

CONTRACTORS HOLD PEOPLE ARE MISLED

Isolation Hospital "Saving" Claimed to Be Loss.

PUBLIC WORKS PLAN HIT

City Construction Shown in Report to Be More Costly Than Jobs Let Out Under Bids.

PORTLAND, Dec. 20.—(To the Editor.)—Except where a real emergency precludes taking the time required by law for advertising for bids on public construction, a real emergency ever does, the usual custom is to justify such a course by a statement through the press as to the great saving made for the taxpayers. And, as there are no data at hand to check such statements, the intended impression is created in the public mind that the public officials—without equipment, without organization, without, often, practical knowledge as a builder—can and does erect public buildings cheaper than the man whose sole business it is to assemble materials and erect them into place in the least possible time and for the least possible money.

Just to show how far from the actual facts such statements may be, the case of the isolation hospital at Kelly Butte is cited. It was erected by the public works department of the city on force account.

In The Oregonian October 23 appeared the following: "Another recent accomplishment of the department of public works is the construction of the new municipal isolation hospital at Kelly Butte, at a saving which Commissioner Barbur places at \$20,000 under private contracting costs."

Committee Starts Inquiry. Of course it will be understood that this statement, appearing as it did just a few days before election, is entitled to some considerable discount, but the amount "saved" was so large as to excite suspicion as to its accuracy in the minds of the General Building Contractors' association and a committee of three careful, conservative and reliable men was appointed to go into the matter and make a report. The committee received the above clipping with a letter of instruction, which stated, among other things, "if this is true the association will want to know it. If it is not true the public will want to know it."

This report is now in our hands and available to any who are interested and care to examine the same. It appears from this report that there were no bids taken at the outset, nor at any time, hence no contractors' estimates for comparison were available October 23 nor at any time; consequently no way of arriving at the amount of \$20,000, or any other amount, as a "saving" of \$20,000 was "saved" had to be saved from something or it was not saved. Just to say that if contractors had done the job it would have cost \$20,000 more than it did cost the city, and thus show a "saving," is about in line with the way this kind of stuff is handled. For when the statement appeared the city itself did not know what the actual cost had been, for the committee was unable to get this data until November 15, later, from the records at the city hall.

Building Data Compared. The committee proceeded on the assumption that they had been asked by the city in good faith to bid on the job in competition with other contractors, and that in event they were awarded the work they would be obliged to erect it for the amount of their bid. The itemized bid submitted with their report is therefore complete as to items, on the supposition that they might be awarded the contract, in which event they would be able to turn the building over to the city complete as it now stands, with all bills paid and with the usual profit on work of this class.

The report shows the total bid to be \$47,744. The records at the city hall show that there has been charged against the isolation hospital construction account the total sum of \$52,500 to date. There is, therefore, a difference of \$4,756 in favor of the contractors of this showing, instead of \$20,000 in favor of the city. The committee can see no reason for increasing its estimate of \$47,744 and concludes that every dollar the city paid above this sum was needlessly spent and, therefore, instead of the transaction showing, as handled, a "saving" it carries an actual loss of not less than \$4,756.

Summary of Report. It appears from this report: First—At the time the statement was made, October 23, there were no bids or other data available from which to make any comparison to arrive at the \$20,000.

Second—The books at the city hall were not in shape October 23, nor for a considerable time thereafter, so that anyone could tell what the actual cost of the building was.

Third—The complete showing from the records, when they were closed, in comparison with an absolutely dependable estimate, does not give a "saving" of \$20,000, or any other sum, but that there was an appreciable loss in the sum of \$4,756.

The committee indicated that they were willing to go over each item in their "bid" with anyone interested. As the items of building of roadway, erection of telephone poles and water storage tank are not matters pertaining to the actual building itself, they were omitted from both sets of figures in this report.

In a later statement in the press it appears that "Portland's new contagion hospital has been completed at a total cost of \$57,636." Quite probably if the excepted items had been included in both totals in the report the relative difference would be still more in favor of doing public construction work by contract if the object in view is to really save the taxpayers money.

While this is perhaps an exaggerated case, yet in every instance that has come to our notice the impression is left in the minds of the readers that the contracting system costs the taxpayers a nice little margin that the public officers could save by doing the work themselves.



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FOR HER CHRISTMAS
Beautiful Hands Always
Even After Washday.
A growing number of up-to-date women maintain the attractive appearance of their hands by using the LAUN-DRY-ETTE for their washing. A wringerless washing machine that makes possible a whole washing without putting a hand in the water.
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ELECTRIC MAID SHOP
133 Tenth St.—Broadway 4024.
"Let the Electric Maid Do Your Work."

5 IN AUTO MISS DEATH
CAR PLUNGES 40 FEET, ROLLS; INJURIES ARE SLIGHT.

Mill Workers Coming to City for Winter; Driver Loses Control on Down Grade.

A tangled heap of wreckage worth less even as junk, except for the lighting system, is all that remains of the large touring car, which plunged over the embankment at the foot of Hamilton avenue, at 1 A. M. yesterday, when the driver lost control on a steep grade. No serious injuries resulted to the five occupants and only one remained in the hospital.

The car, according to the occupants, was inbound from Tillamook. Besides R. A. Anderson, the driver and owner, William Wise, J. Carter, S. B. McGillicuddy and J. Skie were in the car. All had been engaged in mill work near Bay City and were coming in for the winter.

A red lantern warning that Terwilliger boulevard was closed caused Anderson to detour on an unfamiliar road. Apparently the car got the start of Anderson on the steep grade and before the other occupants were aware of the danger the heavy machine was racing down grade at an ever increasing speed.

Despite the warning of his companions, Carter, in the front seat, leaped as soon as he learned the car was beyond control. He received only minor injuries and bruises. As the car reached Kelley street, less than half a street width from its final plunge, Wise leaped from the back seat. His clothing was literally torn from his body as he rolled over and over in the street, but he received only body bruises.

Anderson, McGillicuddy and Skie kept their seats. The car plunged 40 feet over the embankment before it struck and then rolled over and over. McGillicuddy and Skie in the back seat were thrown through the top. Anderson likewise fell free of the wreckage. Skie alone was injured beyond minor bruises and the shock of the fall. Stitches had to be taken in his scalp and laceration in one knee. He was taken to St. Vincent's hospital, but his condition is not serious.

Madras Has New School.
HOOD RIVER, Or., Dec. 21.—(Special.)—The Baldwin & Swope Construction company announces completion of a new two-story high school at Madras, Or. The building covers 12,000 feet and includes eight lecture rooms, gymnasium, auditorium and manual training hall. It is said to be one of the finest schools of central Oregon. The building was erected in nine weeks, which is declared a record.

California Firm Seeks to Obtain Appropriation From Klamath. SALEM, Or., Dec. 21.—(Special.)—An application for permission to appropriate 160,000 acre feet of water from the lower Klamath river to be stored in the lower Klamath lake, has been filed in the office of Percy A. Cupper, state engineer, by Roy E. Swigert, trustee of the Klamath-Shasta Valley project of Montague, Cal.

The proposed irrigation project contemplates the storage of water in lower Klamath lake to be returned through the Klamath strait to the Klamath river for power development in California.

BUSINESS MEN TO AID
Fund of \$2500 to Be Raised for Coast Artillery Company.

ABERDEEN, Wash., Dec. 21.—(Special.)—No action toward securing membership for a coast artillery company will be taken by those interested in the company until business men have made an effort to raise a company fund of \$2500.

Captain George Acrot, commissioned to recruit the company, appeared before the chamber of commerce at a meeting of the executive committee and solicited the aid of the chamber. A vote of approval was given the proposal to raise the fund.

SMOKER BURNS CLOTHES
Gasoline Soaked Trousers Burn; Loss Several Hundred Dollars.

ABERDEEN, Wash., Dec. 21.—(Special.)—While cleaning a suit of clothes Sunday afternoon with gasoline Harry Ahis started to relight his pipe. The gasoline-soaked trousers caught fire and were burned, together with \$20 in one of the pockets.

Several hundred dollars' damage was done to the room, which is located over the Barlkey clothing store.



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CREME-NUT
CHEWING ASSORTMENT
ONE POUND NET

SWEET'S SALT LAKE CHOCOLATES

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HERBERT HOOVER
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This space donated by Lumbermens Trust Co.



Oddfellows Hold Services.
SEASIDE, Or., Dec. 21.—(Special.)—Memorial services were held at the Methodist Episcopal church Sunday night by the local lodges of Oddfellows and Rebekahs.