

Cottage Grove Sentinel
A Weekly Newspaper With Plenty of Backbone

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TRIVIAL MISTAKES OF THE COMMISSIONERS.

The Eugene Register, in a recent issue, characterized as trivial many of the charges hurled at Commissioners Sharp and Roney, those arch apostles of extravagance and inefficiency, at the recent taxpayers' budget meeting. Although the editor of the Sentinel was a party to the hurling of some of the charges referred to as trivial, it can not help but agree with the Register to a certain extent.

The charges were trivial, but only comparatively speaking. Charges much weaker, made against former Commissioner Harlow and former Commissioner Spencer, were made to appear so big that Sharp and Harlow rode into office upon the noise they made about such charges.

It is a small thing, of course, that the present economy commissioners have not only neglected to keep their solemn promises to the voters whom they fooled into voting for them but have actually conducted the most extravagant, most inefficient administration in the history of the county. This is a small thing, not only because failure to keep pre-election promises has become a small thing, but because other charges which have been or are going to be made against the commissioners are so large as to dwarf trivial charges like extravagance, inefficiency and flagrant violation of pre-election promises.

The fact that a few days after Nels Roney went into office his bridge tools were bought by the county is a small thing, but only because other illegal things which the county commissioners have done are so much larger.

It was a trivial thing for a commissioner elected upon an economy platform to attempt to collect salary for the time he was away on a vacation in California, but had Commissioner Harlow done that just before the attempt to recall him, it would have been made to appear to be a big thing.

It is a small thing for the county to furnish automobiles to its county commissioners, but had Commissioners Harlow and Spencer supplied themselves with automobiles we would have heard a great deal about how much they had taken from the county treasury in using them for private business.

It is a small thing for the commissioners to rush a bill through the county court, as it did for the Fitzgerald twins who operated the county hospital for several months, when they must admit such ignorance as would disqualify them for office did they not know that their action would result in the defrauding of the creditors of the twins. Had a preceding county court done a thing like that, it would have been made a big thing when an efficiency candidate for commissioner appeared.

Of course it is a small thing that some applicants for county aid should be furnished with clothing costing more than some of the taxpayers can afford; it is a small thing that some applicants for county aid should be given holiday dinners costing more than those which some taxpayers can afford to buy; but the taxpayers who see the beneficiaries of a liberal county court wearing costly glad raiment and feeding upon the fat of the land have a different perspective.

It is a small thing that salaries for superintending bridge construction (paid indirectly to the Union Bridge company upon the Springfield bridge and the North Fork bridge), although for a few weeks only, should equal the annual salary paid to the bridge superintendent under the old regime, which was one of the big things in the Roney campaign.

It is a small thing that the county commissioners should violate practically every section of the budget law and should overdraw practically every account over which they have control. It was thought to be a big thing when the budget law was enacted, to the observance of which county officials were to be held strictly accountable. An economy administration should make it a big thing to observe a law passed for the very purpose of bringing about economy in public expenditures. It is quite probable that the county could avoid payment of warrants illegally issued in payment of debts illegally contracted. The holders of the warrants would not consider that a trivial thing.

It is a small thing that under an economy administration the cost of keeping the poor, like the cost of everything else under the economy administration, has been more than under any other administration. It now costs \$2.50 per month per capita more to keep the poor than it did under the administration which was berated by Sharp and Roney as extravagant. Possibly when a few more economy administrations increase the cost of the keep of the poor to a price greater than the cost of living at the highest-priced hotels, it will begin to seem to be a big thing.

It is only a small thing that a county road roller worth \$2000 was sold for \$1100; it is a small thing that the commissioners refuse to pay a less price in Eugene for automobile tires than the same cost from some Portland friend; it is a little thing that the commissioners prefer to buy an electric compressor in Portland at a greater price than the Eugene price on the same article; it is a small thing that the cost plus contracts on the Springfield and North Fork bridges cost the county \$2500; it is a small thing that a car of iron culvert was bought in Portland, without publicity, at a greater price than would have been bid by a Eugene firm; it is a small thing that the commissioners would pay for a cost keeping system \$1900 more than the taxpayers think necessary; it is a small thing that the commissioners would pay \$1000 for outside legal advice merely because the district attorney wouldn't give them the kind of legal advice they demanded; it is a small thing that the commissioners have adopted the motto: "Spend the dollars and you won't have to worry about the dimes;" but we find that a number of small things put together show that through the inefficiency and extravagance of the commissioners, Lane county has been netted out of many thousands of dollars. Any legislator who would add to the salaries of the county commissioners the amount they have thoughtlessly, carelessly and possibly maliciously squandered would find that he hadn't done a small or trivial thing.

These are only a few of the small things, any one of which would have appeared big except for the fact that there are other extravagances and other irregularities that tower above them, such as the damnable Neuse timber cruise contract, the damnable road building system and other damnable things which can not be even mentioned for the present.

The small things are only small comparatively speaking, that is all. The Sentinel would that they appeared much bigger and that other things appeared much smaller.

It's funny that we often have to accept favors from those from whom it is distasteful while those who owe us fail to come across.

Old proverb revised: "Where there's a will there's usually a family discord. . . .

When the whale found out it had swallowed Jonah it felt so bad it blubbered.

SHARP AND RONEY GO ON GRILL AT MEET OF TAXPAYERS

Charges of Extravagance, Inefficiency and Illegal Expenditures are Not Denied.

RONEY TOO SICK TO APPEAR

Neuse Timber Company Cruise Contract Smells to High Heaven, District Attorney Says.

(Continued from first page.)

the work. As the work was done the bills were paid by the county.

Although the two commissioners had been elected upon a platform stating that they would cut out all road and bridge supervision, more than the salary of a bridge superintendent for a year was paid on this one job.

The bridge company paid directly over \$1500 for supervision. The county paid for supervision 10 per cent of the total cost and on top of that paid \$400 for good measure. Ten per cent of the total cost was about \$600. That brings the total cost for supervision on this one job alone to over \$2500.

Commissioner Sharp, when a candidate, characterized as reckless expenditure the paying of salaries of \$6 a day for foremen. The foreman on this bridge job drew down \$11 a day, it was stated at this meeting — and not denied — upon which the county paid another 10 per cent.

In the construction of this bridge the price paid for timbers was \$35 the M, while one of the bidders on the bridge had an offer of the timbers at \$27.50 the M.

Illegal Expenditures.

That the county commissioners have no regard for what the law says about the conduct of the county's business was brought out emphatically.

It was shown that thousands of dollars was paid from the general emergency fund for road purposes, without a transfer of funds being made, a flagrant violation of the budget law; that obligations are assumed, to be paid from future tax levies, a flagrant violation of law; that contracts for thousands of dollars are entered into without any publicity whatever, when state law requires bids on all purchases exceeding \$500; that transactions meaning thousands of dollars to the county are consummated in verbal conversations on the streets, or in the back alleys, or in whatever place happens to be convenient.

The taxpayers decided that the county commissioners, who had set aside \$2500 for a cost accounting system, over the protest of Judge Barnard, were too extravagant to the tune of \$1900, which amount was taken from that item and placed under the item for retiring warrants.

Resignations Asked.

During the closing few moments of the meeting a motion was made asking Sharp and Roney to resign. Had the motion been put immediately after made, there is no doubt that it would have carried, due to the fact that at that late hour a large number of Sharp's friends from the farming districts had left for home, leaving the meeting absolutely in control of those opposed to the inefficiency and extravagance which it was charged were the outstanding characteristics of the present administration. Sharp's en-

emies were kind enough to table the motion.

Sharp and Roney, both elected upon platforms of fault-finding with the administration in power, were made to feel that all their chickens had come home to roost.

Neuse Contract Damnable.
While there had been fireworks throughout the day, they were a puny display in comparison with those that were fired when the Neuse timber cruising contract came up for discussion as the last item on the budget.

County Attorney Johnston showed that under the contract which had been signed by the two commissioners "in a dark room" and without his approval and against the protest of Judge Barnard, would cost the county probably three times what a timber cruise should cost. He explained the points that had not been visible to the commissioners and might be overlooked by others. The contract had been drawn by Neuse himself and the commissioners had signed on the dotted line. It was insinuated that when the signing was done the room probably was so dark that it was impossible to clearly read the contents.

Crookedness Hinted.

"The whole thing smells to high heaven," the district attorney declared. "The commissioners have made a mess of things and have done their best to saddle a terrific expense upon the county. Whether they did so crookedly or honestly I propose to find out by testing the contract in court. I will attack its validity upon the grounds of having been illegally entered into and because of the unconscionable and outrageous price charged there-in. I call upon the county court now to show their honesty by rescinding the contract and I will stake my reputation upon the statement that all the damages Neuse could collect through such action the commissioners could stick in their eyes."

Sharp Defends Contract.

Sharp defended the contract and said that it had been signed because the county wanted an honest cruise from an honest cruiser. As to the honesty of Neuse, reference was made to the same kind of scandal in other places where he had operated. Neuse has since admitted that he has often had to stand suit upon his contracts. Judge Barnard was called upon to read a letter which he had received from Idaho. The letter referred to contained a quotation from the Clearwater Republican, of Clearwater county, Idaho, from which the following are excerpts:

Neuse Scandal Elsewhere.
"N. C. Ingram in an affidavit says that he was employed by the Neuse Timber company in 1913 and cruised in Clackamas county; that despite written instructions he was verbally instructed that he must cover 320 acres a day, that he went over thickly-timbered land only once, although contract called for double cruise and an accurate cruise could not be otherwise secured; that in order to get his pay he had to make a false affidavit that he had followed the terms of the contract with Neuse."

"W. F. McKinnon, another cruiser, makes the same statements. "The Neuse timber cruise is the most infamous piece of business a political ring ever perpetrated on the taxpayers of a county of Idaho. To pay out needless money for a necessary service is but another name for graft. The people are skinned in either case."

At a recall election held August 16, 1913, the county court of Clackamas county was recalled because of the nature of their dealings with Neuse.

Shady Work Is Known Here.

It is not necessary to go away from home to get competent testimony as to the character of a cruise Lane county could expect under the Neuse contract, which was the subject of so much comment at the budget meeting.

H. H. Fiester, of Cottage Grove, assisted in the cruising of the timber of Clatsop by this outfit. The orders given the cruisers were that they had to cover a certain number of acres each day. Even if they could give but a single cruise where a double cruise was called for, or if they didn't have time even to step foot upon some of the land, they had to make affidavit that the terms of the contract had been fulfilled. A report was made on every acre, whether or not it carried a foot of timber, and the contract price per acre collected.

Mr. Fiester assisted the cruisers but was not himself a cruiser.

Rescinding Contract Asked.

A motion was put over without a dissenting vote worded as follows: "That the item for a timber cruise remain in the budget; that the county court is called upon to rescind the damnable Neuse contract and to enter into a new contract with reputable cruisers, such contract to be approved by the district attorney."

Taxpayers from Cottage Grove took a prominent part in the meeting.

THE FRUIT OF DISSIPATION.

Margaret Eliot, daughter of the governor of the federal reserve bank of Boston, shot herself with a revolver and died. Her father has made public letters left for him by the dead girl. "I couldn't stand life any longer," was one of Miss Eliot's reasons for suicide, and her father added that his daughter's act was due to "her love of social life, dancing every night and smoking cigarettes."

At first thought, those are odd reasons for suicide. One would think that an attractive young woman, living the life of the gayest of the gay, would want to go on living indefinitely. The suicide of a poor drab little inhabitant of a hall bedroom would be understandable, but the reasons that led Miss Eliot



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