

AUGUST WILL BE BANNER MONTH IN GOOD ROAD WORK

Ex-Judge Webster to Stump State to Awaken Interest in Proposition to Have Counties Sell Bonds.

August is to be made historical in the cause of good roads building. Judge Lionel R. Webster of the Oregon Good Roads association will campaign throughout the length and breadth of Oregon in behalf of the constitutional amendment which, when adopted, will permit counties to issue road building bonds.

Professor H. M. Parks, geologist for the Oregon Agricultural college, will visit ten Willamette valley counties, learning what are the road building necessities and what the quantity of outcropping material available for road building. He will make estimate not only on the amount of rock accessible, but on the cost of quarrying, transporting, preparing and laying it on the roads. He will visit Multnomah, Clackamas, Marion, Linn, Lane, Benton, Polk, Yamhill, Washington and Tillamook counties and his services are expected to be of inestimable value.

In order to aid the project the railroad lines have offered to carry Professor Parks free of any transportation costs. The commercial clubs in each county have been written to by Walter Priest, secretary to Judge Webster, asking that his hotel and livery bills be defrayed by the business interests wherever he stops.

Gives Services Free. Professor Parks gives his services free of charge, and the Oregon Agricultural college will print the bulletin which details the information that Professor Parks will secure.

As a result of Professor Parks' work, it is expected that each county will know exactly where to find road building materials, how much will be needed and the cost of building the roads. The collection of data necessary to this end will be the first and most essential step toward the actual construction of the roads after their building has been authorized by bond issue.

In the meantime the Portland Automobile club is not idle. It has finished posting road signs over a large portion of the state. Under the direction of E. H. Wempe, Oregon's auto enthusiast, the road to Mount Hood is being wonderfully improved. Plans for rebuilding the roads from Portland to Hood River, from Kelso to Vancouver and from Portland to Tillamook are well advanced.

The constitutional amendment permitting counties to issue bonds for road building in amounts of \$100,000 or more will be placed on the ballot next November through the petition.

\$2000 Is Limit. The constitution now prohibits any county from bonding itself to a greater amount than \$5000. This absolutely prevents any concerted effort between the counties of Oregon to improve their thoroughfares or to build trunk highways across the state.

Some of Judge Webster's best arguments for good roads are contained in an address which he recently prepared to deliver before the Oregon Threshermen's association, extracts from which follow:

"The objection is often made that bond issues place too much of a burden upon the taxpayer. Let us see if this is true. A tax of 2 1/2 mills on each one dollar's worth of property makes it necessary for a person owning \$1000 worth of property to pay \$2.50 more annually for good roads.

"A farm or a factory worth \$10,000 would be assessed at \$25 annually. If one is so fortunate as to own \$100,000 worth of real estate he would have to pay \$250 annually. A 2 1/2 mill tax on each \$100 worth of property in the county will produce \$2500 for every \$1,000,000 worth of taxable property in the county.

"If the county has \$25,000,000 worth of taxable property and a 2 1/2 mill tax will produce \$625,000 a year, which will be sufficient to pay the interest on \$1,000,000 worth of bonds at 5 per cent per annum. By issuing say, \$500,000 worth of bonds the interest can be paid and a sinking fund created which will retire the bonds in less than 20 years.

Small Burden on Taxpayers. The sinking fund can be placed on interest and thus help to pay the interest on the bonds. Thus it will be seen that a 2 1/2 mill tax will entail only a small burden on the taxpayer, even if he has to pay it, but as a matter of fact the assessed value and the increased citizenship have in nearly all cases which have come under my observation been sufficient to pay the interest and create the sinking fund without having to increase the current taxes for this purpose.

"There is no more important question before the people of this state today than that of the building of better public roads. This question addresses itself alike to every county and community, and to all classes and conditions of people. It is especially important and of importance to the farmer, because it is one of the most important factors in his business as well as his pleasures; and, as everything that touches the farmer is felt throughout the life and business of all classes, so the condition of our public roads is directly reflected from farm and field to every other business and occupation of the people.

Can Render Lasting Service. Whoever, therefore, contributes to the success of the movement for better public roads thereby renders a great and lasting service to his state and to his county. And this affords me the pleasing opportunity of saying to you gentlemen, of the Threshermen's association, that you are entitled to great credit for the service you have rendered in securing the assistance of Mr. Eldridge in this work. Through the efforts of your energetic and efficient secretary, Mr. Bates, the services of Mr. Eldridge were secured for a series of lectures covering almost the entire state.

"His work here is not merely the work of a public officer of the government. In the conscientious discharge of a duty, but it has behind it that finest of all inspirations—an intense love of the work for the work itself, and a profound belief in the great value and importance to this state and to all states, and to the nation also, of the work in which he is engaged. And, besides this, no man, and especially not Mr. Eldridge, is proof against the enthusiastic and inspiring spirit of encouragement that is now sweeping over this entire state.

Uplift Towns. Mr. Eldridge has shown you bad roads—their extravagance and their deteriorating and depressing effect upon

the business, social and moral life of the community, and he has shown you good roads and demonstrated both their economic value and their far greater importance as contributing factors in the developing and uplifting of the country, the village and the town.

"He has shown you the bad roads leading to debt and depression—to poor attendance upon rural and local schools, and thence to a high percentage of widely distributed illiteracy, and he has also shown you the good, broad, smooth hard surface highways leading to prosperity and plenty, and resulting in the large attendance of brighter children upon better schools, greatly reducing illiteracy and abolishing idleness and contributing in an hundred ways to the betterment of every condition of life. Let me emphasize that this which has been shown by Mr. Eldridge is no far off picture of imaginary conditions, nor mere dreams of things possible to be accomplished, but is the representation of actual conditions and the presentation of possibilities all of which can be realized by us here in this Oregon of ours.

"Necessity" of Proposition. "Let us for a little while, as hard headed, practical business men, address ourselves to the question. How shall we get good roads and get them now? First of all it is the necessity of the proposition, so to say, that appeals to most of those who are taking an active interest in this campaign. In say 20 or 30 years from now, few of us will have any personal interest in the highways of this earth.

"No rust and tight thinking man, however, wants to better his physical conditions or contribute to his personal comfort at the expense of posterity. On the contrary, it is the laudable ambition of all right thinking men to make the world a little better because of their having lived in it. If then, as a practical business proposition, some way can be devised by which we can contribute to our present comfort and prosperity by securing for our own while we live, smooth and hard permanent public roads, and at the same time by the same means satisfy our ambition to benefit posterity, every person should cheerfully and energetically join in a common effort to that end.

Deserves Consideration. "Let us not prejudice the question at the outset, nor permit ourselves to be frightened from an impartial consideration of the matter by the floating shadow of some ancient ghost, dragged by imagination from the charnel house of the past. This is an important question—certainly one of the most important before the people of Oregon today—and it deserves and demands the most careful, deliberate and unprejudiced consideration of every person in this state. Having in view these considerations, let us now with frank and open minds try if we can answer this very important question: "How are we to get good roads and get them now?"

"When we thus speak of good roads we really mean the best roads, for our Oregon needs and deserves nothing but the best, and I am of those who believe that there exists here that spirit of loyalty to our state which will demand, and demanding receive nothing but the very best.

Want Best Roads. "Certain it is that if the enthusiastic determination manifested by this organization and its able officers is any index to the temper of the state, nothing but the best and a great deal of it will satisfy the progressive spirit of the people in their demand for road construction and improvement.

"When we speak of permanent roads we mean just what the words imply and all that they imply—smooth, hard highways, as smooth as the floor of this room, and as hard as the rocks from which they are built, roads that will last forever, and upon which can be hauled all your wagons will hold and at all seasons of the year—a system of roads, too, that shall join valley with valley and town with town all over the state and afford every farmer an outlet to his market place and every market place an inlet to the farm.

"First then, and perhaps most important of all, these roads are to be permanent structures—just as the water system and sewage system of the cities are permanent. Being thus permanent they are built for posterity—for generations and generations yet unborn—as well as for us of today. Since, then, we are building these roads for posterity as well as for ourselves it is but fair and right that posterity should assist in paying for them.

Good Roads Great Benefit. "By building these roads now, we shall have the benefit and enjoyment of them while we live, and since they are permanent, those who come after us will equally profit by them. Common fairness of business transaction, therefore demands that a just proportion of the cost of construction should be borne by all of those who are to share in the benefits.

"By the adoption of such an equitable adjustment of the cost of constructing these roads, both ourselves and our descendants shall equally enjoy the profits and benefits of them, and each pay a part of their cost. Living, we shall thus have all the benefits of these roads and pay but a part of the expense, and dying we shall bequeath to posterity these same benefits and advantages, leaving them likewise to pay but a part of the cost of their construction.

"By this method these roads will be worth to use vastly more than they will cost us, and they will be worth to our descendants many times what they will be required to pay toward their construction.

"I believe that it is generally conceded that the state should assist to some extent in the building of these roads.

Advances Reasons. "There are many reasons why this should be done, but I have not the time to discuss that this evening. Suffice

it to say that many, if not most, of the states of the union have adopted one or more forms of state aid, that foreign countries have found it beneficial and effective and that it is endorsed by the common consensus of opinion of those most familiar with its operation and results.

"But just what form of state aid should be adopted at this time in this state is a matter upon which opinions differ and something which should be considered and discussed. One form of state aid is that by which the state should pay one third, the county one third and the property within two miles of the road on each side one third. Such a bill, known as the "Johnson bill," was once passed by our legislature and was vetoed by the governor. This bill was afterwards revised by the committee of legislation of which I have spoken, was introduced in the legislature but failed to pass.

"Another form of state aid that has been suggested is, for the state to appropriate for each county a definite sum of money each year on condition that the county appropriate a like amount (or double that amount as some suggest) and that the whole sum shall be used in building a scientifically constructed permanent road under the direction of the state highway commissioner.

Form of State Aid. "A third form of state aid which is urged with great force and much reason is for the state to appropriate a definite amount to be distributed to the counties in the inverse order of the wealth of the counties. That is, giving to the poorer counties a greater proportion of assistance than those having greater wealth. They could be worked upon some just and fair proportion of distribution which should afford the most help where there was the greatest need for help.

"All these various plans and such others as may be presented should be carefully considered and dispassionately discussed and through the cooperative efforts of the different members and branches of one organization be crystallized into some practical form of legislation and then by our united effort enacted into a law.

"Another form of state aid is that of employing the inmates of our penitentiary in road construction. It is proposed to establish convict camps in various parts of the state for the crushing of rock to be used in making macadam roads. A stone quarry would be selected convenient to river or railroad transportation, which would be indented by a stockade, machine would be employed, and the inmates of the penitentiary, some or more if necessary, employed in the operation of the plant.

Would Employ Prisoners. "It is proposed to thus employ all able bodied prisoners and eight or ten such camps might be thus kept in operation. These camps should be located in different parts of the state so as to readily effect the most equitable distribution of the product of the camps. The crushed rock could be out of competition with free labor and used with much profit to the state and great good to the prisoners themselves.

"And this leads me to the consideration of another convict labor measure which is the last measure of legislation of which I shall speak this evening. You know there is now, and has been since 1896, a law in this state which provides that all persons serving jail sentences in that all persons serving jail sentences in any county can be worked upon the public roads by the order, and under the direction of the county court. Such prisoners have been so worked in Multnomah county for several years in crushing rock for making macadam roads in substantially the same manner as I have just suggested for working convicts in the penitentiary.

Worked by County. "In Multnomah county those serving sentences in the Portland city jail also are, and for several years have been, worked by the county the same as county prisoners. All this is practical and profitable in Multnomah county because there are sufficient prisoners to justify establishing the plants for that purpose; but this is not true of any other county.

"In each of most of the other counties there are a few prisoners most of the time, but in no one county is there enough to justify the expense of thus employing them. It is now proposed to procure a law providing that all persons serving sentences in any town, city or county jail, shall thus be employed in road construction, and that any county which has not enough to justify the expense of providing for their employment may send them to any other county that will take them and so employ them. Under the operation of such a law all prisoners in every county in the state could be concentrated into convict camps in different parts of the state and employed in the profitable and most useful occupation of building permanent roads.

Establish Convict Camps. "The effect of such a law would be to empty all the jails—county, city and town—in the state into convict camps, where they would both profit the state and benefit themselves. When both these convict labor laws shall have been enacted sufficient free labor will be thereby furnished to provide for one convict camp in each or most of the counties in the state.

"This subject of convict labor is a most interesting one from every point of view, and one which is of the greatest importance to the state. To consider it in all its aspects would require a whole evening, and I have only time to merely mention it as a subject which presents urgent need of legislation, and one which is worthy of your most careful thought and earnest consideration. It is a matter in which I have been deeply and actively interested for many years and I have yet to hear the first reasonable objection against the employment of convict labor upon the public roads.

Deals With One Phase. "I have thus far really dealt with but a single phase of this most important

question. I have considered only that part of the advantages of this great system of internal improvement, which has reference to financial advancement, and have left untouched the far more important aspect which has reference to the betterment of the home, to the upbuilding of the school, to the keeping on the farm the boys and girls who are

flocking to the towns and cities in search of social advantages, or what appeal to them as such, and to the general advancement and development of those conditions of life in this world—life on the farm.

"Let us all join together in generous loyalty to our county and state, in one common purpose of devoting our best efforts to the upbuilding of our state with unity valley with valley and town with town by a system of permanent public highways, smooth and firm and hard, and which shall last for ages. Thus shall we gain advantage for ourselves and earn the gratitude of posterity."

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