

The Oregonian

Portland, Oregon, Postoffice as second-class matter. Entered as second-class matter, October 3, 1878. Postpaid.

Subscription Rates: In Advance: Daily, Sunday included, one year, \$5.00.

How to Remit: Send Postoffice money order, express order or personal check on your local bank.

Foreign Postage: 15 cents per month. Single copies, 5 cents.

Advertising: Office—Yeese & Conklin, New York, Brunswick Building, Chicago.

Portland, Monday, April 12, 1915.

IN A NUTSHELL.

A million and a quarter dollars is very little to spend for permanent roads in a three hundred and thirty million dollar county.

The investment is timely, because it will employ much idle labor, without an increase of taxes.

The only objectors are the chronic foes of progress, and those professional labor leaders who want to dictate the terms upon which unemployed labor shall be employed.

The Commissioners are accused of having an undue prejudice for "graft" and for payment of the Smith charge is wholly met by Smith himself in the weak admission that "organized labor has no quarrel with the Warrenite people."

The County Commissioners and the roadmaster emphatically resent any intimation that there will not be fair and open competition among all contractors on all varieties of pavement.

There is no doubt at all about it. The whole transaction will be in the open, for it must be, and the lowest responsible bidder for any standard road will get the contract or the several contracts.

If the public is to refuse to expend money for public works because it cannot trust its authorized agents, nothing for the public benefit will or can be done.

The public should refuse to be duped by the contractor's greed, and will get the contract or the several contracts.

Government railroad construction in Alaska is at last to begin.

Purchase of the Alaska Northern road and selection of the route for an extension to Fairbanks settles the preliminaries.

This year the existing road will be put in good condition and forty miles of the extension will be built.

Work on the road in the Matanuska coal field will advance up the Susitna River.

The first Matanuska coal should soon afterwards appear on the markets of Portland and other Pacific Coast cities.

In order that this hope may be realized it is necessary that development of the mines should begin this year, but development cannot begin until coal land has been leased under the new leasing law.

Secretary Lane has shown such praiseworthy energy in pushing ahead the plans for railroad construction that he is now being urged to do all in his power to provide traffic for the road by promoting development of mines, but no news has come out of Washington that coal leases have been granted.

Little can be done to relieve the glutted labor market with the small amount available for the railroad, but coal mines could employ a considerable number of men.

Construction of the railroad and opening of the coal mines will give an impetus to metal-mining in Alaska.

There are stamp mills on the coast and Western Alaska, but the coal imported at exorbitant cost from British Columbia, though there is undeveloped coal at their doors.

When Matanuska and Nenana coal are available at moderate prices these mills can extend their operations to lower grade coal, and many mines can be opened.

Coal and metal mines and railroads will create a market for agricultural produce, which can be grown in the rich valleys of Western Alaska and the Tanana River, as in the like climate of Lapland and Finland.

This development can best be promoted by the adoption of Secretary Lane's recommendation that the control and disposal of all of Alaska's resources be entrusted to a commission, which could act without referring every petty question to the slightest government official.

At the same time the Romans ever tried to administer a remote territory directly, in the way the United States has attempted to administer Alaska.

Success can be gained only by giving broad powers to the local administration, as has been done with the Hawaiian Islands.

Now we are getting things going on the Pacific Coast. We are building railroads and highways and irrigating land in Oregon and Washington.

We are now to build railroads and open mines in Alaska. That is the only real solution of the unemployed problem. The rest is mere window-dressing for all if we let the men get to the land. That will be the result of Alaska railroad-building.

THE POTATO AND THE FARMER.

The State University has performed a valuable service by issuing a bulletin upon "Markets for Potatoes."

It is just now the question of markets rather than of production that worries the farmers. They can raise, even with imperfect methods, more potatoes than can easily sell, and they are getting their difficulties of prime importance.

The potato market has always been uncertain for Oregon growers. One year it returns encouraging prices, the next year it may prove extremely difficult to dispose of the crop at any figure.

A grower stands about an even chance of losing his investment or of making a fair profit.

The conditions resemble those of gambling too closely to be desirable. It would be far better if a small but dependable market could be established after a year. The first difficulty seems to lie with the growers themselves. They use poor seed.

Professor Scudder, of the Agricultural College, is quoted as saying that there are not enough good seed potatoes in Oregon to plant the smallest potato acre.

Notoriously it has been the habit of our growers to plant the smallest potatoes of their crops. This accomplishes a retrograde selection and, ultimately leads to that "dying out" of the variety which is so common in all kinds of potatoes, not excepting the excellent Burbank. The Oregon potato crop is not only smaller by the acre than that of Idaho, but it is inferior in quality, partly no doubt because of badly chosen seed, but not wholly.

The potato is so easy to grow in this region that its culture has been neglected. It is planted on worn-out soil

without adequate fertilizers. It is not sprayed to prevent blight and, most important of all, it is seldom properly cultivated during the season of growth. Reform is essential in all these particulars before we can expect to find the best markets. There are questions of grading and shipping that should also be considered. No doubt the solution of the potato problem, like so many others, will be found in the use of co-operative methods.

MAKING GOOD HIS THREAT.

The Central Labor Council, through Mr. Smith, its president, issues a protest against the \$1,250,000 road bond issue, on various grounds; but the real ground is carefully ignored. It is that Labor Leader Smith's proposal to de-

labor the labor vote to the bonds if a minimum wage of \$3 per day of eight hours is not paid was rejected by the County Commissioners. The reasons for refusal were not that a fair wage should not be paid, but that no such bargain or deal could or should be made with Smith and his colleagues as a means of influencing voters.

The bond issue was coupled with the bold declaration that if it was not accepted, organized labor would go against the bonds. Now Smith is seeking to make good his threat.

The ostensible reasons for the Smith hostility are now chiefly that there is "graft" to be paid was rejected by the whole project is a scheme of grafters to exploit the taxpayer by making excessive profits. But the "graft" did not worry Smith, if organized labor got its share.

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The potato is so easy to grow in this region that its culture has been neglected. It is planted on worn-out soil

client for governmental needs we could either squander the excess or store it away in vaults.

Mr. U'ren in forcing consideration of such a freak as this is going beyond all bounds in revenging the slight upon his candidacy.

MR. BURLESON'S JOKE.

Balked in his effort to force through Congress the Mowen railway mail pay bill as an amendment to the postoffice appropriation bill, Postmaster-General Burleson has openly attributed the failure of the latter bill to railroad lobbying.

Senator Weeks replies that the plan of paying the railroads by special coaches and swift boats and proceeded to buy in the market which Napoleon's meteoric return from Elba had depressed.

When the news of Wellington's great victory arrived of course the market soared skyward and the provident financier reaped a handsome reward for his early foresight.

His later career was one long succession of foreign loans to the various governments of Europe. He probably did more than any other man to make London the money market of the world, but he avoided business in the United States.

The study public denunciations which made Wordsworth our hostile critic no doubt prejudiced Rothschild against us. His son Lionel, who assumed the purple in 1836, was famed for his benefactions to the Jew-ry and his philanthropic work in Great Britain. He helped remove Nathan Mayer, the Baron Rothschild whose death was announced the other day, succeeded his father as head of the financial world in 1874 and from that time to the day of his death his name was a household name.

The power of our Morgans and Rockefellers, conspicuous as it is, looks feeble in comparison with that of the House of Rothschild, whose connections ramify through every reigning family in Europe.

In a word, the proposed plan would be similar to the fixing of rates by the Interstate Commerce Commission but to exceed the amount fixed, but allowing the shipper to modify his rates.

The Government should show an example of fairness and equity to its citizens and judicial impartiality to its opponents.

Ralph Peters, chairman of the railroad committee on railway mail pay, accuses Mr. Burleson of "himself permitting the Government of the United States to rob the railroads of at least half what is due them for carrying the parcel post," and defies him "to name a single act of the railway mail pay committee, in its efforts to present the facts in this case to the people, which has not been absolutely legitimate."

He says the railroads "appeal to the people and intend to present their case as aggressively as they can in every Congressional district in the United States."

The conduct of the railroads in this matter shines by contrast with that of Mr. Burleson. They appeal openly, first to Congress and then to the people, while he, as a shipper, has the opportunity to earn a fair profit. Given this opportunity, capital will make the Grants Pass and Roseburg railroads the first of a series of roads connecting the Willamette Valley with the Coast and traversing the interior of the state.

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