

THE WEST SIDE.

E. C. PENTLAND, Publisher.

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 17, 1890.

TO OUR SUBSCRIBERS.

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E. C. PENTLAND, Publisher.

"Caution" may be a representative citizen of Polk county, but we hope not. We do not want to die before Oregon amounts to anything. Life is too short to wait on "mosbacks" to let the state fill up. We want company, and we are willing to divide a good thing, particularly since half is better than the whole.

In Washington the man with \$10,000 in money and \$10,000 in property stand on equal footing each paying the same. In Oregon the man with \$10,000 pays on \$10,000 and the man with \$10,000 in property pays on about \$3000 and deducts \$3000 while the man with money pays the tax for both. Nice law that is—and yet we hear it said that there is not enough intelligence in the Oregon legislature to repeal the law.

Some of our readers say that without a usury law money would bring fifteen per cent. England has no usury law, and yet money can be had at 4 and 4 1/2 per cent. Washington has no usury law and yet after the big fires there money was loaned at 6 to 8 per cent. and yet small loans were worth one and one-quarter per cent. In Washington the poor man has a chance. In Oregon none. As the interest on small sums is low the security must be first-class. The borrower alone is the sufferer.

The farmers of Polk county it seems to us, are virtually interested in having the usury law repealed, and having an assessment law which will not make one class of property pay all the burdens. As a rule the farmers here are all out of debt (the heaviest taxpayers in the county are farmers) and if the rate of taxes on their property were one-half its present rate, under a proper assessment, and they could go to our banks and loan all the money they pleased and be guaranteed six and seven per cent. net they would not be induced as now to invest their money in Washington or some other state.

Collecting taxes depends as much upon the consent of the taxpayer, as upon real superiority of one law over another. Oregon has a law that if enforced could be made quite operative. Did you ever hear of a taxpayer being arrested for perjury? Do you ever hear of instances where rich men (known to be rich) pay no taxes, and it is said "they lied to the assessor?" Who ever investigates such things? None. Why? Because public opinion would not sustain him. The law is generally cursed. Then why not get a better one based on the experience of other states?

Do you think Mr. A. who lives in Oregon is just the same man when he returns his property to the tax collector as being taxable on a net sum of \$600, and yet in Washington he returns the same amount of property and it appears as \$6000? We have in mind a \$10,000 building, mortgaged for \$6000 and assessed at \$4000, consequently really a leading citizen seems to be bankrupt. In Washington his property would appear at \$9000 or \$10,000; and if anyone were interested in knowing how much he was in debt, let them make inquiries. The man in Washington takes pride in paying a large tax. In Oregon the man who does it is to be pitied.

"Progress" and "mosbackism" in Oregon is at its teeth and toe nails. The Bible says "a little leaven leaveneth the whole" and the batch of bread in Oregon just now is either going to come out leavened with "progress" or "mosbackism," and if the next legislature is a mosback legislature it will let the present usury law, and indebtedness clause in our assessment law remain, and then the Oregon loaf of bread will come out about as thick and hard as a cracker, leavened with "mosbackism." Let "progress" get into that loaf of bread and it will swell up like a sponge. Some people say the hard solid loaf of bread is the most healthy. Nice white roller flour outells burr flour, and a progressive state will outgrow a mosbackish state. Down with the "mosbacks."

JUST WHAT WE WANT.

The last congress passed a bill which we believe should prove of practical value in the United States. We refer to the bill to enable the postmaster general to test at small towns and villages the practicability of the free delivery system.

The move has been made several times for reducing postage to one cent for each letter. Before that is done, our delivery system should be improved. In Germany every village postmaster is required to deliver the letters from his office within a certain distance. At the present time the large cities have these advantages only. Our government should extend it to the smaller towns at least. Less time is wasted when one man delivers the mail to all the owners, than when many owners of mail walk to the office and call for it. Uncle Sam should save us steps.

Do our readers suppose that a law could be made operative which said that every should sell his wheat for just twenty cents a bushel more than actual cost. The effect would be than when wheat costing forty cents a bushel was really worth only sixty cents the farmer would sell; and when it became worth seventy-five cents there would be no wheat for sale; and if, as our law does with money, it were a crime to demand more, the wheat would be shipped out of the country. So it is with money. On large gilt-edged loans the rate of eight per cent. is abundant, and our bankers only wish they had more such loans. But when it comes to the man who wants to borrow a hundred or so dollars, the case is different. The money lender cannot ask more than ten per cent, and so he does not loan any money, so that when it comes down to the truth of the matter, the rich man grows richer, because he can use borrowed capital and the poor man poorer because he has no borrowed money to deduct from his property and hence pays double taxes. Place the legal rate in Oregon at 6 per cent, and let contracts be made at any rate.

Unless Oregon repeals the usury law and gives us a decent assessment law, it will be only a few years until the people of Oregon will care less about their own state than Washington. To-day thousands and thousands of dollars are invested by Oregonians in Washington. If a crash is threatened they will suffer as much as Washington. Those who depreciate a boom on account of the collapse will not keep our Oregonians from losing their money because they have invested it in the "boomed" country. When a man loans his money he wants to see and helps the borrower to prosper. Oregon money is invested in Washington and to-day Oregon capitalists are "booming" Washington. Our usury and tax law is to blame. Money is cheaper and taxes lower in Washington and yet they have no "cinch" on capital. Suppose a collapse comes in Washington, who suffers? Not Washington alone, but Oregon also. Let us have laws to bring back money into Oregon. Let the state progress.

Taking money from a people is like taking the tools from the workman. The farmer pays hundreds of dollars for labor saving machinery and as a consequence he farms much more land at greater ease for himself. When money is easy in a state it makes business prosper and the country grow. It grows faster and wealth is accumulated. The present usury and tax law drives money from the state and consequently our progress is slow. We see that our progress is slow, and we lack faith in our own state. If Oregon were Washington it would not take six months to interest capital in such a paying investment as a railroad to Falls City and Salem. Four or five men would give their individual notes for a few thousand dollars, the railroad would be started, and a mortgage could be given on every mile at say 5 per cent. per annum, and all the money would thus be secured, and the interest could be paid from the earnings of the road. But our laws in Oregon discourage any such thing. Repeal such obnoxious laws.

VARIOUS OPINIONS ON TAXATION.

Mr. E. Hofer of the Salem Journal, as a private citizen is not inclined to express any opinion on taxation as the writer learned while in conversation with him a few days ago. Mr. Tony Noltnor, of the Portland World, says he favors a law giving precinct assessors no exemptions for indebtedness. He favors the mortgage tax law. We met ex-Governor Moody who said the present law was a perfect farce and was doing more harm than good. In Portland we met Harvey W. Scott, of the Oregonian, who said that although no arguments are being produced to show why our present obnoxious laws should be not repealed, he doubted very much whether the next legislature would do it. That the mosback element of Oregon is still in the ascendant. Mr. Scott talked forcibly on the question and it is evident that his recent visit to Washington has caused him to pronounce Oregon a hopeless case. We met Mr. Frank Dekum, the president of the Portland Savings bank, and he said that he had no

hopes of seeing any new laws passed. "If Portland makes a move in the matter the whole rest of the state 'kicks.' We have made up our minds that we can stand it if they can." We met quite a number of persons who have studied this question and the universal opinion seems to be "no exemption for indebtedness," "no usury law," and why there is any doubts of what our legislature will do, we are at a loss to understand. The present law is manifestly a failure. All opinions unite on "no deducting of indebtedness." That clause will certainly be repealed. "Precinct assessors" are popular. Let our legislature pass a law providing for precinct assessors; providing for assessment of all the property irrespective of ownership, providing for no exemptions and even taxing mortgages and all will be well. If the people want to see good laws, they should ask for them.

PUBLISH THE LAWS.

It is an acknowledged fact that the great majority of the people know but little of the laws of the state in which they reside. Beyond attorneys and a few professional men whose business necessitates knowledge of special points, it may be said that ignorance of the statutes is universal. For instance, take the fence law. The ordinary individual knows there is some law regulating the style of fence and that he is liable to loss—he knows not how much—in case the stock of another man is injured on his illegal fence. He had no chance to discuss the old law before it was amended to its present form and express his opinion as to what it should be, knows not what it is now, and never will know unless he goes to an attorney or is "cinched" by its provisions. This is only one of many important statutes, some of them oppressive and some of them beneficial, of which the ordinary individual is ignorant. The people as a mass have no opportunity to form opinions in regard to objectionable statutes or sections thereof and by recommendations to their representatives have them properly amended. They are informed as to the privileges or restrictions set forth in the statutes, and therefore have no opinion as to whether they should remain or be changed. The ordinary person's information in regard to the statutes is usually acquired after legal process is served upon him and he has costs to pay. While no steps are taken to make generally known its existence and tenor, ignorance is held to be no excuse for the violation of a statute. This is absurd when a practical and cheap method is available for overcoming such a condition. The laws should be published in the newspapers at the expense of the state, and after every session of the legislature all new statutes or amendments are placed before the people in the same manner. This would result in the thorough diffusion of accurate information that every citizen should possess, the repeal of useless or objectionable laws, amendment of imperfect ones, enactment of new measures for the public welfare, and in many other ways would be a direct benefit to the people. It cannot be urged against this idea that it is a scheme for the newspapers to make "a piece," as a rate for publication could be made that would leave but a small margin for profit. There is not a newspaper in the state that would not gladly publish the statutes at the lowest living rates; they could not afford to do so without some compensation, though statutes of especial interest are now frequently published as news. Besides, the item of expense would be more than saved in the diminished number and cost of prosecutions and in the decrease of legal expenses generally. There can be no serious objections to this proposition. If carried out it will be of incalculable benefit to the state as a whole, and to every individual it will be a source of satisfaction, in many cases actually saving no small pecuniary losses. This idea of enacting laws and placing them out of range of the poorer classes by publishing them in book form only, and holding them at prices which many can not afford, is an injustice in itself, but is doubly worse when those whom it effects are called upon to suffer for their ignorance. Then let those who have power to right this wrong do so, by placing the laws on the tables of every household through the medium of the state press.

AN ANSWER TO "CAUTION."

Our correspondent "Caution" is certainly a—New Yorker sure enough. It takes New York forever to build a monument to Gen'l. Grant, and New Yorkers would probably be as long in building up the state of Oregon. We intend in our discussion of this subject to be impersonal and insist on our correspondents being the same, else we would dwell for a few minutes on this sample New Yorker. "Caution" says the present law is all right. It keeps people from going in debt. According to his idea the Declaration of Independence of the United States was wrong because we then assumed added respon-

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abilities. No business can be done with our fellow man without debt. The laborer works one day or one month and he makes a debtor of his employer. If the employer pay in advance then the laborer becomes a debtor. And so the world goes. Contracting proper debts is not wrong. If added responsibilities bring added blessings it is proper to assume them. "Caution" says the fault of our present assessment lies with the assessor. The assessor is a servant of the people, and the pressure brought against him is so great that he must follow precedent. Even if an assessor does give in the true value as was done at Astoria, the county court will cut down the assessment. The system is to blame. The system is based on the law, therefore attack the law.

Our correspondent deprecates "booms" and says there is a bound to be a relapse. He reminds us of a man who will starve his horse for fear if he gets him fat he will be too frisky. Just now Oregon is the starved horse, and Washington is feeling frisky. We notice that some of our most conservative business and moneyed men are investing largely in Washington. They are going to risk riding behind the frisky horse. "Caution" thinks it strange that his Chicago friend wants to pay taxes on \$9000 instead of nothing. That is not the reason why "Chicago" wants no indebtedness taken out. It is because he knows if he has borrowed money on one-third value of his property only, and if his property were assessed at near its true value he should pay on at least \$9000 anyhow and just such men as New Yorker, who are holding land and loaning money (and not paying taxes on the money) would pay enough more to make the rate lower, and besides he could borrow money up to within almost the value of his land in order to improve it, and when improved his income would pay the difference.

Just such men as "Caution" are perfectly satisfied to let our present law remain, when they leave their money in Washington, get their land taxed on ten dollars an acre, afterwards sell it for eighty dollars, and fight progress and public sentiment. If Oregon really has a majority of such citizens many are not going to waste their time in the state, but do what hundreds of people are doing now, go to some other state. The coming legislature will settle this question. The legislature acts for the people.

In the issue of the West Side of last week "A Card" over the signature of V. A. Williams and E. B. Lee appeared, to which I wish to say that I submitted an article to the West Side for publication containing the following points substantially: 1st. My proposition of peace; to open the church building for both sides of the controversy to preach in; that, if we can agree, both sides worship together as one congregation and the ministers of both sides to be allowed to preach alternately; that one was required to give up their private opinion in the case; that the payment of salary, to whom, should be optional with the members. 2d. That a large majority of the members expressed themselves favorably in a petition and otherwise that the church should be open to both sides of the controversy, and that two trustees out of three favored it, and ordered the church to be opened. Because of the length of the article the editor proposed to make an editorial of it, to which I consented provided it contained my article in substance, and it was from the above named facts that he drew his caption "Peace Restored," with only good intentions as I verily believe, but it is misleading since a number did not consent, and foreign to anything I desired to convey, and would not have consented to it had I seen it before it was in print. Certainly, according to the laws of the Evangelical Association the church is in "charge" and control of the board of trustees, and two against one declared the church to be open for me to have my regular service in, and not to be closed against the other side. I am not responsible for congregations on my side of the controversy who closed their doors against ministers on the other side. I did not by force go into the church as charged, but the trustees took off the lock which was put on without authority. We challenge a contradiction successfully. Rev. N. Sauer.

CORRECTED.

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