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TAXPAYERS ARE TOO ECONOMICAL

COUNCILMEN GENERALLY FAVOR GOOD PAYMENTS, BUT SAY THE PROPERTY HOLDERS WILL NOT ALLOW SUCH WORK TO BE UNDERTAKEN.

Councilman Albee also voices a cry for better streets. He has been a consistent advocate of improved thoroughfares during his tenure of office as councilman and has always insisted that macadam was no good, except in the suburban districts.

Every member of the city council is conscientiously working for good streets, but of late the remonstrances have come in so regularly following a petition for an improvement that when an improvement measure does get through without being killed the city fathers count themselves lucky.

"You will find certain names standing at the head of every remonstrance against street improvements," announced Councilman Kummel, "and anyone who cares to investigate the situation can ascertain the fact for his own benefit."

"Certainly we want better streets," said Councilman Sharkey. "My position has always been clearly stated on the question of street improvements, and my efforts have always been turned to that object. But it has been a hard, uphill fight in the majority of cases, for, from some reason, there is a general attempt made to defeat nearly every important improvement that the council undertakes."

"The people of Portland want to be better streets before the opening of the fair in 1906," stated A. Flebner, a property owner and interested also from a long familiarity with municipal affairs, when asked yesterday about the agitation for better streets.

"We must take this question into serious consideration," he continued, "not only on account of the fair, but from the fact that the city is now on the threshold of a greater prosperity and this means municipal improvements. The same rule that applied 10 years ago would be of little avail now. Conditions are different and the quicker we realize it the better for us all."

"Let us have good streets. I would rather pay \$500 per lot for a hard-surface and permanent paving than pay \$5 per lot for a macadam covering. It is worse than no improvement at all, in my opinion, and the results at all the streets laid here in that manner should be sufficient warrant of the proof of this claim."

REPAIRS REPAIRED. Repair work on the lighthouse-tender Heather has been completed, and the vessel has dropped down from the Hazel-tine dock to the coalbankers, where she will take on fuel before proceeding to the mouth of the river. The tender is now fitted up with all the latest improvements.

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WILL TEST THE DISTRICT PLAN

PRESIDENT METHOD OF TAKING RE-STRICED DISTRICTS FOR COSTLY PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS WILL BE FOUGHT IN COURT BY INTERESTED PROPERTY HOLDERS.

The continued efforts of the city officials to construct permanent fills or wooden bridges to replace the present wooden bridges and the determined fight by property owners to defeat the change may result in an attack on district assessments in the courts.

"This district assessment has never been a settled thing," explained Attorney R. Duniway yesterday, "as none of the improvements which it was planned to pay for have been completed. The proposition of erecting a steel bridge at Marquam gulch came up and there were rumors then that the property owners, or a number of them, intended to fight the legality of such a scheme of assessment in the courts."

"The question is not an entirely new one with municipal improvements, but it bears such an unusual significance here as from the fact that practically all of Portland's large improvements under way or considered at the present time are to be paid for under that method. Eight or nine big fills, five or six steel bridges, large sewer districts and other propositions are on that program and the effect of a court decision on the validity of district assessment will be of vital import to the carrying through of these schemes."

"The opponents of district assessment propose another plan to pay for all these improvements and that, in a sentence, is to defray the cost of the betterments by a special levy, exactly as any other tax levy is made, upon the city as a whole, and governed entirely by the value or amount of property owned or controlled by the individual."

"This is a much better plan than the district assessment in my opinion. A district assessment would be all right if it could be graded down to a reasonable figure and then the remainder of the cost paid out of the general fund. But take such a district as is proposed for the Sullivan's gulch bridges, for instance. It is not equitable nor just to tax the abutting property, or land, owned in a restricted district, for an improvement that is of such general benefit. Again, in cases like the Marquam gulch bridge, it is also unreasonable to expect people living miles away in another direction to pay the same tax or assessment that would be levied against the property immediately adjacent to the improvement, which is peculiarly and particularly benefited. Between these two degrees the district assessment plan has a thorny path, and I really believe it much more reasonable and proper to simply defray the cost of such works by a general levy. Either do that or pay one-half the cost from a district assessment and then pay the other half from the general fund, which will in effect distribute the expense among all the taxpayers at large."

Mr. Duniway's statements are also expressed by many others, principally among those who are prominently fighting district assessments for the Union and Grand avenue bridges. It is taken as granted that the expenses of contesting the proposition in court will be met by these same parties.

A FAMILY ROW SAYS THE JUDGE

"On some quiet day when there is no other business on hand I will hear the matter," replied Judge Charles E. Bellinger, in the United States court yesterday, when Attorney Cecil H. Bauer asked that contempt proceedings against Louis Robinson be considered. "Suit your own pleasure," remarked the attorney.

"I can assure you it shall not be my pleasure to hear such a nasty family row," said the judge. Upon several occasions Judge Bellinger has stated very plainly what he thinks of the Robinson case. Last May Louis Robinson, a bankrupt, was indicted by the grand jury on the criminal charge of secreting property and money to the extent of \$475 from his creditors. On the third day of the trial Judge Bellinger dismissed the case, declaring that it was merely a family row in which relatives were trying to get each other into the penitentiary. Attorney Bauer desires at this time to reopen the case and punish Robinson for contempt.

"I suppose I am in duty bound to again listen to this nasty squabble," said the court this morning, "but if the facts presented are the same as before there can be but one decision from me." And the judge repeated: "This is nothing more than a fight between brothers-in-law, sons-in-law, or something like that."

At the time the criminal case was heard United States District Attorney Hall appeared for the government, Bauer & Green for the creditors, and Glinzer & Sewell for the defendant.

JAPANESE MINISTER TO SPEAK. (Journal Special Service.) New York, Feb. 11.—Kogoro Takahira, the Japanese minister to the United States, came to New York from Washington today to attend the Thirty-second anniversary banquet of the Silk association of America to be given to-night at Delmonico's. The Japanese minister will be one of the speakers at the banquet, and others to be heard are Robert W. Taylor of Youngstown, O., and Robert B. Armstrong, assistant secretary of the treasury.

THE LIFE OF A RUSSIAN SOLDIER

PRIVATE DRAW \$3.00 A YEAR AND SERGEANTS GET \$25—FORMER SOLDIER OF THE Czar TELLS WHY HE WOULD FIGHT WITH JAPANESE TROOPS IF NEEDED.

Martin Markason, formerly an officer in the Russian army, gives this interesting glimpse of the life of the soldier of the czar: "In Russia the land is nearly all owned by a monopoly of barons and the mines are owned by the government and a farmer would consider himself very lucky if he owned from one to 10 acres of land. The poor farmer, both men and women, work from daylight till dark for from about 25 to 50 cents a day and the farm worker who does not own any land is very fortunate if he gets a share of the crop and a small amount of cash. The farm workers have no stated hours of labor, but are compelled to work as long as the foreman wishes them to. They are compelled to work upon the land of the priests free of charge and must donate anything that they possess upon request. They believe that the czar is the god of the land."

"When one considers that in the Russian army a private draws but 90 cents a quarter, a corporal \$1.10, a sergeant \$4.50 and a first sergeant about \$25 a year, one can easily imagine what the officers get. Out of this money the men must keep their shoes polished and their clothes neat. If they have any more money at all they must get it from home."

"The rations consist of two meals a day. The men are allowed three pounds of black rye bread a day and one-half pound of meat and one quart of soup. In the evening all that they get is mush. The bread is issued for five or 10 days ahead and if the soldier has any left he takes it into the market and sells it. The only hope that the soldier has of increasing his income is by working for the land barons during harvest time, when they are often de-

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