years as a real menace. To them the Jones' idea may appeal as a remedy.

On the other hand, it is questionable if it is right to tax large fortunes out of existence. True, these fortunes could not have been amassed save for the favoring conditions of the country in which their creators lived, but an inheritance tax of the kind proposed by Senator Jones would be discrimination and confiscation of property. In addition, it would add millions to the government's income with no assurance that the burden of cost would be relieved or that the poorer classes would receive any benefit therefrom.

What the government needs is not an increased income raised by a discriminatory tax upon a few, but a decrease in income produced by direct tax on the many. Only through direct taxation will come economy. When the people pay out of their own pockets directly into the government treasury, there will not be so many appropriations for "porra" purposes.

An inheritance tax with the fund safeguarded so closely that it could not be an invitation to further extravagance would be practical and probably helpful. But to dump millions each year into the public treasury without any restrictions upon the manner in which they shall be spent does not raise a hope for a return to economy in governmental administration.

UNUSED FARM KNOWLEDGE.

The new secretary of agriculture, Prof. Houston, believes that the big job before his department now is to organize rural life so that country dwellers may secure the benefit of the vast amount of information and scientific learning which for years has been accumulating in the department. This knowledge does not get distributed. The problem is to distribute it. A knowledge of farming, practical farm credits, methods for market-

ing farm products—these are the things which must be secured to the farmer.

In order to further this work Secretary Houston has secured the services of Dr. T. N. Carver, professor of economics in Harvard university, to give his entire time and attention to this work. "Rural Organization service," is what the new work will be called and one branch of it will be the new division of markets for which congress appropriated \$50,000 last session.

"Marketing," said Secretary Houston, "is only one aspect of the great problem of rural organization. Other phases should be considered at once. The general education board has for years sought avenues for useful service to the people and has now promise to co-operate with us in the support of our farm demonstration work and this proposed rural extension service."

Organization will be conducted around subjects which interests the particular locality. In one place it may be roads, in another mosquitoes, in another forestation or the protection of the range. The purpose is to bring the rural dwellers into co-operative unity. Money in plenty has been spent by the agricultural department for years in securing valuable information for farmers and it is a sharp reflection upon one phase of its efficiency that so little has reached the people it was intended to serve.

CHANGE NOT SO RADICAL

La Grande, April 29.—(To the editor)—La Grande is one of the most progressive cities in the Northwest. During the coming years this city is destined to undergo the transition from its present condition of a live wide awake town to an inland metropolis. It is during this change that the mistakes of most cities are made. Franchises are given that later not only prevent competition, but fail to furnish the service required. A city like La Grande must build for the future, or it is simply building in vain. A city government should be capable, efficient, and farsighted. Soon will come the proposition of a gas plant, then street cars. Will these be owned by the city or controlled by franchise. Then the extension of the present public utilities and other municipal affairs. Is it not clearly apparent that the administration of the city's business during the next few years will be of great importance not only for the time being, but for many years in the future.

The commission form of government is in the air. It has been called a fad, a freak, a fancy and some other worse things. But it is still growing in favor. Like every other worthy cause it is merely strengthened by persecution and criticism. Many new cities are planning on its adoption, although the latest phase of its growth has been in the direction of state governments. The commission form of government has often been referred to as a radical change; but it is simply a business system substituted for the old methods. It does not add to nor subtract a single prerogative from the government of the city. It simply recognizes that politics is business.

Under our political system great industrial combines have arisen from scattered, undeveloped, and unsystematized fragments into world powers. At first boards of directors governed these great corporations, the directors representing all the stockholders. Such a system is similar to the present city government with its council representing the citizens. However, these great corporations were all business. They found that the more authority they placed in the hands of capable managers the larger was the dividends. This resulted in a small board of capable managers superceding the old board of directors. This is the commission form of government. The people elect managers to handle the municipal business paying sufficient salary to secure ability.

Thus the commission form of government is not very different from the present except that it applies 20th century business science instead of blundering 18th century methods. But this one "except" requires many reforms. They could be had under the old system but the commission form requires responsibility and efficiency. To do this the recall, the civil service, the bonding of officials,

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and initiative, the referendum, the short ballot, and many other established reforms all come at once.

There is no use dwelling upon the inadequacy of the present city government. Confusion, lack of responsibility, lack of efficiency and incapability of looking ahead are the chief points in the case against it. It is not the fault of the present officials in many cases. The great inadequacy of the present system is found in its lack of business organization. That is what a city does when it adopts the commission form of government. It does not change the function of the government, but simply substitutes business efficiency for buddle politics.

Let La Grande have the best. Of course we can exist under the present conditions, but we can develop much faster under a modern scientific business form of government. GEORGE HUNTINGTON CURREY.

MOTOR CAR EXPORTS.

The British commissioner in Australia reports a keen competition of American-made motor cars with those imported into that continent from England. This competition, which began with the cheaper grade of car, is now equally pronounced in cars of higher price. The commissioner's report is unusually interesting. He says:

"The American manufacturer of both motor cars and buggies which reach the consumer here at a cost of under \$1,600 has met with a considerable amount of success. This competition is not confined to the cheapest class of cars, however, as it

is understood that the United States manufacturers are cutting into the trade for cars up to \$2,400 and \$2,900. Buyers state that the American car is lighter, has a greater clearance from the ground than that of United Kingdom origin, is cheaper to operate both with respect to petrol used and the wear and tear of the tires, and the capital outlay, car for car of the same power, is said to be far less for cars of American manufacture."

Exports of American motor cars and parts have shown a phenomenal gain and are rapidly approaching the exports in the same class of products from the United Kingdom and France. The following figures will show how our export trade has grown: In 1902, the total value of motor car and parts export amounted to \$950,000; in 1903, these had grown to \$1,207,000; in 1904, to 1,805,000; in 1905, to \$2,481,000; in 1906, to \$3,487,000; in 1907, to \$5,501,000; in 1908, they dropped off to \$5,278,000; but in 1909 they had again grown to \$5,992,000; in 1910 to \$11,196,000; in 1911 to \$15,509,000 and in 1912, to \$25,657,000.

At the same time exports from France, have grown from \$5,883,000 in 1902 to \$30,795,000 in 1911, and the exports from the United Kingdom from \$837,060 in 1902 to \$17,246,000 in 1911. The predominance of French exports rose to its maximum in 1906, and since then it has been declining steadily.

England still imports a larger number of complete motor cars than it exports. In 1912 it imported from the United States 3,734 complete

cars, as against only 2,236 from France.

England began by buying our cheaper cars. Now it is buying in increased quantities our higher priced cars which, according to best authorities, our higher priced automobiles, cost less to operate and are lighter and more serviceable for ordinary uses.

The consumer is the only one not kicking on the reduction of the tariff on foodstuffs.

The telegraph messengers in Omaha are now girls. Can anyone see them going by a millinery window with a rush message?

Boston psychologist says pie has ruined thousands of lives. Does he refer to political pie or the kind mother used to make.

New York authorities have found \$100,000 worth of human hair in a cellar, in fact almost enough to supply one female seminary.

China is going to have an aeroplane fleet, which should, in time, reduce the population of China to normal proportions.

A New York golf player has violated all the ethics of the game by having his photograph taken with both feet on the ground.

Fashionable women are wearing suspenders on their skirts, but there is some doubt as to whether their husbands will be able to find time to sew the buttons on for them.

The Test of Time

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La Grande National Bank

La Grande, Oregon

Capital, \$100,000.00 Surplus, \$130,000.00 Resources, 1,100,000.00

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