

# Medford Daily Tribune

Official Paper of the City of Medford.

Published every evening except Sunday.  
**MEDFORD PUBLISHING COMPANY**  
 GEORGE PUTNAM, Editor and Manager.

Admitted as Second-Class Matter in the Postoffice at Medford, Oregon.

### SUBSCRIPTION RATES.

One month, by mail or carrier, \$0.50 One year, by mail, \$5.00

### COUNTRY LIFE AS IT IS FOUND.

The report of the commission of country life tendered to congress today by President Roosevelt is replete with information regarding the conditions of the rural sections throughout the United States, yet to even the casual reader the report clearly conveys the fact that much more time and labor must be spent upon this work, many more reports must be digested, and many further matters looked into before the commission will have fulfilled its mission. It is gratifying to know then that the president has made but a single recommendation to congress in connection with the report—he asks for an appropriation of \$25,000 to carry on the work. Laws for the betterment of the conditions are left for future sessions of congress.

The commission finds that agriculture in the United States, taken together, is prosperous commercially, when measured by the conditions that have obtained in previous years, although there are some regions in which this is only partially true. The country people are producing vast quantities of supplies for food, shelter, clothing and for use in the arts. The country homes are improving in comfort, attractiveness and healthfulness. Not only in the material wealth that they produce, but in the supply of independent and strong citizenship, the agricultural people constitute the very foundation of our national efficiency. As agriculture is the immediate basis of country life, so it follows that the general affairs of the open country, speaking broadly, are in a condition of improvement.

In summing up the various problems that must be solved if country life is to be placed on a higher plane, the commission names the following as the leading specific causes:

*A lack of knowledge on the part of farmers of the exact agricultural conditions and possibilities of their regions;*

*Lack of training for country life in the schools;*

*The disadvantage or handicap of the farmer as against the established business systems and interests, preventing him from securing adequate returns for his products, depriving him of the benefits that would result from unimpaired rivers and the conservation of forests, and depriving the community, in many cases, of the good that would come from the use of great tracts of agricultural land that are now held for speculative purposes;*

*Lack of good highway facilities;*

*The widespread continuing depletion of soils, with the injurious effect on rural life;*

*A general need of new and active leadership.*

The commission points out a number of ways to remove the handicaps of the farmer, which briefly follow:

*The encouragement of a system of thorough-going surveys of all agricultural regions in order to take stock and to collect local fact, with the idea of providing a basis on which to develop a scientifically and economically sound country life;*

*The establishing of a nationalized system of extension work in rural communities through all the land-grant colleges with the people at their homes and on their farms;*

*A thorough-going investigation by experts of the middleman system of handling farm products, coupled with a general inquiry into the farmer's disadvantages in respect to taxation, transportation rates, co-operative organizations and credit, and the general business system;*

*An inquiry into the control and use of the streams of the United States with the object of protecting the people in their ownership and of saving to agricultural uses such benefits as should be reserved for these purposes;*

*The establishing of a highway engineering service, or equivalent organization, to be at the call of the states in working out effective and economical highway systems;*

*The establishing of a system of parcels posts and postal savings banks;*

*And providing some means or agency for the guidance of public opinion toward the development of a rural society that shall rest directly on the land.*

*The enlargement of the United States bureau of education to enable it to stimulate and co-ordinate the educational work of the nation;*

*Careful attention to the farmers' interests in legislation on the tariff, on regulation of railroads, control or regulation of corporations and of speculation, legislation in respect to rivers, forests, and the utilization of swamp lands;*

*Increasing the powers of the federal government in respect to the supervision and control of the public health.*

However, it seems that one of the most important matters to be undertaken, if any thing is to come of the movement, is a broad campaign of publicity, that must be continued until all the people are informed on the whole subject of rural life, and until there is an awakened appreciation of the necessity of giving this phase of our national development as much attention as has been given to other phases or interests; a quickened sense of responsibility, in all the country people, to the community and the state in the conserving of soil fertility, and in the necessity for diversifying farming in order to conserve this fertility and to develop a better rural society, and also in the better safeguarding of the strength and happiness of the farm women; a more widespread conviction of the necessity of organization, not only for economic but for social purposes, this organization to be more or less co-operative, so that all the people may share equally in the benefits and have voice in the essential affairs of the community; a realization on the part of the farmer that he has a distinct natural responsibility toward the laborer in providing him with good living facilities, and in helping him in every way to be a man among men; and a realization on the part of all the people of the obligation to protect and develop the natural scenery and attractiveness of the open country.

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