

Great Waste In The Production Of Spruce

A recent Washington report says that affidavits purporting to show criminal abuse of the "cost plus" system of letting contracts for spruce production on the Pacific coast have been filed with the aircraft sub-committee of the Commission War Investigation committee. The information, made public by the Republican national committee, relates to alleged padding of payrolls and expense accounts, employment of inefficient workmen and gross waste of supplies, resulting in a loss to the government of thousands of dollars. The evidence the committee states was turned over to the Providence Journal.

Huge Waste Alleged.

The foreman of one job, according to one of the statements, said he could have signed requisitions for hundreds of dollars worth of material he did not need if he acquiesced to requests of the official of the company. Affidavits by others assert that camps were started, that hundreds of workmen and soldiers were transported to the localities and shacks built, roads constructed and other expenses incurred, after which orders came to abandon camp. He said no effort was made to salvage the material.

One man states that construction companies required their workmen to sign vouchers in blank.

Correspondence sent out by Colonel Bruce Disque, head of the spruce production division, was turned over to the committee. It relates to letting contracts for construction of railroads and production of spruce.

When the charges were called to the attention of officials of the air service they indicated that similar statements had come to their attention heretofore and showed no signs of concern. On the contrary they expressed the hope that the house investigating committee would sift these and all other charges to the bottom and make the true facts known.

It was frankly admitted that it cost the government much more to get out spruce aircraft lumber in the early stages than later on when the machinery was running smoothly. Had they held back six months probably it would have cost much less, but meanwhile there would have been a wholly

inadequate supply of aircraft stock for the plants manufacturing machines to beat the Germans. The cost, to the United States, air service officials asserted, never reached anything like \$650 per thousand feet.

The riving process which involved the splitting of logs by means of wedges was adopted only because the mills on the west coast did not have facilities for cutting out the straight-grained stock required for aircraft, spruce officials declared. Just as soon as means were provided for sawing the logs riving was discontinued, it was said.

Aircraft spruce was confined wholly to straight-grain stock. No part of the log that had spiral grain or cross grain could be used because the planes made from it were likely to collapse at critical moments, they explained. Consequently, it is true, according to the officials, that in any event only a small per cent of a felled log could be used for aircraft. One mill at times recovered about 20 per cent, but in most instances it was considerably under 10 per cent, they said.

A great deal of trouble was caused by I. W. W. agitators on the Pacific coast, it was further explained, and this greatly increased the cost of spruce lumber. It became necessary finally to put uniformed troops into the forests and sawmills. Ultimately 25,000 lumbermen and operators agreed without reservation to give Colonel Disque power to decide all labor questions.

Spruce officials said it is true that railroads were built or partially built and never used, that some plank logging roads were laid and not used. This was due either to sudden cessation of hostilities or in some instances because the riving process was abandoned after mills began to saw airplane stock in sufficient quantities they said.

Cost of \$650 a Thousand Charged.

While only a small per cent of the trees went into aircraft, the remainder, commonly known as the side cut, war department folks explain, was disposed of for construction work of all kinds and for other uses.

"Practical lumbermen as well as railroad men," the Republican commit-

tee announced, "are authority for the statement that the cost-plus system adopted by Disque for the construction of railroads into the forests and the production of spruce sent the price of the lumber to such a point that in the aggregate the government paid practically \$650 per thousand feet for the spruce it procured, while private interests were getting out the same character of logs at a cost of from \$130 to \$178 a thousand feet. One of the biggest lumbermen on the coast asserts this to be a fact."

Colonel Disque Blamed.

"The process of riving and splitting the logs into quarters by means of wedges was inaugurated by Disque, and although he succeeded for a time in getting out the material, the waste was terrific, according to the letter of a lumberman, whose mill capacity is 10,000 feet day, and who was one of the first to adopt the riving process. Out of 3,000,000 of No. 1 spruce he succeeded in getting only 200,000 feet, or about 7 per cent."

The correspondence written from the office of Colonel Disque to the committee shows that when he took charge he was not in favor of the government building railroads into the forests, but reversed his decision after a few months, and finally awarded a cost-plus contract for a railroad into a tract said to have some billions of feet of standing spruce.

Waste On Logging Road Charged.

A company that had surveyed and procured the right of way offered to build the road with its own capital, purchase the standing timber and deliver it to the government at the same flat price of \$451 and \$30 a thousand for the two grades of spruce, provided it be given a contract for 14,000,000 feet of spruce a month for a period of 18 months. This offer was rejected according to Colonel Disque's correspondence.

A few months later Colonel Disque reversed his decision, and according to the formal statements submitted to the committee, awarded the contract for building of a railroad and for producing the spruce to another corporation which had no survey, no right of way, no locations of any kind.

"There is documentary evidence that a United States army officer spent \$20,000 in making certain elevations in Oregon on which to build a logging road and after he had completed his work all he had to show for his labor was a number of bench marks on the

(Continued on Page 2)

OREGON ELKS TO MEET SOON

CONVENTION AT KLAMATH FALLS AUGUST 14-16

Great Outdoor Frolic to Last Three Days—Special De Luxe Train and Reduced Rates.

Elks from every city and county of Oregon are making plans to leave within a few days for Klamath Falls, where the second annual convention of the Oregon State Elks Association will be held. The meeting of the antlered herd of this state will differ from its former meetings or similar affairs held in the past for numerous reasons.

In the first place, the Elks are first of all, a patriotic order, and during the war took a prominent part in wartime activities. Thousands of Elks answered the call to arms and the honor roll of those who made the supreme sacrifice includes many of the order's membership.

Therefore, the annual meeting will be in the form of a Victory celebration and plans for the assistance of wounded ex-service men promise to be one of the foremost topics of the business sessions.

The entertainment of the large herd of Elks and their families, many of whom will make the journey to Klamath Falls in shape of a vacation jaunt, is likely to outshine any entertainment ever planned for a body of men and women.

The usual entertainment accorded to delegates and members who attend conventions in large cities will be missing, it is true, but the natural beauty of the country in southwestern Oregon will be utilized in a big outdoor frolic. An Elk barbecue will be staged on Thursday, Aug. 15th at Harriman Lodge, on the shores of White Pelican Bay, and following the big feed, a vaudeville entertainment will be staged in a natural amphitheatre discovered by the Klamath Falls committee some months ago. The acts for this entertainment will be furnished by each lodge of the state. In the form of surprise acts, which will be both novel and entertaining.

Trips into the wonder spots of

the Klamath county, street dances and the old fashioned carnival will be staged in Klamath Falls, and every moment of the three day session promises to be filled with fun and frolic.

A special deluxe train will be operated from Portland to Klamath Falls, leaving Portland at 11 a. m. on August 13th. Many of the lodges throughout the state will take advantage of this special train with its reduced rates, while many others are planning en masse to the

convention. Reservations on the special train can be made by communicating with William J. McGinnis, chairman of the transportation committee of the state Association, Elks Club, Portland, Oregon.

RELIEF FOR ORPHANS IN ALASKA

FAIRBANKS, Alaska, June 25—(By Mail)—Mrs. Thomas Riggs wife of Governor Riggs of Alaska, and

other women of Juneau have begun a movement to raise \$5,000 to assist in providing for the welfare of native children on Seward Peninsula left orphans by the ravages of the influenza epidemic of last winter. The movement contemplates erection of a home for the orphans on a site at a hot springs about fifty miles from Nome. The women propose to turn over the administering of the fund to Bishop Crimont.

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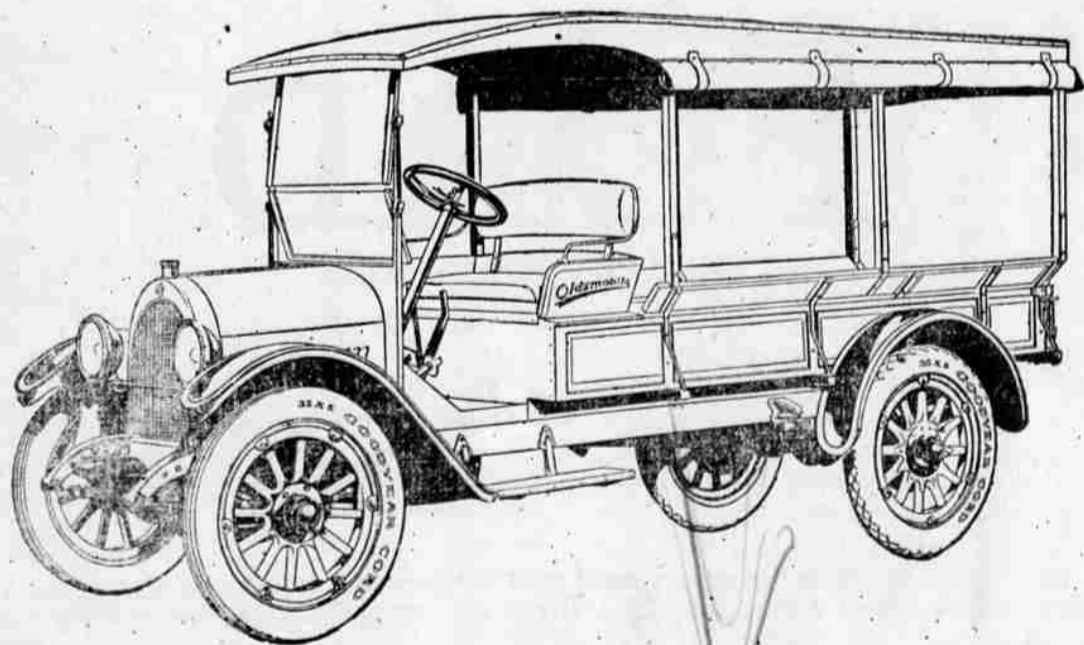
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