

BENNETT ON PORT MATTER

Presents Argument in Favor of
Amendment of Charter of
Commission.

EDITOR TIMES:

The argument advocating amendment of the Charter of the Port of Coos Bay as proposed by the initiative petition of J. W. Bennett, presented July 1, 1910, is as follows: To the Legal Voters of the Port of Coos Bay, Oregon:

The initiative petition of the undersigned, proposing to change the Charter of the Port of Coos Bay, is substantially as follows:

The main object of the amendment, and the object which it will accomplish, is the preventing of the Commissioners of this Port from running the district in debt in excess of \$50,000 without first gaining the consent of the legal voters of the Port. The amendment, if adopted, will give the Commissioners of the Port power to incur indebtedness to the amount of \$50,000. The Commissioners still have power to levy the same tax as at the present time, and this \$50,000 leeway is allowed principally so that no worthy object will fail during the ninety days' time necessary in which to call a special election, and also provides for the unforeseen emergency. The amendment does not prohibit the bonding of the district, but anticipates that the district will be bonded when a suitable proposition is brought forth. The amendment simply puts the matter in such a condition that an enormous indebtedness—an indebtedness to the extent of ten per cent of the assessed valuation of every man's property within the district—cannot be thrown upon him without the majority consent. There are many questions so trivial that it is impossible to present them to the qualified electors of any community, but we believe that the bonding or mortgaging of one's property to the extent of 10 per cent of its assessed valuation, is such a vital question to every voter that he should at least have an opportunity to be heard in his own behalf. I believe that the amendment presents a fair proposition, and that every voter has the right to know the plans of the Commission for spending money before he is plunged into indebtedness. The proposed amendment goes to neither extreme. It does not necessarily hamper the Commission in its work, nor does it give it unlimited power.

One of the main important results of the passage of this law would be to create wholesome discussion of the project and management of the Port of Coos Bay, the same as in city, county, State and national affairs. I dare say there is hardly a voter in this district familiar with the present Commissioners' plans for the expending of \$500,000. As a matter of fact, the Port Commissioners themselves did not know when, where or how all of the proposed \$500,000 indebtedness would be expended at the time they attempted to bond the district. Whereas, had it been necessary to vote the bond by the people, no radical action could be taken, or a definite proposition reached, only after wide spread discussion and careful deliberation which would be presented to the voters of the district—then hasty and ill-advised action would be reduced to a minimum. Under our present system five men have the complete control of all its affairs. And although the Commissioners meet twice a month, the people are at present left completely in the dark as to the questions discussed at these meetings, and the plans and projects of the Commissioners can be ascertained only by an individual talk with the Commissioners, or their personal friends, or by taking the time

and trouble to go to the books of the secretary of the Port Commission; this last being impossible for the mass of the voters. In our city affairs every move and action of the city council is publicly reported and discussed, and publicity is invited and encouraged.

The passing of this proposed amendment does not mean that the harbor of Coos Bay cannot be improved to the full extent authorized by the present law, but only that the people be given an opportunity to be heard. The writer of this article is heartily in favor of the bonding of this district to aid in the development of one of the finest harbors of the Pacific Coast, but before a large sum of money is expended, he wishes to see definite plans made, and a careful discussion of the questions so that the people will understand exactly what they are doing, and what the money is wanted for. As soon as a legitimate proposition can be put before the people after the passage of this act, the writer will use his utmost endeavors to see that the same is properly carried out.

It is commonly remarked by some of those opposed to the amendment, that the amendment is bad because it puts the power in the hands of the people. While on the contrary, I say that the bonding of one's property is vitally important to everyone, and is a question with which we must necessarily be familiar, and the voter should be given an opportunity to express his sentiments. When you convince me that the destiny of Coos Bay is in the hands of any five men, that minute you will convince me that Coos Bay is doomed.

The present amendment is not alone for the present, but more in particular for the future. Not only would the adoption of this amendment bring the questions of to-day before the voters, but it will do so for all time to come. It will be a safeguard at all future time, and no matter how much faith we may have in the men who represent us, we will at all times be given an opportunity to discuss the matters of interest to the community and to use our influence in what we consider to be to the advantage of the harbor and the district.

It will be remembered that the original Port law which this amendment seeks to amend, authorized the Commissioners to incur a liability of ten per cent on all taxable property within the Port district, and the present Commissioners shortly after entering office, and, I believe, before any project had been prepared and the estimate of the work done, enacted an ordinance authorizing the issue of \$500,000 worth of bonds of the Port district without consulting the people, and without placing before them a plan or project by which they proposed to expend this enormous amount of money. The idea of the amendment is this: That they are authorized to incur a liability of \$50,000, as suggested hereinbefore, but that when they want to incur a liability or sell bonds for a greater sum, they must present to the voters, whose property they propose to mortgage, a plan, or as it is sometimes called, a project, of what they propose to do with the money and what the estimate of the cost of the work is, and then the voters will have an opportunity of deciding for themselves whether or not they approve of this project and this plan. This amendment does not prohibit the improvement of any inlet or the improvement of any river or tributary to the Bay, but simply provides that when the Port Commission undertakes to improve any inlet, river or tributary, unless within the \$50,000 limit, they are compelled to first of all obtain a project and an estimate of the cost of what they propose to do, and then submit this to the voters of the district, and in case a majority of the voters are in favor of this expenditure, then the Port Commission is authorized to incur a liability for this purpose by mortgaging, or by what is sometimes called bonding the district to that extent. Under the present law the five Com-

missioners can sit in some secluded place, decide for themselves what the project will be, what work they propose to do and estimate the cost thereof, and immediately proceed to bond the district for that improvement without consulting anybody. This is an awful power to vest in the hands of any five men, no matter how good they are, and I can think of no other municipal corporation where such unlimited power is given. In municipalities like Marshfield, when they propose to bond the district, an election is called; the people are informed what the money is wanted for, and a majority of the taxpayers decide whether or not they will authorize the city council to issue the bonds. In school districts it is the same. When the Marshfield school district proposed to build the grammar school building on Market avenue, an election was called and the directors were authorized to bond the district for \$15,000 for this improvement, and the plans and specifications were placed before the voters for their inspection and the result was that the bonds were authorized, and when the same district proposed to build the new high school, an election was called, the plans and specifications were submitted to the taxpayers, and something in the neighborhood of \$50,000 was authorized to be expended by the Board of Directors. I can think of no municipal corporation at the present time, not even the Government of the United States, which has authority to issue bonds without the sanction either of Congress or some legislative body, or the voters of the district. Neither do I know of any private corporation where the stock is held promiscuously, where the board of directors are authorized to mortgage the property of the company without calling a meeting of the stockholders and taking a vote on the proposition.

I am unable to find any official action of the present Commissioners by which they have proposed to improve any of the inlets, but statements have gained circulation by which the abutting owner of property on the inlets is led to believe that the amendment is fatal to such improvements. Let it be understood that the amendment does not prohibit the improvement of any of the inlets, rivers or tributaries of the Bay, but simply requires that before these are undertaken to a greater extent than \$50,000 that the same shall be submitted to the taxpayers and an estimate of the cost of the improvement submitted so that the majority of the taxpayers can decide whether or not they are willing to mortgage or bond their property for the purpose of making the proposed improvement. I believe that any property owner in the district who will set aside any prejudice which he may have, or any hope of a reward which he was given to understand would be forthcoming to him if the old law remained in force, that he cannot fail but decide that the proposed amendment is to safeguard the interest of every property owner in the district, not only for the present time, but for all future time to come. Bonds like all mortgages are a lien upon the property of the Port district, and will have to be paid as they become due, and every man before mortgaging his property for the improvement thereof, should think and know what the improvement is to be, and what it will cost, and then decide for himself the advisability of the undertaking, and if the amendment, which I propose, becomes a law, then every proposed improvement beyond the extent of \$50,000 will be published and made known to every voter for a period of ninety days before the election, and then the majority of the voters in the Port district, who number about 2,500, will have an opportunity to decide for themselves whether the proposed improvement is of sufficient importance to justify them in mortgaging their property so as to authorize the Port Commission to proceed with that work.

In conclusion, I respectfully say to the voters that in this move I am not doing it as an agent or attorney for anybody, and I have not consulted anybody. I have no effect in the matter. It cannot interfere with the litigation now pending, as the election will be held before the first case is passed upon in the Supreme Court, but I do it as a property owner. This initiative petition was entirely started by my own suggestion so that the voters will have an opportunity to pass upon it themselves, and in case they vote it down, I will be one of those who will not be blamed for what occurred. And in case the amendment carries, someone will be grateful to me in time for this work which I have undertaken. I would also add that even if there had been no opposition to the Port law, or to the appointment of the Commissioners, that this law would have been suggested by someone, and particularly myself as soon as I realized the enormous power given by the old law.

The Government has appropriated \$350,000 for the improvement of the

COPPLE GOES TO BUY GOODS

Prominent Merchant Leaves
For Eastern Centers to Se-
cure Stocks.

R. A. Copple, proprietor of "The Golden Rule" store, left this morning via Drain for St. Louis, Chicago and New York and other Eastern markets on his regular buying trip to lay in a new stock of fall and winter goods for his stores in Marshfield and Bandon. He will be absent about a month.

Mr. Copple has found his Eastern buying trips highly advantageous to himself and his customers. In discussing the matter yesterday, he said:

"Two objects particularly lead me to go East to buy my goods. I find that I can get better qualities and more up-to-date stuff and can also buy the better merchandise at a considerably lower price than by ordering through the ordinary salesmen. It also enables me to keep up with the up-to-date styles and bring them to Coos Bay as soon as any place in the country has them. Thus, you see, I am able to sell goods at prices here and at Bandon that surprise people who are accustomed to trading at other places or in other towns."

A PLAY WITH SCENES IN HELL.

Irish Players Also Show Robbers
Blowing Open Heavenly Gates.

LONDON, July 5. — Irish players from Dublin bring out a new play every night or two without making any fuss about it. Some of their offerings are weird in the extreme. "Glittering Gates," just put on, is an example. It is a one-act play, written by Lord Dunsany, with the scene laid in hell. Two burglars try to get into heaven by cracking the golden gate as they would a safe door. While on the job they discuss beer, mothers and sweethearts.

When they blow the gate open—which certainly is a novel way of getting into paradise—they find nothing except starlit space. They concluded that after all heaven is not what it is cracked up to be. They have no use for it and are rather grumpy over having wasted their work.

As the play was in hell the London critics did not know what to do. There was no precedent to guide them. One called it "strange and horrible." Another described it as "beautifully staged and excellently written." Still another said it was "indifferent alike in taste, idea and execution."

Coos Bay bar, and \$50,000 for the improvement of the inner harbor, and with \$50,000 allowed the Port Commission, is it not but fair that in case more is wanted that the voters be consulted before the mortgage is put upon their homes?

I respectfully ask every voter to give the matter careful consideration and realize that the amendment is not for now, but for all time to come, and it surely will not be repealed, and then decide for themselves individually what their decision will be and the result will tell for itself.

Respectfully Submitted,
J. W. BENNETT.

Dated July 2d, 1910.

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9.00 a. m.	3.30 p. m.	9.15 a. m.	3.45 p. m.		
9.30 a. m.	4.00 p. m.	9.45 a. m.	4.15 p. m.		
10.00 a. m.	4.30 p. m.	10.15 a. m.	4.45 p. m.		
10.30 a. m.	5.00 p. m.	10.45 a. m.	5.00 p. m.		
11.00 a. m.	5.30 p. m.	11.15 a. m.	6.00 p. m.		
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