



# Clothing...

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### BAER & DALEY

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It is so popular in some quarters as the criticism of public officials. It always indicates an interest in the public welfare that crowds over into the domain of disinterested patriotism itself, and, of course, should be rewarded with even admiration. Most of such criticism is recalled for and is most welcome to editors, but the right to include in it indiscriminately whether just or not, seems to be one of the inalienable privileges of the American newspaper, and whether it may affect the character of an upright official or the good name of the state, counts as naught. If it seems necessary in order to make a point politically, no public man from Washington to Roosevelt, and on down the line has ever escaped these unwarranted attacks nor probably ever will until the newspapers themselves take a broader view of their duty along this line. A fair criticism, however, is right, just and necessary.

Now, I stand with the public in saying to the papers, always mentioned, who seem to have taken office, as the East Oregonian says, appear to support this office as "partisans" without any constructive criticism. It is just such vicious twaddle as this that breeds suspicion and attempts to cause to cause, their confidence at times, and to a few individuals who appear to have adjusted as a permanent condition the holding of similar staff positions over the state, that there has been no set connected with my official duties since the day of my inauguration to this hour that has not been given to the inspection of every citizen, and that no other three men can be found in the state who are more anxious to have this whole truth connected with every department of the state government known to the general public than are the members of the present state land board.

So, with this out in view, I desire to say to the Dallas paper that I owe a duty to the people of Oregon which requires it at once to comply with its offer and to give it to the result to "turn" the names of members in Wasco and Sherman, committees who have been compelled to pay \$1 and \$1.25 for the same lands that the state is authorized to sell for \$1.25. Make it specific. No only give the names of the men, but also the names of the men who received them to pay it and why. The men connected to be thus robbed. That paper adds that "presumably" the difference between the two sums "goes to the men, the chief as in Penney's case is in the way of the state." If such a charge as this were true it would blot a man's character as charged for all time. Does the paper realize what it is doing? And will it, therefore, give the name of the man meant and what its proof is? If there is a man in the employ of the state land department who receives for his services as such a sum more than is allowed him by law, and if the man who have the proof will furnish it, I will promise that his official head will come off within 20 minutes afterward.

But the East Oregonian wants information also, and Heaven knows it needs it. It uses an entire column in demonstrating this fact, but the substance of it is contained in the following questions:

"Why is it that applicants for the purchase of school lands cannot secure information of the office at Soledad as to whether or not there are any lands for sale?"

"Why is it that when a citizen has any of these lands he must do so through a man connected with the state government?"

The East Oregonian adds that "these are facts" that "they cannot be truthfully denied," and that the questions are asked of the state administration because they suggest "possibilities of collusion and fraud." Very plainly, I deny that as stated, they are facts. The only thing that prevents them from being true is that they are not so. This is not only not true as to school lands, but no man has ever applied to the office at Soledad for the purchase of any kind of land and if he did, he would get all the information that he could possibly get, as connected with the office. Through a whole column of disconnected allegations about the office being "compelled" to pay an "amount equal to \$4

an acre for land "the minimum price of which was set by the legislature at \$2 an acre." Several times above the price of \$2000 per acre, and confusing statements appears the assertion that since purchasers have been compelled to pay and have paid, \$1 an acre, "the two dollar price set by the legislature and the \$2 demanded by the outside man," it follows that the state has been swindled out of \$2 an acre every acre sold, etc. This illustration is made.

"If any school acres be sold, then it is not \$10000 paid by purchasers in addition to the \$10000 that goes to the state treasury, and, finally, where does that \$10000 go and to whom and why?"

All of which goes to show that critics know as little as our minimum prices for the lands as they do about how the law provides for the purchase of school lands. The fact that this disinterested critic does not know anything whatever about the real value of the lands shows that he has never seen the law on the subject and accounts for his sensational revelations.

Let me give him a little history. It will do him no good, but will help others. Within three weeks after my inauguration, on the 2nd of February, 1888, I sent a special message to the legislature, calling the attention of that body to the fact that during the preceding four years the state had sold about 100,000 acres of school lands, which, during the preceding 100 years, had been sold to associations, through what the associations of state lands, but that "a law should be passed at once withdrawing the remainder of this public land from sale altogether, and let the school children of the state, instead of non-residents and other speculators, be the purchasers of the future close to their values." I added that "it may be late to do so," but that the state should do it as soon as possible. In this message it was also recommended that a law be passed providing for the reduction of the rate of interest on school lands from 8 per cent to 5 per cent. Both of these recommendations were enacted into law, and all the lands which were at that time sold, were still unsold and not on the market.

The remaining school sections which could not be sold outright for school lands and which for any reason might revert to the general government and which, therefore, could be used for "base" men which to select "base lands," proved so few and scattered over the state in such remote parts that Hon. T. W. Davenport, the retiring land agent, one of the best qualified and most trustworthy men in the state, recommended that his office be abolished, and that there were so few selections yet to be made that it would not pay the state to incur the expense of advertising the lands necessary for the base, unless other duties were added to it, the latter of which was done.

For the reasons here given the state has not engaged hitherto in hunting "base lands." It is an expensive consideration that the cost of it would come out of the state treasury, since it would reduce the \$2.50 per acre received by so much as the cost per acre for advertisement amounted to.

The East Oregonian says: "Let an inquiry be made. Let the facts be further set forth before the public. Let the truth be known." Exactly so, and it seems to assume that it is doing in a new field. Last January I set all this matter out in the following detail to the legislature, explaining why the state was not engaging in it in advertising mineral sections or other lands that might be used for indemnity selections. The East Oregonian is simply wailing in the dark about, with a little attention to public affairs, it might have had the benefit of the light I turned on nearly a year ago. For its benefit let me quote the following message from my last message to the legislature read to that distinguished body on the 10th of last January:

It will thus be seen that the process necessary to establish the mineral character of school sections is expensive and uncertain. In addition to this there is such a small quantity of it remaining that to undertake its advertisement by an agent of the state would diminish to the extent of its

cost the price to be received for the indemnity lands. Most of the timbered lands selected in lieu of these bases are as easily worth to the purchasers the sum of \$10 per acre as they are for \$2.50, received by the state, and for this reason the state has refused to still further reduce the price of them by adding to their cost. If private parties have wanted the lands badly enough to incur the expense of establishing a base for them, instead of the state doing it, the state has sold such selection and thereby realized the full price of them to the treasury. It is rightly presumed that in all such cases the purchaser knew whether the land was worth enough more to him than the \$2.50 an acre to justify the added expense of furnishing the base, and that in so regarded it or he would not have selected it. The only object the state had in this matter was to secure the full \$2.50 an acre to the treasury, holding that even at this price the purchaser of the land had not paid in most cases more than 75 per cent of its value.

More than two years ago the land board discussed the expediency of raising the price of these lands above the minimum price of \$2.50 an acre, but they are selected from government lands, all of which can be secured in several different ways under the different land laws for that figure, and it was deemed for that reason, however to do so. There is no reason to suppose that the members of the land board have not been as anxious, and even more so, to subscribe the public interest as the average private citizen. All public officials are not self-willed, neither are all honest men in the newspaper business. When they are applied to the chief of the state land board for the purchase of indemnity lands they have been told that the state has no base and that they will have to furnish it themselves. Any citizen of the state anywhere who is so disposed, can go to work at any time in an effort to establish the mineral character of any school section located in any part of the state. It is a perfectly legitimate business and is open to all classes of people. There is no semblance of a monopoly in any feature of it. It is not connected with any other law anywhere that would in any way control him to continue his search "life in a" search for a site, while the opportunity to make a fortune as a land hunter offers beyond his longings goes unimpaired. And for the mineral character of a section is established through the "base" and expense of a citizen, he has no title to the land, but has only secured the information that it is a base, and has made it a matter of record. He changed the land from plain school land worth \$1.25 an acre to mineral land worth \$2.50 an acre. In other words, he has, by an investment of his own time and money, doubled the value of the land to the state, without it costing the state a cent, and through himself has acquired nothing whatever, save the information that it can be used as "base" in the selection of indemnity lands. He will like to mention only to any man he can see who wants it and at such a price as it is presumed as to be worth to them both. It secures all his information through the United States atlas and officials and confers no information or position, of any kind, upon him, directly from the state land board. No man in the state is named in this work, and any connection with the state land department.

So you can sit in an office, or in a field, or elsewhere, and establish the mineral character of a school section, however much this seems to be the opinion of some people. Let someone, therefore, but unacquainted with it, look these same over and its mineral character attested by the affidavit of at least two reputable witnesses, and the list filed with the register and recorder of the district where the lands are located. These officers then issue a hearing public notice of which is given by publication for five consecutive weeks in some newspaper published nearest the lands. If this hearing is favorable, then the matter is still further referred to the commissioner of the general land office at Washington, and must be again approved by that official before its mineral character is established. The "game hunter" has to do this and if he fails he is out his time and money. The right to engage in it is as free as the air—breathing, but the state does not for the reason that the cost of it would come out of the school fund, which is the most sacred of all our trust funds. It is already a question of whether the cost of advertising the remaining scattered mineral sections shall be paid out of the school fund or by the purchasers of the indemnity lands, all of whom are and many of whom are speculators, besides.

That is all there is to it. It is merely a plain business proposition, and the interests of the school fund have been thought of more consequences than the welfare of speculators or even of other purchasers of valuable timber lands which are going at far below what they are actually worth. But if it can be shown that any man connected with the state government is in any way making money out of his position, not directly authorized by law, the state board will take it as a favor if his name be reported promptly and publicly.

T. T. GEER.

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