

Labor 100 Years Ago — April 1, 1916

A look back at the front page stories of the Oregon Labor Press on April 1, 1916. A digital version of the front page can be seen at www.nwlabourpress.org/100yearsago

California Avoids Paving-Price Inflation

You can make the round trip from Los Angeles to San Diego, a distance of 270 miles, for \$4.50. This trip is made in a first-class, seven passenger touring car, not in a sight-seeing stage. Moreover, the price is not the result of cut-throat competition as these rates have applied for months. They are merely equitable

fares made possible by the system of good roads that the state of California is constructing. Neither is this two cents a mile an exceptional rate for auto travel along these roads. The truth is that in California, good roads have put an automobile outing within the reach of even a working-man's pocketbook. Everyone is get-

ting the benefit of California's good roads, for the state is spending the people's money economically so as to get the most out of it. These roads are not merely to entice tourists to California. They are to serve all branches of the community. City dwellers, farming people, visiting automobilists, pleasure seekers, all

benefit greatly from these roads, for their use is not confined to passenger cars; a great deal of auto truck freighting is done along them. In fact, these roads now form the main arteries of trade and traffic that bind the different outlying communities together.

Permanent hard-surface roads are destined to be the making of this Western country. They are to do the most toward solving its transportation problems. In a state like Oregon, where, throughout a large portion of the as yet thickly settled part, the soil is deep and inclined toward clayiness, agricultural development is dependent upon good roads, especially when we have such a magnificent system of rivers as has Oregon. For the solution of our local transportation problems is to be through hauling our farm products on auto trucks over hard-surface roads to trolley line feeders extending either from the rivers or from main-line railroads, according to conditions.

Good roads it has just been said, will solve one of this state's greatest problems. What good roads have already done for California proves this. In that state you can ride by automobile at two cents a mile. In Oregon you pay three cents a mile upon a railroad train. Why? Because we have as yet few good roads in Oregon. California's good roads not only make it possible for automobiles and auto trucks to compete with the railroads; they also bring people to the agricultural parts of that state so that California has a population sufficient to give an impetus to competition in transportation. Oregon needs population, especially agricultural population. Unless we construct a system of permanent, hard-surface roads throughout this state, Oregon will not get its proper portion of the newcomers who are seeking farm homes on the Pacific Coast. This is a self-evident truth that no Oregonian can afford to ignore.

Two years ago the people of Oregon began to awaken to the importance of this road problem. Multnomah County became aroused and last year voted \$1,250,000 for hard-surface roads. Now we have the Columbia Highway which is destined to make Oregon's scenery famous the world over. But this Highway is only a forerunner of the road-building that is to, and must, follow. Last year many Oregonians visited the San Francisco Fair, some keeping

on as far as San Diego. Every one of these sightseers who got even a fleeting glimpse of California's excellent road system came back a booster for good roads. California's example crystalized good road sentiment in this state. As a result, Oregon is about to put out a big good-roads bond issue, and it is well, for the state as a whole needs good roads as badly as Portland itself needs factories.

How Paving Clique Operates

The danger in all this is that Oregon's good-road campaign will not follow along the lines of California's successful venture. Not because Oregonians are not just as intelligent as Californians, but because in Oregon we have a certain element—paving grafters thoroughly organized—with which we must contend that Californians did not have.

The Oregon campaign for good roads is being shaped at the present time by paving companies that hope to fatten at the public trough. Long skilled in such work, these insiders are pulling the wool over the eyes of men having good intentions, but, unfortunately, not of sufficient depth to go to the bottom of this rather complicated problem. In this statewide campaign for good roads, Oregonians will for many years to come have the same clique to contend with that Multnomah County has kept in affluence these many years. Moreover, unless the citizens of this state give much thought to paving problems, and take a more-than-surface interest in this matter of getting good roads, there will not be for years to come, any more competition in paving contracts on state work than there was in Portland in city work, before the Ellis amendment was passed compelling conditions that permitted of competition in city paving.



UPDATE

Loyal Legion beer hall updates its history

Members of the Pacific Northwest Labor History Association (PNLHA) were astonished last year to discover a new Portland bar named after the notorious Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen (4Ls). The bar's website characterized the 4Ls as a labor union and seemed to identify with its dubious heritage. The Northwest Labor Press published a guest column by PNLHA member Norm Diamond, a labor historian, that set the record straight about the 4Ls. Shortly after publication on March 18, the Loyal Legion beer hall updated its web site, adding more accurate information about the WWI-era Loyal Legion of Loggers & Lumbermen. The update is pictured below.



Where did the name "Loyal Legion" come from?

I came across the "Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen Employment Services" sign in 2008 as I was building my first Portland restaurant. The sign was built into the wall in the basement of the Hung Far Low building in Old Town Chinatown.

The sign was made of metal sheets attached to a wood frame, a traditional sign construction in the decades before the invention of plywood. I brought in our friend and sign historian Lee Littlewood to help us renovate the sign and it now hangs front and center overlooking our 99 taps.

The true history of the "4Ls" organization is a great deal more complex than we understood when we opened in August of 2015. Because of the historic nature of the building that we occupy, our progressive wage structure for our kitchen employees and the history of our sign's origin, we have received a great deal of interest in our project from both architectural historians and labor historians which has been humbling and gratifying. One labor historian, Norm Diamond, reached out to us to clarify the history of the 4Ls and I thought it was important to include his text in our website.

"The Loyal Legion of Loggers and Lumbermen (4Ls) was a unique Northwest organization. It was founded in 1917 during a strike wave in an effort to restore spruce lumber production, needed to build airplanes for the new US Army Air Force. The sign that hung on the front of the 4Ls Portland office in the 1920s now hangs on our wall.

During the summer and fall of 1917, there was a strike underway as both loggers and millworkers demanded an eight hour work day in the case of the men in the woods, the demands included regular paydays, access to showers and latrines, furnished bedding in the camps, and hiring through a legitimate agency rather than the exploitative "sharks" that stole their money.

The Army intervened. By a combination of intimidation and reforms, they broke the strike and enlisted both employers and workers into the 4Ls. The first leadership of the 4Ls consisted of one hundred assigned military officers. Among the approximately one hundred thousand members in the course of the 4Ls history were about twenty five thousand soldiers, the Army Spruce Production Division."

Norm Diamond, Ph.D
Former President, Pacific Northwest Labor College