

## The Ontario Argus

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### ONTARIO'S MERCHANTS

Perhaps it would be the charitable thing to do, to forget the remark Mr. W. E. Lees made during his discussion of the paving proposition, when he described the merchants of the city as "men who have a shirt-tail full of goods, that they can move to Baker or any place else."

And the Argus is willing to let the matter pass as a slip of the tongue, directed by a mind intent with the heat of argument, but believes that an apology is due from Mr. Lees to the merchants of Ontario. He at least, should be the last man in the city to make such an uncalled for and slighting remark.

But the Argus wants to take this opportunity to direct the attention of property owners to the part that the merchants of Ontario have to sustain in every phase of the civic life of Ontario.

First of all it is because Ontario has such farsighted and energetic merchants, who carry stocks of goods of such quality and in such quantity as they do, that Ontario is the trading center of this section. The Argus believes that without fear of contradiction it can be said that for enterprise and progressive merchandising, Ontario's business men have no peers in the Snake river valley. To a degree, greater than is usually the case they are the city of Ontario and whatever progress has been made here is almost entirely due to their efforts.

Who, may we ask is it that supports every public enterprise in this community? Who is it that donates to every cause? Who is it that took the time to sell Liberty Bonds, pay for the entertainment of the departing soldiers, and for their welcome home? Who gives time for the Fair work? Who works on the Commercial club committees? Who entertained the stockmen? Who has done any of the many things that have been done for the general welfare of the community, things that make this a town and thus make business property and residence property worth even what they are?

Let any man answer that question. Is it the landlords of this town of Ontario who do these things? Have they contributed in time or in money in proportion to what the merchants have done? Who will say that they have? No one, for no one can and tell the truth.

The doorways of Ontario business houses are worn with the tracks of soliciting committees. When it comes to giving funds to support any public measure Ontario business men are generous without stint. Some may not have given a great deal of time to these matters but they have given money, and in proportion to their worldly wealth, as compared with that of most of the landlords of the city they have done their duty ten times over.

The Argus regrets that there is occasion for making such comment. But these are the facts. They should not be so for the interests of the merchants and the landlords are identical. We would remind Mr. Lees that prosperity for the landlord depends upon the prosperity of the merchants, far more than does that of the merchant depend on the prosperity of the landlord. But the business man who is getting started in life and has to accumulate capital to maintain stock can not divert it to the erection of buildings. Therefore the landlords should boost the business of their tenants, for their own advantage.

And what more could Mr. Lees ask than the public assurance that the business men have made that they will pay the increased rents necessary to pay the paving before their stores? Could anything be fairer?

We ask him to take this into consideration, and to consider too that all the people who live here are entitled to consideration, for it is their presence here that has made the town what it is today.

While a year may not be long in the life of a city, as has been well said there are times when a decision can not be delayed without jeopardizing the future. The question is whether that time has arrived. It is not a question of whether the men who favor it are merchants or property owners.

No doubt Mr. Lees now regrets his slighting remark directed at the merchants. We hope that he does, and that everyone will forget it, and any other knock that anyone has made, and that having been aroused, and feeling the need of mutual support Ontario merchants and Ontario property owners and Ontario citizens in general will unite now for a bigger and better city.

### THE PAVING CONTROVERSY

There are two possible constructions that might be placed upon the opposition to the paving program; that those who are arguing against the improvement sincerely believe that this is not the proper time for such improvement; or that the arguments are advanced merely to forestall any improvement at anytime.

The first construction, however, is the only one that is tenable so far as the majority of those who protested is concerned. The Argus is firmly of the opinion that the majority, a vast majority too, of those who voiced protests and signed the petition want paving and want it in the near future.

This must be true, because those who are protesting are the very men who have most of their wealth invested in real estate here much of which is not producing them income. They invested in this property to sell it at enhanced figures when the city should grow and they would thus secure what economists describe as the unearned in-

crement. As hard headed business men they know that the city can not grow by declining to improve conditions. Therefore they can neither sell their property or turn it into income producing property with the present population. So naturally they want improvements, but they have their own ideas of how these improvements should be made. And this is but natural.

From all the statements made at the interesting session of the Council Monday evening it appears that paving in Ontario was in the hands of friends, but friends who were not ready to act just yet. Without trying to go behind the public statements made, the Argus believes that they do want Ontario to be paved some day. And anyway they are entitled to their own opinion in this matter and to a respectful hearing.

As in every such public discussion there were many things dragged into the talks that were not germane to the question at issue, but served to show that when aroused Ontario men can voice their sentiments. It is too bad that they can not be stirred up oftener. If the agitation for paving does nothing more than keep some of the citizens, who have let public matters slide and have been content only to kick now and then, on the job it will have performed a wonderful civic service.

### A PUBLIC SHAME

It is a disgrace to American citizenship, the way in which so many citizens neglect their duty and fail to vote on important questions. If men and women who have this great right of exercising their judgment on the vital questions of government will not exercise that right they should be disfranchised for a period sufficiently long to make them appreciate what it means, else they should be forced to live in a land where rulers think and act for them. Such people have no place in a democracy.

There may be, and there is, some excuse for the rancher who has to leave his farm at this season and travel miles to the polls, for not voting. But certainly no such excuse can be offered for the residents of Ontario who have but a few blocks to walk to cast their ballot.

Just think of what the voters of Dead Ox Flat did last Tuesday. They cast half as many votes as did the people of Ontario. And they were progressive votes—votes for good roads that would let them come to Ontario to trade. And yet Ontario had so little interest in this important matter that many, even after being asked to do so, would not cross the street to vote. It is a shame.

However the laxity of the majority has not been fatal to the important measures. It is apparent at this time that the road bonds have passed and the market road bill approved. But it is almost beyond belief how so many people could have voted against the measure to guarantee the interest on irrigation securities. In this of all counties, where irrigation is so needed, that so few would vote on the question and that any of them would vote against it makes one question the wisdom of the so called Oregon system. It is high time that a campaign of education of the fundamental duties of citizenship were undertaken in this state if the system is to be continued.

### OREGON'S OPPORTUNITY

Never in its history has Oregon possessed the advantages which are here today. In the present Congress the state has two members of the delegation at the head of the committees of most importance to the development of the State. In the Senate, Senator McNary is chairman of the committee on irrigation and reclamation; while in the House, Representative Sinnott is chairman of the committee on public lands.

Before these two committees will pass the measures necessary to the realization of the reconstruction program which has been discussed during the past six months. The principal feature of the various reconstruction programs is the development of the latent resources of the nation, especially the development of the agricultural lands within the public domain.

It is in this particular that Oregon is abounding in wealth. Oregon has undeveloped resources beyond the imagination of most of its citizens. What Oregon lacks, or has lacked in the past is ability to make the officials at Washington comprehend that fact with sufficient force to secure co-operation.

That is why the state is fortunate in having as the heads of these two important committees men from this state; men who know the state and its needs, and who have seen this section ignored for years in the reclamation program. If Oregon does not now secure some help for its many feasible irrigation projects, we might as well quit and seek our capital elsewhere.



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There is a Future, Then What  
a Man Reaps as he Sows?

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