

# BENNETT ON WATER REPORT

### Makes Lengthy Statement of Plant and on Richardson Findings.

J. W. Bennett of the Coos Bay Water company has issued the following statement:

"Engineer Richardson's report on the water question was a matter which I supposed, was entirely in the hands of a committee appointed to investigate the situation, but 'The Times' of the 25th, seemed to think the thing won't be completed unless it pulled me into the limelight for its own amusement or to give the people something more to think about."

"Marshfield already has a bonded indebtedness of \$54,000 and it also has a bonded indebtedness on nearly all the improved streets in town under the Eddy Bonding act. The school district is bonded to somewhere in the neighborhood of \$50,000 and some provision will have to be made for a city hall to cost several thousand dollars and then the Port Commission has authority to bond the district, without consulting the people, to the extent of \$750,000 and more, as the value of the property increases. This condition exists because the Bennett Amendment was not understood on account of the misrepresentations employed."

"A move is also on foot to bond the county for a million dollars to macadamize the roads, and now when Engineer Richardson suggests an investment of a half million dollars for Clear lake, with taxes already over four per cent in Marshfield and North Bend,—and North Bend has an indebtedness of its own,—also its school district besides, and a large amount of street improvements have yet to be finished, especially the one connecting with the road to Marshfield along the waterfront, the details of which I am not familiar with, it looks as though the burden we have to carry was heavy enough without either bonding for the Clear lake proposition or the issue of bonds for the Port Commission proposition, when congress is doing so much with the dredge Oregon at the present time, therefore, without going any further into the question I think it is safe to say at the commencement that neither Marshfield nor North Bend will be justified, at this time, in going to the expense of reaching Clear lake, although if they undertake to go into the water business, would it not be a good idea for them to purchase the present holdings at Clear lake so as to have that to fall back on in the 'sweet bye and bye' when the same becomes necessary?"

"I have not referred to the other places mentioned in the report as I understood the committee of the two towns desire to take up only the Coos Bay Water company's plant and the Clear lake proposition."

Of this Mr. Richardson says: "This property consists of seventy-six acres of land lying in the Pony Creek valley. Two pumping plants. One at Pony Creek and one at the Porter mill, and the distributing mains in Marshfield and North Bend."

"Regarding the supply, it will be remembered that shortly before Mr. Richardson visited at this place, Engineer Cummings of Seattle, Wash., who is the engineer relied on by a great many of the largest eastern bond houses, reported that the water on Pony Creek, without impounding was sufficient to supply a population of between fifty and sixty thousand inhabitants, and reported that in view of the formation of the land, being of sand, over which the present Pony Creek flows, it was astounding that there could be so much water in the creek when the possibilities of seepage through the sand was so enormously great."

"The fact is Pony Creek has a very extensive watershed and it will cost less to impound water on Pony creek than anywhere else, to supply Marshfield and North Bend; and by impounding water in a suitable manner during the rainy season, which is somewhat popular in this section, it will be far cheaper to impound water on Pony Creek than it will be at any other point which has yet been suggested."

"In Mr. Richardson's report of the value of the Coos Bay Water works he overlooks some items which would appear of importance in calculations of this kind. For instance the Coos Bay Water company purchased all of the water from the abutting property owners on Pony Creek from above where the present pumping station is to tide water on Coos Bay for which it paid \$25,000 twelve or fifteen years ago and long prior to recent legislation which respects existing rights and the interest on this small 'bag of shells' would amount to something besides to say nothing of increased value. Then the coal underlying this land can be mined and delivered to the pumping station at a cost of less than \$2 per ton, and that is a matter which is also overlooked. Rights-of-ways, etc., are not mentioned or estimated to say nothing about the increase in values in the franchises, which have been made by reason of the water company's own efforts and expenditures."

"The Marshfield franchise when given to Orchard, was not worth ten cents of anybody's money and never would have been unless a water system was put in under it and the same can be said of North Bend, it was the putting in of a pipe line and the water system there that made that franchise of any value and the company is naturally entitled to the fruit of its own efforts."

"The Coos Bay Water company has never asked either the city of Marshfield or North Bend to buy its plant and it cannot in anyway be compelled to transfer its interest. Those details were all taken care of before the extension to North Bend was made. Still the plant is for sale at a reasonable price and Mr. Nolan has the option to purchase it."

**Present Status.**

"The present status of this water affair seems to be as follows: '1. The cities of Marshfield and North Bend should determine whether or not they are willing to bond the two towns for the purchase of this system at the price for which it can be purchased. Shall it be a municipal ownership or not; and can the two towns agree?'"

"a. So far as the Coos Bay Water company is concerned it is immaterial whether it sells to the municipalities or the parties who now have an option, and with whom it is to deal until the option expires."

"b. If this question is decided in the affirmative, it should be determined whether two towns like North Bend and Marshfield, whose boundaries do not unite, can issue bonds under the law, which would be acceptable to bond buyers and this calls for more than a street opinion."

"2. Would it be preferable, under existing conditions and present indebtedness of the district to give a reasonable franchise to Mr. Nolan, which would justify him in the purchasing of the plant, and making the additional improvements which are desirable?"

"3. WOULD IT BE PREFERABLE TO IGNORE MUNICIPAL OWNERSHIP AND IGNORE NOLAN'S PROPOSITION AND EXTEND THE PRESENT FRANCHISE OF THE COOS BAY WATER COMPANY A REASONABLE TIME BY WHICH IT WOULD BE JUSTIFIED IN PUTTING IN THESE ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURES, WHICH ARE ESTIMATED BY MR. RICHARDSON AT \$42,000 IN MARSHFIELD AND \$12,000 FOR NORTH BEND."

"But it should be remembered that the Coos Bay Water company has no monopoly on franchise as anybody who has the water may be able to secure a franchise on as liberal terms as the Coos Bay Water company, and the fact that the franchise has been granted by the city and utilized, should not be confiscated without just compensation simply because the proprietors made the franchise valuable by making use of its provisions. The courts won't recognize anything of that kind."

"Suppose the cities of North Bend and Marshfield should make a present of a half dozen franchises to different ones, what would they be worth? A franchise when it is granted is not worth ten cents to any one except as an opportunity to spend money and make it valuable."

"The franchise granted to the Coos Bay Water company's predecessors was granted at a time when nobody would have it as a gift. It was not worth the paper it was written on, neither were the Marshfield or North Bend franchises, until the grantees in the franchises commenced to make use of their properties and every dollar they spent made the franchise more valuable and without that expenditure the franchise itself would not be worth anything. It would lapse in a short time."

"Suppose the fellow who makes an offer through The Times of \$200,000 without giving his name, and with several large sized strings on it, is granted a franchise for nothing, what could he do with it, unless he scooped the water from Coos river and then pumped the ship into the main."

"Suppose Mr. Nolan or Mr. Jackson or any of those associated with them were granted a franchise, even such as they asked for, and which is usually adjusted later on on an

equitable basis for the grantor and grantee, what could they do with it now with the prospect of making interest on the investment without the purchase of the Coos Bay Water company's plant? They would have to go to Clear Lake to commence with, if Mr. Richardson's report is correct, at an expense of \$500,000 besides condemnation proceedings."

To illustrate, the people of Marshfield gave Jake Blake a franchise for nothing and what is it worth today? What was it ever worth as to what he paid for it? In fact it proved a loss to him. He hunted all over the coast and tried in the east to get the money which he thought necessary to make the franchise valuable and after all his work and time nearly dropped dead and let the franchise go back to the city. Oh yes, oh yes, giving these valuable franchises away for nothing has a tale to tell sometime. 'Pray, let us reason together.' It makes us both feel better."

"In the spring of the year, The Times was condemning the system on account of its being contaminated with colon bacilli, human excreta, and pollywogs, and now in the same year, it is advocating that the city buy these nasty things, which cause typhoid, and sell them to the public."

"Well, what do you think of that? 'I believe that either the cities themselves if they can jointly do so and want to go to that expense, should purchase the system and make the improvements necessary, and increase the rate for water accordingly so that they will be justified in making these expenditures and pay interest on the bonds, or let others do it, who are willing to purchase the plant, or as I said before extend the franchise of the present company so that these improvements can be made by it."

"The best authority puts it now as capable of supplying a city of between fifty and sixty thousand, with but little improvement, and of supplying an immense population by storing water on Pony Creek."

"Mr. Richardson's report regarding 'going value' seems to go upon the assumption that, if parties are afforded an opportunity to construct water works by reason of a franchise from the various cities and this franchise is made more valuable by reason of the improvements put upon it by the grantee in the franchise, then they should be allowed interest on the investment, but does not take into consideration that in many of these franchises granted, money is expended and the plant does not pay operating expenses. There is a chance to be taken there. Who is going to make good to the grantee in a franchise of that kind?"

"No one seemed to care enough to even ask the value of the Coos Bay Water company plant until Mr. Nolan and his associates came along and were given an option. Now they discover that sixty thousand dollars additions are desirable and are endeavoring to discover what disposition there is in Marshfield to allow a reasonable compensation for the expenditures, and the mayors and the city councils of North Bend and Marshfield are honest and capable citizens who will do what is best in their judgments for the best interest of both cities and will not be jarred by the newspaper agitation or the yells of the uninformed blunderer to increase subscription lists."

## THE PEOPLE'S FORUM

The Times will be pleased to publish letters from its readers on all questions of public interest. Each letter must be signed by the writer, and so far as possible be limited to 200 words. In publishing these letters it must be understood that The Times does not endorse the views expressed therein; it is simply affording a means for the voicing of different opinions on all questions affecting the public welfare.

### SAYS THE TIMES IS TOO FRIENDLY TO BENNETT.

Editor Times: I, with others have been an admirer of The Times because of its independent attitude on local questions but at times your paper is disappointing because of its lack of aggressiveness. The Times has opposed some of the schemes of J. W. Bennett, but it never misses an occasion to make favorable mention of Bennett as a booster and toady to him and his interests as if it feared it would incur his displeasure. That's the time your paper makes me sick. Some of us old timers hoped when The Times announced its independent policy that our time of deliverance from his entirely selfish interests in running this community was over, but it seems not. While your paper has done some good work in opposition to his selfish motives in retarding local improvements it has always upheld him as an enterprising and public spirited citizen when the reverse is true. Joe Bennett is like one of these psalm singing sinners who are conspicuous in the church on Sunday and prayer meeting night with their self-proclaimed goodness and then for six days in the week resort to every trick and deception that belies their profession. Joe Bennett is usually on hand at every banquet and booster meeting boasting of his desire and his past services in helping advance the community and then he retires to his office and unless he can scheme some way to make any proposed improvement serve his own selfish interest, he immediately begins to knock and oppose it in every way that he can. I have been a resident of Marshfield for over thirty years and in all that time Joe Bennett has always

held his personal interests ahead of the good of the community. He has at all times been very free with his "God bless you, God bless me, God bless everyone," but I have always noticed that after prayer Joe is always busy with the collection plate, and his pocket never suffers from any sentimental feeling for his home community. He has succeeded in deceiving many people by these outbursts of his, but he has not fooled us all. That is why some of us regret to see the Editor of The Times apparently under his unhealthy influence. It is true The Times is now favoring municipal ownership of the water works and a square deal for the people but at the same time you keep harping on the idea that the city should treat him fairly and that he is a "prominent and progressive citizen." I believe those are your exact words. Now the Editor of The Times need not lose any sleep over Joe Bennett getting any the worst of it in any deal. He has shown that he is able to take care of himself and his selfish greed needs watching more than his personal interests. I am not from Oklahoma or Missouri but I will have to be shown when it comes to Joe Bennett's public spirit."

I have seen Marshfield fool away its franchises and public matters until there is hardly anything left, and now Joe wants to grab what is left. I think it is about time the people understood this thing and acted accordingly. Joe Bennett's waterworks proposition should be treated upon a purely business basis and no other way. I was in Marshfield when the city could have gotten its own electric light system for less than \$12,000 but there were people who said the town could not afford it and the people were sold out then just as they are trying to sell them out again in this fifty years waterworks franchise. I was in Marshfield when Joe Bennett got the first water franchise by importing a man by the name of Orchard from Washington who worked the deal just like he is trying to work it now with Nolan and Jackson from Omaha. One night when the council met the water franchise which was supposed to be prepared up in Washington by this man, Orchard, was accidentally held up to the light and the water mark of Joe Bennett's law office was discovered in the paper. Action was postponed but later he got what he wanted and it was discovered that the man, Orchard, was merely a stool pigeon for Bennett. There was a provision in that original franchise providing that the city could purchase at a stated price, but later Bennett got a friendly council to cancel this by trading some old pumps for the favor. These are only a few of the things that make some of us old timers suspicious of Joe Bennett's tricks and manipulations with franchises. It seems to some of us that Bennett has milked this community long enough and if he would get busy with his railway franchise it would be better than trying to get a water franchise for another fifty years."

What I have said here is only the truth. Personally Joe Bennett is pleasing and sociable although he is sometimes somewhat coarse in his social displays. I wish Joe Bennett would be more broad and less selfish in his duties as a citizen and harmonize his personal interests with the interests of the public, but if he will not it is only common sense that the people of Marshfield should try to protect themselves from the freebooters whether at home or abroad.

Yours truly,  
A MARSHFIELD CITIZEN.

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