

Laurgaard Writes of District Plan

O. LAURGAARD IN OREGON JOURNAL

The past irrigation congresses have been of some benefit in solving the problems affecting the arid lands in the eastern counties, but up to the present time, however, no solution to the important problem of financing irrigation projects has been offered by which the results desired have been accomplished. Numerous methods have been endorsed by the previous congresses, but very few have been attempted, either because they were not practicable, feasible or attainable or because sufficient interest and support was not given the subject.

As a practical result of the Oregon Irrigation Congress the appropriation for the state Tomah project was obtained through the 1912 legislature. It is not expected, however, that this form of financing our projects will prove popular even if it should prove practicable and feasible, for the reason that too much local politics would probably enter in the majority of cases, and because too much opposition would be encountered in sections not benefited.

Millage Tax Discussed.
The state millage tax was advocated and endorsed by the last session of the Oregon Irrigation Congress as a method that will prove practicable and immediate for the reclamation of the worthy projects under state control. Although the benefits derived by the state at large through increased valuation would be large and the ultimate return of the principal and interest would be assured it is not believed now that this method can be successfully advocated and carried through to completion for the reason that the taxing power of the state and the center of population is west of the mountains where to a large extent irrigation is not desired or so intensely necessary as for the



O. LAURGAARD.

eastern and central portions of the state. The plan is practical, however, and is as justifiable as a road millage tax which never is returned into the public treasury direct and does not show the immediate result of development and increased assessed valuation that would result from irrigation development.

Other methods such as the state or government underwriting bonds for irrigation projects although desirable from certain views points could not be obtained probably for several years, until the people could be sufficiently educated to pass the necessary legislation.

District Plan Favored.

There appears to be only one logical solution for the irrigation problems in Oregon and the west, and that is the irrigation district idea, backed by some state or federal legislation which would assist in the payment of interest during the construction and the development period. In order to make a success of any irrigation project we must look to the success of the man on the land. Ordinarily the man must be able to provide a living for himself and family in addition to paying for the water and improvements on the land before success can be proclaimed. Under private irrigation, the Carey Act or the various other forms attempted in the past it is usual not only to charge a large cash first payment, but it is also necessary for the settler to pay interest and maintenance fees. In addition he is required to build a cabin, build fence, clear his land, purchase stock and otherwise improve his farm. Under ordinary circumstances the man who has sufficient capital to accomplish all of these things would have very little desire or would be attracted only to a small degree by the investment in an irrigated farm in Oregon. It is the man with the small means but with an abundance of physical energy and ambition that must be placed on the land.

In order to make a success of the new settler with small means, but with a capacity for work, it will become necessary to place him on the land with no first cash payment no principal payments for a long term of years—say 20—and no interest charges for a period of from four to five years.

Must Aid Settler.

Such a program must be conducive to the success of a rancher who could employ his time and labor clearing his land, improving his place and becoming settled on a self sup-

porting basis before he is harrassed with interest charges or worried with payments of principal.

The irrigation idea offers these opportunities as far as principal is concerned, providing the bonds which are offered by the district find a sale, but the interest must be met during the construction as well as the development period.

The district also applies the principle that the land reclaimed must pay eventually for the benefits received and no other section of the state or community or any other person will ultimately be obligated to pay for the development of the lands in which he is not directly financially interested.

A bill which was introduced into congress during its last session (Senate Bill 6827) by Wesley L. Jones of Washington, provides for the guarantee by the government for the interest on irrigation district bonds after a project has received the careful consideration and approval of the secretary of the interior. The Jones bill, if passed, will have the effect of providing uniform irrigation district laws throughout the western states.

Bill is Discussed.

Although Oregon and Washington at the present time have very satisfactory irrigation district laws other states have not advanced to the same degree, thus whenever irrigation district securities are offered an explanation must be made as to the direct merits of the particular bonds. Furthermore, the passage of the Jones bill, it is believed, would create a ready market for this class of security and in time would probably eliminate any other form of irrigation security. From a reliable source it is estimated that from \$75,000,000 to \$100,000,000 can be judicially expended in each of the two states, Oregon and Washington, on irrigation development alone, which will give some idea of the enormous development possible under the district plan assisted by the passage of the Jones bill.

The enactment of this bill into a law does not mean that the money would be appropriated from the federal treasury but would only provide for the payment by the government of such portions of the interest as would be in default by some districts. It is possible that arrangements could be made whereby the amount

available annually from the reclamation service can be made available for this purpose.

Uniform Plan Preferred.

Could the entire amount, say \$7,000,000 or \$8,000,000 which is available annually be made available for this purpose the government alone could pay interest on a fund of practically \$1,000,000,000 principal even if all interest should be met by the government.

Furthermore federal or state supervision of the construction of the district projects would further eliminate the objection that in many cases the members of the district board of directors are not business men nor qualified to handle the expenditure of large sums of money in a short time.

The Oregon Irrigation Congress should, in my opinion, concentrate its efforts on some one sound plan of action and exert every effort to bring about relief to the many sections of Oregon, the development of which means so much to the balance of the state and the city of Portland.

Merry Christmas.

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Merry Christmas.

DEPARTMENT ISSUES SUMMARY OF CROP ESTIMATES

Figures Given for Oregon and the United States—Quantity Greater, Prices Less Than Last Year.

WASHINGTON, D. C., Dec. 17.—A summary of estimates of crop production and prices for the State of Oregon and for the United States, compiled by the Bureau of Crop Estimates (and transmitted through the Weather Bureau), U. S. Department of Agriculture, is as follows:

Crop production in the State this year aggregates in quantity about 17 per cent more than last year. Prices on December 1 average eight per cent lower than a year ago, making total value of crop production, on this basis, about eight per cent less than last year. The estimates are based upon those crops whose values in the last complete crop census represented 68 per cent of the value of all crops.

For the United States production this year aggregates in quantity about nine per cent more than last year. Prices December 1 average one per cent lower than a year ago, making a total value of crop production on this basis about eight per cent less than last year; these estimates are based upon crops whose value in the last complete crop census represented 85 per cent of the value of all

crops grown, and may be regarded as representative of all crops.

Estimates for important crops are given below: Acreage and production in thousands, i. e., 000 omitted. Column (1) acreage; column (2) production; column (3) price Dec. 1, cents.

Oregon.			
Crops—	(1)	(2)	(3)
Corn, bu.	15	23	1,160
.....	14	23	650
Wheat, bu.	15	900	20,000
.....	14	799	16,604
Oats, bu.	15	365	16,100
.....	14	364	12,740
Barley, bu.	15	130	4,680
.....	14	122	3,860
Rye, bu.	15	21	414
.....	14	21	336
Potatoes, bu.	15	48	6,520
.....	14	49	4,753
Hay, tons	15	850	1,870
.....	14	858	1,716

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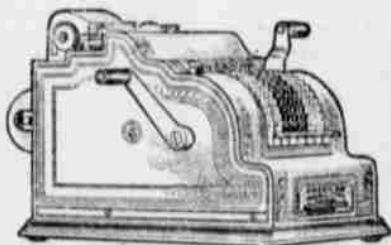
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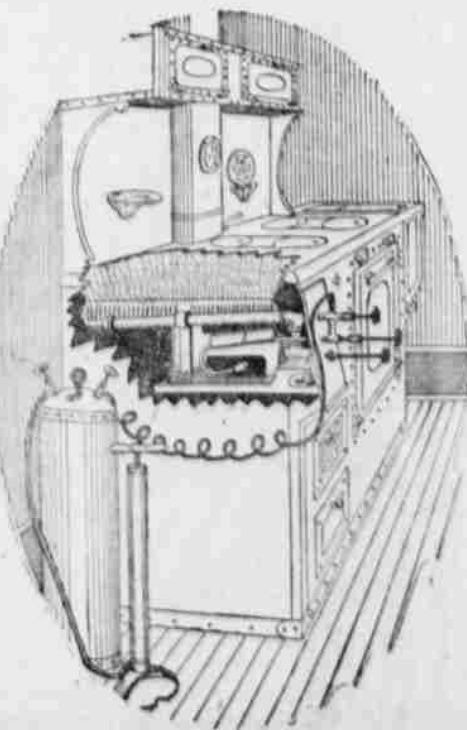
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