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DAVIDSON REPLIES TO ATTACK IN GLACIER

To the Editor of the News:

Assertions have been repeatedly made in the Glacier that I have stock in the company which bought the present water system. I wish to say that I have no stock in the company which owns the water system and never expect to have. The only possibility of my having any is in case the court orders the recent sale set aside, which is very unlikely, as the company sold the property at the highest price obtainable and got the cash. These statements have of course been made to injure me and my interests in Hood River in general. A history of this continued warfare upon me, personally, and my business interests, and the source that it emanates from, is not without interest to the public.

Since the purchase of the Tucker Spring in the early part of 1905, by Mayor McDonald and his party, the question of building a competitive municipal water system has been prominently and almost constantly before the public and has been advertised abroad very extensively by the Glacier as the city administration news organ, and more or less by other papers. Developments in the recent bond injunction proceedings before the federal court have brought prominently to the surface some very interesting, not to say startling, information. In order to draw definite and correct conclusions it is not out of place to consider that the agitation has emanated from two sources which are closely related to each other, both in business and politics. The first and original source of this agitation was for the purpose of gratifying two disgruntled stockholders of the defunct Hood River Electric Light, Power & Water Co., viz: N. C. Evans and Mayor D. McDonald, who had previously been managing the water and light business. Second, the desire of the mayor and his associates in the banking business, who were also in control of the city government, to handle and distribute the large fund arising from the sale of the bonds. During the time of this controversy there has been a very close resemblance between the management of the First National Bank and the city council. For instance:

D. McDonald, councilman, mayor and director First National Bank.
 A. D. Moe, councilman, city printer and mouthpiece and director First National Bank.
 E. O. Blanchard, councilman, city treasurer and cashier First National Bank.
 J. M. Wright, councilman and contractor for First National Bank.
 A. J. Derby, city attorney and attorney for First National Bank.
 G. I. Slocum, councilman, nephew of E. L. Smith, a heavy stockholder and a director in the First National Bank.

During all of the time which this controversy has been going on a majority of the city government has been made up of officers or attaches of this bank, or their relatives, and they have been in a position to control the city funds for several years back.

The Glacier, published by A. D. Moe, has been very active in the warfare against the water system by conducting a "Boil the Water" campaign and publishing much abusive and disgusting matter, one of the objects of which, it is now apparent, was for the purpose of attracting the attention of the public and taxpayers away from the frenzied effort of his business partners acting in the dual capacity of selling the city bonds at any cost, and getting the money into their own hands. The deal would have been consummated at a loss of over \$50,000 to the taxpayers of this city but for the intervention of the federal court, which says that the attempt to sell the bonds without advertising was unlawful.

The old adage that "misery loves company" is well illustrated by an editorial in the Glacier last week, in which the editor seeks to draw others into his class. He knows the odium he has brought upon himself in attempting to appropriate to his own use the sum of \$50 paid him as chairman of the street committee, which he disgorged after keeping it over a year without having turned it into the city treasury, as should have been done. He also knows the opprobrium brought upon himself and associates when the Federal court decided that the attempt to sell the city bonds without proper advertising was unlawful, and he also knows what the attitude of the public will be when it actually learns that the city was plunged into debt more than three times the limitation of the city charter, by his associates, which has been done with his approval; so, in order to feel less lonesome, apparently, he undertakes to put the private water company in the same class by insinuating that it has a "somewhat unsavory past."

While "to err is human," neither the private water company nor any of its members deserve to be criticised by the city printer nor any of his associates whom he proposes to return to office. He evidently hopes to continue the improvident, unlawful efforts of the present administration. It is gratifying to know, however, that among those who hold over as councilmen there are men who will serve the city in an honorable manner if not overpowered.

People, generally, understand that to spend \$90,000 or any other sum to bring the Tucker Spring water to the city for a permanent or temporary water supply, would be money wasted. This is not admitted, however, by those interested in handling and distributing the fund nor by those who expect to profit by contracts and other jobs or by selling powder and tools to the contractors, and which the mayor is in position to furnish. The contractor would hardly be in position to buy elsewhere, as such a breach of business etiquette might involve the acceptance of the work, and unlike the city sewer system, of which Mayor McDonald was inspector for the city, the contractor who took the liberty to make his purchases elsewhere, might be required to put the pipes to the required depth instead of leaving them some five feet nearer the surface of the ground than he was paid for, and where, in one instance, the ends of the sewer pipe did not meet, but were connected by briar.

This brings up the intense interest manifested by City Printer Moe, erstwhile city councilman and chairman of the street committee under a former administration, who was active in having several hundred dollars worth of work done on the street in front of his residence, the expense for which he approved as proper to be paid out of the tax money, but which class of work is required by the charter to be paid by the property owner and has been paid for in that way in most cases, and who makes an affidavit to add the bunch. In it he tells what he has been told, as he terms it, which is in a large part untrue. He undertook to bring pressure to bear upon Mr. Van Horn to drop the injunction proceedings, but the pressure, apparently, was not heavy enough, as the suit still stands.

The testimony in the suit shows that the council meeting which authorized the making of the disgraceful Keeler contract was held outside of the city hall, and that there was no record of the proceedings of the council showing this meeting to have been held until the suit was brought, when the minutes appeared on the records of the city the following day, and that the city recorder evaded the question on Sept. 17th as to having made any contract with Keeler Bros., when he had signed the contract himself on August 5th. It was noted that Mr. Keeler was a frequent visitor to the First National Bank upon his visits to Hood River, and it was also the duty of the city treasurer, E. O. Blanchard, to know how the city finances stood, but notwithstanding his intimacy with Mr. Keeler and his knowledge of the city finances, he professes ignorance of the intentions of the city council in the matter, although his bank, through his combined act as city treasurer and bank cashier, has actually taken up \$10,000, of city warrants, while over \$17,000 in city warrants have been issued and registered as not paid for want of funds, and the limitation of the city charter is but \$5,000. The mayor is a director in this same bank and had signed the Keeler contract a month previously. It is his duty, also, to look after the bank's interest, as well as the interest of the city.

Now the sale of these bonds for 30 years at 6 per cent means more of a loss to the tax payers of the city than the entire proposed cost of the water system as offered by the writer when in charge of the matter. The mayor and his party would not consider the purchase because the price was too high in their opinion, but it was perfectly agreeable to make a private contract, contrary to law, for the sale of \$90,000 worth of city bonds thereby making a direct loss of more money than the entire price of the water system. Did his bank need the deposits which would probably be unused six months to a year? Did he need the business in the line of selling powder, etc., to the contractors, or did he think the dear public, whose interests he is so carefully guarding, would be delighted to make somebody a straight present of over \$50,000. One percent on \$90,000, or \$900 per annum, for 30 years would be \$27,000 and the interest on interest paid during that time would make the total more than \$50,000. I am not suggesting who were to be the beneficiaries under the agreement but there must have been enough inducement in sight to keep the matter quiet until a competitor in the bond business learned of the matter and let the secret out.

It is reported that the water is bad. However, no bad results have been shown. Matson threatened to

"get even" and has persistently tried to have the water condemned. It is to be hoped by all heavy taxpayers, like the writer, that the water will always remain good, but if not it is morally certain that any loss sustained by the owners, whoever they may be at the time, will have to be paid for by the city on account of the acts of some of the city officials above mentioned by refusing to provide protection for this water by ordering drains and sewers as requested about six years ago, and again suggested by the state board of health more than a year ago. Instead this lot of officials has sought to have this water supply condemned and encouraged rather than discouraged leaving filth on the ground above this spring, according to their own reports.

If the above scheme had been carried out it might have been considered good banking, but could hardly be considered good city government, except by those interested in handling the funds. H. F. DAVIDSON.
 [Paid Adv.]

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