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The Next Step.

The next step to be taken by Malheur county in promoting the Warm Springs Irrigation Project, is to organize all land owners who have holdings that will come under the proposed project. While it is not absolutely necessary that an organization be perfected, it is necessary that each land owner agree to abide by the rules and regulations of the Government, as is customary under such projects.

There is much farm land along the Malheur river above Vale, and a considerable acreage this side of Vale, that is at present irrigated to some extent by water from the Malheur river. These lands have water rights which must be relinquished to the government when the Warm Springs Irrigation Project is commenced. The value of these present water rights will be adjudicated by the Government, and the owners given credit for them upon the purchase price of the new rights from the Government project.

So, no one is asked to donate any of the present water rights. But it is absolutely necessary that all agree to abide by the rulings of the Government pertaining to such matters. And it is necessary that the program of harmony be extended to this part of the work.

There should be a meeting called and attended by every water right owner along the river, and this matter taken up and thoroughly threshed out. For, if it is not possible to agree and harmonize in this important preliminary work, then there is no use to attempt to promote the Warm Springs Project. It means simply a waste of time and money.

The Government will not take up a project over which there is disagreement and friction. This has already been demonstrated once in Malheur county.

But there is every indication that the Warm Springs Project will be taken up by the Government, providing Government officials are assured of the support and cooperation of the people effected by the improvement.

Secretary Lane of the Interior Department has already expressed his willingness to take up some new project in Oregon and expend \$450,000 of Government money upon it, without one cent of State money being allotted for co-operative use. The Warm Springs Project is said to be the most favorable in the State for this purpose. An almost natural reservoir site is available, and without great cost, can be built to store some 180,000 acre feet of water. Approximately 60,000 acres could be watered from this reservoir. The character of this land is such that, as soon as irrigation is provided, it will rank among the best agricultural lands of the United States. Viewed from all angles, the Warm Springs Irrigation Project is of high merit, and the probabilities of its early recognition and adoption by the Government, are the very best.

But immediate steps should be taken to complete the preliminary work of organization, so as to be able to present the Government with a clean slate when the time comes for action.

For Better Roads.

The final report of the Joint Congressional Committee on Federal Aid to Good Roads was submitted to Congress last week. It urges National participation in highway improvement on a large scale, but under such a plan as will guard against the "pork barrel" and prevent dictation of local road problems by a Bureau in Washington. The committee was unable to agree upon any particular bill, but submitted a vast amount of data that has been collected and expressed views regarding some general principles that should be observed in Federal good roads legislation.

Summing up advantages of good roads, the report says:

"Systematic efforts and cooperation of nation, states and counties will make American highways the best in the world, bring remote agricultural lands within practicable hauling distance from railroads, materially raise the values of farm property, enhance the margin of profit on farm products, vastly increase the average daily attendance at rural schools, raise the standard of rural education, make the motor truck an economical vehicle for American farmers, lighten the labors of American horses, save wear and tear on harness and wagons, and add to the comfort and happiness of all rural residents."

The report estimates the total quantity of commodities hauled over rural roads at 700,000,000 tons annually, costing now an average of 21 cents per ton-mile or \$1.89 per ton for the average haul of nine miles. A system of first class highways would reduce this cost to the extent of 13 cents per ton-mile. The report does not assert that such a perfect system of highways is immediately practicable, but expresses the opinion that

such an improvement as is now practicable, would result in the saving of eight cents per ton-mile, or a total of \$504,000,000.00 annually. Viewing this saving as a dividend, the report says that it would justify, on a 6 per cent basis, an investment of \$8,400,000,000, which the committee believes is far more than would be necessary to place the roads in such a condition as to effect the saving indicated. Other excerpts from the report are as follows:

"We believe that when the United States Government undertakes so important a problem as that of Federal aid to good roads, it should undertake it in a large way. To undertake it in a small way means a continuation of the policy of patchwork and consequent waste of funds, with slight permanent results to show for the expenditure and would, within a very few years, subject Congress to the criticism of having established what is commonly called a 'pork barrel,' from which the several states would receive annually a small contribution of funds distributed over a large mileage of roads without producing the high class of public roads which are so much needed and desired. We believe that before Congress adopts a plan the whole subject should be so thoroughly studied that the plan decided upon may be enacted into law with confidence that it will remain practically unchanged on the statute books for many years to come, thus standing for many years as a credit to the Congress which enacted it.

"Congress should make careful provision for such administration of the federal highway participation as will protect the several states in their right to control their local highway affairs and guard against dictatorship from a Federal Bureau in Washington."

The report includes data concerning the road systems of foreign countries and of the several states, extensive statistical data bearing upon various plans of apportionment of Federal funds among the several states, statistics regarding good road expenditures, bond issues, etc., the character and condition of highways over which rural mails are carried, special rates accorded by railroads for transportation of highway material, a resume of all pending good roads legislation, and the most complete bibliography of good roads literature ever published.

Be Fair to All.

The Oregon State Legislature will be asked, within the next few days, to pass a bill providing for a special state levy of one-half mill to be used for road improvement. And Multnomah county will include a provision in the bill providing that this money be spent on the Columbia Highway, leading into Portland.

Entering the argument that, inasmuch as Multnomah County pays approximately 37 per cent of the taxes of the state, the money should be used on the Columbia Highway. Thus Portland stands as a unit in favor of the special taxation.

Granting that Portland is right in her contention. Granting that the entire state will be willing to stand extra taxation for the building of the Columbia Highway, what will Portland and Multnomah county be willing to grant the remainder of the state in order to even up matters? If this bill should pass the legislature and the money be used on the Columbia Highway, would Portland be willing, two years hence, for a similar bill to pass providing for the building of some fine piece of road in Eastern or Southern Oregon?

There is not a county in Eastern Oregon but that needs road improvements badly. Settlers in many of our rural sections are compelled to use roads that are almost impassable at certain seasons of the year. Settlers in a new country expect, to a certain extent, to put up with many hardships. And bad roads are to be expected. But these settlers, who are the true empire builders, should be given encouragement when possible. And there is nothing that encourages a rural resident so much as a good road.

The Columbia Highway is a commendable piece of work, and far be it from us to discourage it. But the Columbia Highway is being built chiefly for pleasure purposes. It will be a connecting link in a transcontinental road for automobile tourists. We should encourage tourists to visit Oregon, and should make their journey within our borders as pleasant as possible. But at present tourists can run their cars onto a boat at the Dalles, and float serenely down the Columbia river. Surely this is not such a hardship. Nothing to compare with the obstacles of many of our rural farmers whose very existence depends upon marketing the products of their farms, over roads almost impossible of travel.

Let us boost for good roads everywhere, and let us hope that our legislature will, if the bill carries, see that all sections of the State secure their just proportion of road improvement.

Boost for New Railroad.

A valuable ally for Ontario and Malheur county in the promotion of a railroad from Northern Idaho to a point in Nevada to connect with the Western Pacific railroad, comes from Northern Idaho—the pan-handle district. Every section of Northern Idaho has enthusiastically taken up the new project and is boosting in every possible way for its completion.

Several weeks ago The Argus published a story outlining the possibilities of such a road, and since then we have received many letters from all over Northern Idaho asking for further information. The plans have not yet been definitely announced. However, the demand for a north and south road in Idaho has reached such proportions that the Idaho Legislature, in session now, has taken up the matter and designated the appointment of a commission to investigate conditions.

The only feasible plan, so we are told, at present, is to extend the Pacific & Idaho Northern from New Meadows down the Salmon river, to a point of connection with one of the railroads of Northern Idaho. It is said the Pacific & Idaho Northern is already the property of the Hill interests. The line now connects with the Union Pacific system at Weiser. But if the P. & I. N. ever perfects a northern connection with the Hill lines, the southern connection would prove unsatisfactory.

Present activities of the Western Pacific—a line on friendly relations with the Hill interests—assures developments

from that source. Six weeks ago officials made the trip in a mobile from Winnemucca, Nevada, a point on the Western Pacific, to Ontario, later going to Boise.

It is claimed a feasible route for a railroad was picked on this trip—a route which would be a connecting link between San Francisco and Montana, Idaho, Eastern Washington, Eastern Oregon. And, at the same time, Idaho's north-south railroad would be accomplished.

The new line must come through Ontario. In fact, only coming through here, could a feasible grade be established.

The Jitney Bus.

A new common carrier—the jitney bus—has made its appearance in the cities of the northwest, and is causing great commotion among the street car corporations. In San Francisco has been estimated that the jitney bus has caused the street car a loss of one dollar per minute between the hours of 6 a. m. and 6 p. m. Demands in various forms have been made upon governments asking that the jitney traffic be regulated and a licence fee or tax charged.

City Commissioners of Portland have so far declined to place any regulation or tax upon the jitneys, claiming it was only a matter of time before they would put themselves out of business by being financially unable to operate long upon fares low enough to bring them into competition with street cars.

Possibly this is true. In a few months it may be demonstrated that the jitney bus is a failure when forced to compete with street cars. But how about the jitney bus in the numerous small cities of the country that do not have street car systems? For instance in Ontario there is undoubtedly a money making field for a system of jitney busses. Their service could not be confined to city limits, but should stretch out for many miles in all directions from the city. Surely a good patronage could be established. Not only passengers could be accommodated, but light freight could be hauled. The service would fill a long felt want.

A system of rates could be established which would not necessarily need be as cheap as railroad transportation, but cheap enough to become popular and not prohibitive. And within a short time after the service is established, it should do a heavy business.

The Ontario Commercial Club has taken the matter up and appointed a committee to investigate local conditions and probable cost, with a view to assisting some one in establishing a jitney bus service here. Surely here is a good opening for a man who has a little capital to invest in that class of business.

County Administration.

Economy in expenditures and centralization of responsibility is the keynote of the message of Gov. James Withycombe to the present session of the State Legislature. One part of his message is particularly directed to county administration and is certainly worthy of consideration. It is as follows: "Much has been said about the need of economy-legislation, directed at the several departments of State government. I heartily concur in the feeling that reforms tending toward economy are desirable in State administration, and no doubt these will receive wise consideration from you. But I venture to point to a field of endeavor even broader, namely: county administration. During the last few years, each \$100 paid in taxes in an average county about \$12.50 has gone to the State and approximately \$37.50 to the county. In other words, county administration costs the taxpayers three times as much as State. Undeniably there are many leaks in county government that well may be checked by adequate legislation, and it is my hope that effort for economy and efficiency will not stop with the State, but will proceed to the details of county affairs."

We fully agree with the Governor that economy in expenditures and centralization of responsibility is needed in county administration and the solution of this problem will be of great benefit to the taxpayers. There is a great deal of money expended in red tape that could be put to better use in developing the resources of every county.

City Is Prosperous.

Announcement this week of real estate dealers of the city that there are few vacant houses in Ontario, is another indication of the local prosperous condition. At this period of National depression, there are few cities of the country that can truthfully lay claim to such a condition.

In all lines of business, Ontario seems to be especially favored during these "off" times. There are no business men here crying "hard times." Many stores report a smaller volume of business during 1914 than for the preceding year, but in every instance they will tell you their expenses of doing business were small in proportion.

There is a reason for this condition in Ontario. There is no line of business over-done. The growth of this country has been of the solid kind, and fictitious values have never prevailed.

True, Ontario feels the general business depression. But it has caused no uneasiness or hardships. If every city were in as good condition as Ontario there would certainly be no excuse for crying "hard times."

Read the Governor's Message.

Read over his message to the Twenty-eighth Legislative Assembly if you want to know what kind of a Governor Oregon has. He has shown in that message that organization will be the aim of his work. This organization of the administration of the State's affairs will build for the future interests of the State; will economize on expenditures; will place the responsibility for success or failure where all may see and judge.

In his message the Governor shows himself a far-sighted statesman, a scientific business man, a hearty supporter of educational and reform work and an enthusiastic worker for all Oregon. He enters into his office feeling the responsibilities and difficulties before him and desiring to prove worthy of the confidence of the people.