

**STATE LEGISLATURE
FACES BIG PROBLEMS**

Members Silent on Matters of Proposed Legislation.

GOOD ROADS BILLS LOOM

Uncertain Financial Situation May Furnish Food for Discussion and Statute Changes.

SALEM, Or., Dec. 14.—(Special.)—The 20th biennial assembly of the Oregon Legislature is less than a month away, yet legislators who have visited the capital—and there have been many of them—are decidedly reticent about what they intend to propose along the lines of legislation.

Some big outstanding legislation apparently lies ahead, but in what shape it will come up, where it will come from and the exact detailed nature of it seems to be rather hazy.

The uncertain financial situation confronting the members of the two houses may have something to do with this reticence and some of the legislators have admitted that they are casting about to get their bearings before they decide to take a plunge into the law-making pool.

Much Legislation Eyed.

So far the following outstanding features slated for consideration at the 20th of Oregon Legislature include: Some sort of reconstruction legislation, yet in a decidedly embryonic and chaotic condition. Some few smattering as to possibilities of state statute making along this line has been suggested, but those so far proposed have been unrelated, not co-ordinated and in themselves have even failed to take definite shape. The likelihood is that a great gnat of bills, all more or less bearing on this important subject, will be introduced, but legislators have so far been busy in making known in any specific way just what these bills will provide.

Consolidation legislation is another big feature which promises to have a more or less definite showdown at the coming session. Many Legislatures in the past have attempted to do something along the line of merging, eliminating or in some other manner handling state boards and commissions so that state activities could continue at a reduced expense. All efforts in the past have been rather sorry as far as results have been concerned.

Merging Problem Looms.

The last session put it up to a commission to investigate and report on this important subject. This commission has investigated and its report is in the hands of the printer. The high lights of this report which are given to the public and it is reasonable to suppose that with the flying start given the consolidation question it can come up early for consideration. How soon any decision will be reached, however, is problematical in the extreme, as it is certain stiff lobbies will be on the job both for and against the commission's programme, or parts of it at least.

This may augur long discussions in committee and out here and there. Decisions are reached as to the plans outlined by the commission. It is probable that the commission's report will be considered piecemeal, rather than as a whole, and members are certain that parts of their programme will go through, if not all of it.

Finance Cause Discussion.

Financial legislation will take up much time of the legislators. Wide discussion has opened up among fiscal sharks of the state as to whether or not the state can weather the next two years on the amount of money allowed it under the 6 per cent limitation amendment. All were pretty generally agreed while the war was yet on and no immediate cessation of hostilities was in sight that the state's finances were placed in a very precarious position by the 6 per cent amendment.

A number of state officials still insist that the finance are in an identical position to that of six months ago. Others, however, see a chance for recuperation which will carry it over a large share of the next biennium, if not the entire biennium, on the funds that will be available for expenditure during that period.

The court of last resort in matters of this kind seems to be the members of the Legislature themselves, and this problem will confront the 90 men, who no doubt will be as much in conflict over what the state can do, as the state officials are now.

Accident Fund Increase.

It is known that some efforts will be made to present legislation which will have for its object the alleviation of the present situation as to the state's fiscal affairs, and also to prevent such exigencies from arising in the future if possible. In fact, a number of bills along this line are sure to come and a number of them will be considered. Closely linked with the outlook of the state's finances is the question of

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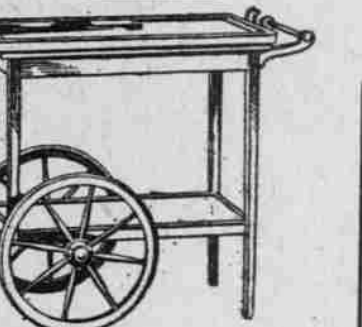
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whether or not the workmen's compensation law is to be made compulsory and whether or not state-aid to the Industrial Accident Commission be removed, save insofar as such state-aid is for the administration of the act itself.

The enormous growth of the State Industrial Accident Insurance Department during the past few years has increased the amount of the state's share of the accident fund to large proportions and it is conceded by all that elimination of this payment by the state would be a long stride toward settling the pinch that is felt from the six per cent amendment and from mounting costs. The 1915 Legislature also appointed a commission to investigate the question of making the compensation act compulsory and the removal of state-aid from its operations. This commission is still to be heard from but some of its members have indicated that they probably will be favorable to such a plan.

Military Opens Question.
It is understood the commission itself is also favorable to it now although it has been opposed to it in the past. It seems probable that an effort will be made to secure a favorable endorsement of such a plan from the Legislature and have that body pass it on to the people in the shape of a constitutional amendment or referendum bill.

The status of military affairs in the state also opens another question in which there are possibilities for large discussion. The varying elements of the military organizations of the state now exist present chances for some lively tilts. The State Guard may feel inclined to remain in statu quo through some sort of legislation remedial of its present uncertain standing. The National Guard question is also one which presents at least two phases. A very strong element is disinclined to a speedy rejuvenation of the National Guard, while the Governor has expressed himself as favorable to that plan.

There seems to be a sentiment that is largely inclined to await the return of Oregon's heroes from France before any definite policies are outlined as to the state's military affairs, while the Governor is anxious that he have some sort of a military backing in event disputes may arise that he believes cannot be coped with by the civil authorities.

Roads Legislation in Sight.
Another part of the state's military forces which is sure to be an angry bone of contention is the military police. The Governor will be inclined to seek a retention of that organization in the shape of a small state constabulary. A large number of members who have been here have been outspoken in their opposition to the military police as a whole or to any part of it. Whatever is done with the military police will not be done without a scrap. That is as certain as it is certain there will be a session of the Legislature.

While good roads advocates expect there will be some proposed amendments to the highway laws, they have reached the conclusion that any attempt to overthrow the \$5,000,000 bonding act will be practically abandoned, and if it does come up they expect it will amount to but a slight flurry. Some talk of this had arisen before the last election. The general belief has been expressed by the legislators that the highway programme as adopted in 1917 will not be interfered with in any material respects.

no matters of material importance at that time are expected.

There will be an effort to place the State Penitentiary back into the hands of the Board of Control, but the chances are that such an effort will be abortive, if the expressions heard here from legislators are any definite criterion.

Salary rises which have been granted to a large number of state employees under stress of war conditions, as well as recommendations for still further increases, will also come in for a full share of consideration. State officials have generally agreed that such salary rises were justified under the circumstances, but not all of the legislators who have been here have as fully agreed along that line. Sufficient difference of opinion seems to exist for a good lively debate, at least.

Governor Prepares Message.

But nothing specific as to such possible legislation has arisen, although it has been hinted that there may be some bills growing out of the taxation amendments referred to.

Some important proposals for amendments to the judicial system, which

have been outlined previously will come from the committee provided for by the last Legislature to investigate as to the necessity for such reforms.

Governor Withycombe has started preparing his message to the Legislature and it is probable a number of

suggestions for possible beneficial legislation will come from his pen, but so far he has offered no intimation as to what these might be.

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