

SPECIAL BUILDING PERMITS SACRIFICE SAFETY OF PUBLIC

Organization and Operation of City Inspection Department Praised, but Generous Ways of Council Nullifies Work.

(Continued From Page One.)

serious defects in city departments that are directed by boards and commissions. The report today points out that in nearly every instance building material is allowed to occupy more street area than the building code permits, and that there is a confusion of jurisdiction between the engineering, police and building departments that makes it impossible to fix the blame for unenforced laws.

The report gives the building inspector as authority that not a department store in the city complies with the building code, and declares that the council's policy is altogether too "liberal."

Records are called upon to show that 50 per cent more special permits were issued in 1912 than the total of permits from 1905 to 1911. There were 24 special permits in 1912, and a total of 14 from 1905-1911. So far there have been 14 in 1913. Most of these special permits were in violation of fire protection provisions.

It Is Well Organized.

The report also declares that the ordinance governing moving picture theatres is entirely inadequate. It reads as follows:

"Portland has an excellently organized and efficiently operated building department, but the ultimate result obtained is far from desirable. Hard work with no backing means in Portland exactly what it means everywhere else—failure. There are a few minor faults in office methods and inspection control which are now in the process of elimination, but the fundamental difficulties are not in order in the building department itself. No executive backing, frequent overruling by the council, and the lack of definite jurisdiction lines have caused the present condition wherein the building department is forced to operate by policy rather than law, upon personal preference, and not equal rights and privileges to all citizens.

"With no executive board committee, no council committee, no special board (except on appeals) in charge of the administration of the building department, and with the mayor so encumbered with other duties that it is impossible for him to devote adequate time to the work, the building department has almost been running loose. Granted that the present form of government by boards and committees is inefficient, it is certainly better than an organization with no executive board. Backing by an authoritative body or individual has been and always will be most needed in the enforcement of the building code. Too often in the past have various executive officers of the city of Portland suggested without issuing written instructions that the policy of the building department should be liberal in certain cases.

"And entirely too often has the council arbitrarily assumed the administration of various building operations and granted an astonishing number of special permits, sometimes even without referring the question to the building department for preliminary report. It is impossible to expect that the council as such has sufficient technical engineering knowledge to pass judgment intelligently upon applications for building permits. In the more detailed statements which follow in this article, a review is given of various special permits granted by council.

"In more detail, the criticisms on the present method of controlling building construction are as follows:

Office Methods Could Be Improved.

"First—The present inspection organization of this department and the procedure established for the control of building inspection is worthy of mention here as being the only inspection division in Portland's city government properly controlled by means of current reports and comprehensive summaries. We would suggest, however, that complete control over inspection operations necessitates a tickler file as a basis for controlling inspection notices carried by the inspectors in the field. With this slight addition, and with the institution of a copy process in making out duplicate inspection forms and cross reference cards, more complete control could be obtained.

"Second—An analysis of the receipts of the building department develops the fact that charges on building permits are too low, and on electrical permits too high, while no charge whatsoever is made for building material permits. Where one particular individual receives a direct benefit—very often to the distinct disadvantage of the community at large—that permits or licenses should be required to pay for the privilege. Regarding building material permits, we would suggest that a charge be made not only for the cost of issuing the permit and inspecting the work, but also for the use of the street. The many violations of space occupied could not be reduced by requiring everyone using the street as a storage ground to pay a fair rental for such restricted area.

"Third—In making an inspection of various building operations in the city, a surprisingly large number of violations of the building material regulations were noted. Almost invariably building material occupied more street area than is permitted by the provisions of the ordinances. Concrete was being mixed directly on the surface of the pavements and various kinds of building material were piled directly on the pavement surface, absolutely contrary to the provisions of the ordinances, which re-

WOOD WATER PIPE LINE 13 FEET 6 INCHES IN DIAMETER; BIGGEST OF KIND IN WORLD



Views of huge water conveyor at Northwestern Electric company's plant on White Salmon river. Top—Forebay, or surge tank by which flow of water is controlled. Bottom—Section of pipe leading from dam to power house.

The largest wood stave pipe line in the world leads from the 125 foot high concrete dam of the Northwestern Electric company on the White Salmon river, near Underwood, Wash., to the power house a mile down stream, where the head of water backed up by the dam is to generate 20,000 electrical horsepower.

The pipe is 13 feet 6 inches in diameter. From the dam outlet to the point, 170 feet above the power house, it divides into two smaller pipes, each nine feet in diameter which take the water directly down to the power turbines, it is 5100 feet long. The only iron used in its construction is in the form of steel bands, like barrel hoops, which encircle it every few feet.

In fact, the pipe itself is built on the principle of a big wooden barrel without ends. Its sides are formed of staves of Douglas fir in 30 foot lengths.

quire that the pavement shall be protected with plank.

"Supervision over inspection of building material on the street has not been assigned to one department. At the present time, the engineering department is responsible for the condition of the street pavements, the police department responsible for interference with traffic, and the building department for construction proper and protection to pedestrians. With such indefinite jurisdiction lines, it is not surprising that in practically every case, provisions of the ordinance are being violated by the permittee.

"Fourth—Definite jurisdiction is also needed for supervision over signs and bill boards. Whether this responsibility belongs to the building department, to the police or to the city engineer is somewhat of a question. Since the ordinances split the jurisdiction among the departments, supervision is naturally lax and results unsatisfactory. The building department has even been required to report upon the moral effect of the kinds of pictures and posters placed upon various bill boards—hardly a function of a department established for the purpose of controlling building construction. This is another feature which the administrative code provided for in the proposed charter will include.

Need for Controlled Permits.

"Fifth—The permits issued by this department are not treated as official instruments per se. Considering the fact that it is the form, the printing, color and general set up of the permit and not the signature of the head of the department which makes a permit an official instrument in the field, we would suggest for serious consideration that all permit forms be under the control of the central accounting divi-

of building construction, the granting of special permits excepting the applicant to certain provisions of the law is special legislation unquestionably liable to political abuse.

Exceptions Are Serious.

"That these exceptions granted by special permit are serious may be realized from the fact that more than one half the exceptions granted violate provisions of the building code established for fire protection. A resume of the main provisions of a few of the special permits granted in 1912 may emphasize the seriousness of such condition:

Ordinance No. 26,332; name, Mitchell, Lewis & Staver company—Authorizes the remodeling of a frame building to be used as a garage.

26,328, P. C. Lyman—Exempts from enclosing basement stairs with a brick wall and fire door.

26,325, Ardmore Terrace Apartments—Exempts from placing fireproof doors in stairways and substitutes wood.

26,320, Morgan-Bushong Investment company—Exempts from provisions of section 442 of ordinance No. 21,465, reducing number of stairs two to one, on building eight stories high, 100 feet wide and 203 feet long.

26,328—Permits alteration of building

of inferior construction to be used as a garage.

26,987, Pacific Telephone & Telegraph company—Grants authority to construct 15 story building and make use thereof of a system of floor construction not sufficiently strong to meet requirements of building code.

26,982, T. W. C. A.—Permits adding two additional floors to this building, thereby violating provisions of building code respecting six story buildings within fire limits. (This ordinance was refused two years ago by council.)

26,769, Fred Frits—Grants authority to construct wooden floor in second story of building at 245 Burnside street used as a theatre.

1913 Permits.

26,490, Northwestern Fidelity company—Lowers the factor of safety in the wind bracing, etc. Stairways reduced from 3 to 1, fire escapes 4 to 2, and placed improperly. (The actual construction of this building does not even conform to the special permit.)

26,517, Jacob Rosenthal and J. C. Friendly—"To omit wire ribbed floor joists and metal covered wood work in a light opening between first and second floors."

26,620, Mrs. Cramer—Authorized to

construct a sidewalk elevator in excess of the ordinance limits.

28,454, P. J. Stroud—Authorized to construct a frame building in excess of 75 per cent of the lot area.

26,674, Heywood Brothers & Wakefield—Authorized to construct a balcony in violation of the regulations of building code.

26,730, Mead Estate (Holtz Department Store tenants)—Authorized the removal of a sidewalk between first and second floors of a department store.

26,746, James A. Mott—Authorizes the moving of a frame building within the fire limits.

26,753, Morgan, Fieldner & Boyce—Authorizes the use of sidewalk space during the construction of building.

DRINK CURE MANAGER IS GIVEN REVENUE JOB

Washington, April 25.—"From all reports made here this afternoon, this man seems to know a good deal about whiskey and I move that he be confirmed."

This was the characteristic statement of Senator Martine of New Jersey in executive session of the senate to-

ward the end of the discussion of the qualifications of William H. Osborne of North Carolina to be commissioner of internal revenue.

Osborne ran a drink cure establishment for many years. The senate agreed with Senator Martine and he was confirmed.

ROAD MODEL EXHIBIT AT PANAMA EXPOSITION

Washington, April 25.—Among the exhibits at the Panama-Pacific exposition will be the greatest collection of road models ever displayed in any part of the world. Arrangements for the exhibit are now being made by Logan Walter Page, director of the public roads bureau of the department of agriculture.

The aim will be to put on view such striking examples in miniature of road models that visitors will not only appreciate the benefits of improved highways, but will at the same time get an understanding of their construction.

So far, the spring business has certainly not been overdone.

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For the past few weeks the street railway company has had a large force placing the permanent track eastward on Dekum avenue. Its completion, which will be in the next few days, means that you will be able to take a car direct to the heart of Irvington Park Number Three, enjoying the advantage of a seven-minute service.

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