

THE OBSERVER

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THE FRUIT BUSINESS.

There has been a few ups and a few downs recorded in the Grande Ronde fruit business, but for the age of industry the downs count for little. The gold digger of forty-nine really expected to remove a few rocks before he could pick up the gold nuggets, so the fruit grower in this valley must expect to encounter to some reverse before he can have everything come his way.

Those reverses have consisted of a large crop—yes, too big a crop which resulted in low prices last year and a blight which appeared during the past few months. Other fruit sections have had blight, fought it and quit talking about it, but the Grande Ronde valley when the first blight appeared, threw several fits and the pulse of some of the growers is hardly normal yet.

But what is the real fruit situation now?

As near as we can get at it from an honest pursuit of every particle of evidence along fruit lines, this year will show a good profit to the grower. Especially the grower that has the choice varieties will the profit be certain. One orchard we have in mind will probably pack out twenty thousand boxes which is not a big crop, but the fruit will command a higher price and therefore the net returns will be far greater than last year.

There is positively no cause for alarm, except among that class of humanity known as the quitter and the business coward. He will probably sacrifice a great deal to get out of the business and when he is signing his last papers to relieve himself from orchard property his neighbor will get returns from this year's crop which will more than pay the quitter for the entire price of his lands.

COMING OF THE MINISTERS.

It will only be a few days until La Grande will have for guests nearly three hundred Methodist ministers. They will come from every nook and corner of this district because small

indeed is the community that does not boast of a Methodist Episcopal church. Usually when a new town starts about the third building erected is a church of this faith and a minister is at once placed upon the town-site where he supervises and nurses the Methodist congregation until it grows to considerable size.

These men who are coming to La Grande are well seasoned, well informed men. The Methodist preacher of today is decidedly a sensible man willing to listen to others and refraining from what may have once marked a desire to force creed upon all acquaintances. True, even today the Methodist creed is never overlooked, nor is it treated as a secondary matter by the ministers for as a matter of fact there is nothing to be ashamed of nor are there apologies to make for this form of religion which has been accepted by so many thousands of people.

With no desire to discuss the Methodist religion and with less desire to open the subjects of creeds in any form, we wish to impress upon the people of this city the importance of the conference and the importance of the visitors who will be here. When Bishop Luccock and men of his class speak, the man who will not reverently listen is lacking in reason and judgment, for such speakers belong to the very, very big of the nation and it is a treat—yes, a rare treat for La Grande to have the pleasure of hearing such men.

Then try and do something to assist in making the conference people know they are appreciated while here. There are many things to be done and each person is his own best judge of what he can do and do well to force upon the Methodist ministers that feeling of welcome which is always so admirable in any community of people.

THE LOCAL BAND.

La Grande has a good band; we can have a better one.

We can have the best band east of the Cascades, which would be in keeping with the best city east of the Cascades.

But to have that band we must as citizens and business people, render it proper support.

The members have stood by their guns faithfully—have sacrificed time and money to keep the ship afloat, and it is now time for the rescue party to appear in the person of the rank and file of La Grande citizenship. Fortunately the boys now have a leader who is the man for the place from every viewpoint, so let us all get together and have that "best band" in the city's history.

PAVING DISCORD ON EVERY HAND.

La Grande is not the only city that has her paving troubles. Nor is she the only city that is complaining of the high cost of paving. From many parts of Oregon, from Washington and other northwestern states comes the universal complaint that paving is too high, and there is slowly but surely forming a sentiment to cease improvement unless the paving business can be brought to lower prices

for the work done as in other lines of business.

PROPERTY HOLDERS ASK

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As it is likely that the work will be done at once, it is hoped that the work will be rushed as frost and thaw is just as disastrous to cement paving as a hot sun to a cake of ice. Conditions must be right to get the best results, and it is argued that if defects occur it will develop in the first six months and therefore, can be repaired by the 10 per cent held out as per contract. Others declare that first six months will not disclose all defects but that the first four or five years will, and that it was absolutely wrong not to attempt at least to get a bond for the same price that the present bid stands at, if possible. Along these two lines of difference, argument today usurps the fact that a new paving has come to town. In many ways it was a spirited session of property holders and council—though not so much as noted, regarding grade but the bond issue. The concrete people had the inside track and a downhill pull and no other company had a ghost of a chance when the final test came.

"This is the first town that paving has been let in the Northwest without a maintenance contract," asserted A. C. Moffat of the Warren Construction company after the meeting. Others declare that some towns don't require it. "Close inspection and fulfillment of specifications make the bond really unnecessary," affirms City Engineer Neal.

"If concrete is so perfect and stands the wear so well, why not let the builder give a bond for there is, concrete men say, no chance to get poor results?"

"No bond" construction is easy; build it to last six months and get out of town," is the way Moffat replies.

The total assessments represented by the concrete petition was said to total \$22,000, more than two-thirds of the entire amount of estimated cost, \$30,000. It had been circulated by Harry Bookman, F. W. Pattison and others as the consequence of an informal meeting held the night before by a dozen or so property owners on Spring avenue. The petition was discussed at some length and F. L. Meyers took the floor of the chamber to remark that he, like all the people there, wanted cheap paving, the most results for the least money, but was alarmed that too much cheapness was liable to be disastrous to the final results. He suggested that it was an easy matter to obtain signatures to any petition and ventured the guess that many who had signed the petition were luke warm, knew nothing about the grade of paving petitioned for, and would have signed any other petition had it reached them first.

F. W. Pattison said he helped circulate the petition and had found that the difference in cost would save him several hundred dollars and that he was willing to take a chance on the outcome in view of the amount of money saved.

Harry Bookman expressed the same view relative to the willingness to "take a chance." He pointed out that the street was very springy in the

winter and spring due to the excessive undercurrent of moisture and seepage, and believed that a cement form would bridge over the soft places more satisfactory than any other method of paving.

Bond Issue Is Started.

Mr. Meyers started the discussion that lasted for two hours when he inquired if the company was under the same five-year maintenance contract that the Warren people had been. It developed that it was not and then developed the real issue of the evening—not should it be concrete, but should there be a bond.

Roscoe A. West who owns one twentieth of the total property to be assessed, found he could save several hundred dollars and believed that the soggy nature of the street demanded concrete. He was willing to take the chance for he had been advised by friends that cement if correctly put in, made excellent paving, citing several miles of such results in Michigan, where his friend was conversant with the situation.

A. C. Moffat representative for the Warren people, raised the bond question again by affirming that the reason there was not a 10-year bond on his company's work was that no indemnity company would give a 10-year bond.

Councilman Sargent attempted to get a resolution passed by the committee of the whole, in which capacity the councilmen had met, that would pass up to the council a favorable report on concrete. Then came a discussion of the merits of the bond now existing with the Warren people; it was said by some of the councilmen that it was worthless and that it had been offered free-will and consequently the city had received it. Moffat replied by saying it had been demanded of the company the first time it entered here and that the company had supplied them since. The motion was passed up however, at that time, but the fairness of requiring a bond of the Geiger company when none had been covered or provided for in the specifications, was discussed pro and con and at length by several parties, Councilman F. D. Haisten leading in an attack on the question saying there was no need of a bond for cement. He maintained that the 10 per cent held out for six months was sufficient.

The resolution deeming the petition favorable was finally passed and it was ordered that a record of the minutes be spread on the records of the council books. This part passed off smoothly and when the council met in adjourned session a few minutes later, the bond question was the chief issue again.

When the council met one of the first actions taken was to read a resolution embodying a maintenance clause in the contract with no stipulated time. Then came another spurt of objections and Mr. Sargent finally withdrew his motion admitting that the clause about maintenance was not legal.

Legality at Stake. It was generally pointed out that it would be improper to demand a bond of Geiger when none had been asked for, as his bid would have been higher—from five to 20 per cent it was estimated—had the clause been a part of the specifications. Some talk of re-advertising was brought up, and at this point Mr. Moffat said his company had bid on that basis and as the others had not it was unfair to his

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company. He wanted only fairness done to his company. He finished by saying if new bids were asked for his bid would remain the same, and pointed to the fact that others would undoubtedly have to raise their bid, more especially the cement people.

Sam Mangun, the Boise contractor, said Dollarway would rebid the same

as now if a bond was required. This put up the light that the Geiger company would have to admit that its work wouldn't stand for the guarantee or put up a bond on the present bid Mangun assured the council it was not right or legal to require the bond

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