

ROBERT E. STRAHORN DISCUSSES IRRIGATION NEEDS OF CENTRAL OREGON AT SALEM CONFERENCE

SALEM, March 10.—The big speech delivered at the State aid conference here—at least the paper which fairly may be said to have received the most respectful attention was delivered by Robert E. Strahorn.

Certainly Mr. Strahorn more nearly represented the east-of-the-mountain country than anyone else. He fought its battle to the best of his ability, and because of what he said is of special interest to everyone in this country. The Bulletin prints below Mr. Strahorn's complete speech, excepting that portion devoted exclusively to drainage:

"I have no thought or authority to speak for any railway interest except the one so near my heart in Central Oregon. However, bearing in mind that thousands of miles of railways are largely dependent for revenue upon privately irrigated lands, that the crops grown in 1914 on Government reclamation projects alone, totaled 130,000 carloads, and that the prosperity, improvement and extension of our transportation systems are so dependent upon the working out of these development problems, I will necessarily indulge in observations involving them generally.

"With the Southern Pacific's loss of over \$1,000,000 from operation of its Oregon lines last year, with smaller though more important losses by the Hill systems in Oregon, and largely diminished earnings on the Oregon lines of other roads, in spite of their important outlays for betterments of a class from which no additional earnings can be expected, and in view of their now almost unbearable load of taxation they are no doubt all casting around anxiously for some means of relief. May they not find an important measure of this in the matter we are here to seriously consider, and I trust, to wisely promote?"

"I cannot imagine the creation from any single source of such a tide of prosperity as would spring from the doubling of the productivity of Western Oregon's 3,000,000 acres of wet lands. The accruing benefits would seem to be cut of all proportion to cost. (Mr. Strahorn here went into the drainage problem and its possibilities in detail.)

Irrigation Needs Similar.

"What is said of drainage in Western Oregon applies with considerable force to irrigation. As is well known such areas as those along the east side of the Willamette valley as far south as Eugene, an important part of the McKenzie valley and much of the Rogue river and Umpqua valleys suffer from deficiency in moisture, and could be made vastly more productive by a moderate amount of irrigation which in these cases can be applied at a minimum of expense. Like the drainage areas the lands are all settled, many well improved, and now being worth from \$50 to \$50 or more per acre, would be ideal security for the capital necessary to reclaim them.

The reclamation problem in Central Oregon and most of eastern Oregon is relatively more important than west of the Cascades. Over there we are not blessed with the large areas of land which are naturally productive. We must sink or swim by reclamation of some sort almost everywhere. Dry land farming alone and the measure of reclamation by irrigation and drainage now existing will not warrant any considerable ad-



Robert E. Strahorn

ditional settlement, because it will not warrant the additional transportation facilities necessary to make the country economically or comfortably habitable.

"What this means to the State of Oregon and to our country may be appreciated from the fact that in five counties of Central Oregon alone, with which I am now chiefly concerned, there are roughly 10,000,000 acres of tillable land, an area as large as Massachusetts and New Jersey combined, of which only a little over 10 per cent is cultivated. At least half of the land returned as cultivated is natural hay land, leaving only about five per cent of the tillable land actually cultivated. A large proportion of these hay lands produced less than a ton per acre and most of them need drainage, with which, and cultivation to proper crops they would yield from three to ten times their present food product, according to the crop used.

"Including existing irrigated lands there are in those five counties about 1,000,000 acres of arid or irrigable lands for which an adequate water supply can be obtained, and about 400,000 acres of marsh lands which can be drained and afterwards irrigated, often at reasonable cost.

"There are some areas whose cost of reclamation would under present conditions be excessive. But easily one-fourth of the 1,000,000 acres are included in projects irrigable at \$25 to \$50 per acre where sufficient settlement and development has taken place to make reclamation very desirable and financially safe under present conditions.

Means General Activity.

"Such a comparatively small developed area would give us increased production, population and general activity equal to Yakima Valley with its 100,000 people, its numerous railroads and many towns of from 1,000 to 20,000 highly prosperous inhabitants each. Most of the marsh

lands could be reclaimed on an equally conservative basis. They are among the richest lands in the world. They are also particularly inviting because of the under surface moisture which in such situations is usually present.

"The eight or nine millions of acres of dry farming lands separating these arid and marsh lands might as well be in the midst of Sahara so far as their further development is concerned. Until the arid and marsh lands with their large possibilities of intensive cultivation, heavy yield and much larger proportionate population are put in the way of reclamation there can be little hope of railway extension.

"The dry farming lands, although a vast potential asset on account of the millions of bushels of grain they will ultimately produce, will not with their much lighter yield alone coax capital during these trying times into such an unattractive investment as railway building.

"No man, no matter how deserving or what his possessions or product may be, can borrow any money at any rate of interest even in the best communities of that dry belt. I recall one valley in a favored part of which there are 27 schools and where some farms produced as high as 12,000 bushels of wheat last year. More of them want to do the same and they need a modest amount of financing to do it. I have spent days in Portland and Spokane earnestly endeavoring to get money for some of the best of those people on what I call the best security in the world, a real working family, good farm and everything they have with it, but could not even at 10%. I appeal to you men from the wet belts or the irrigated belts who are more comfortably situated, that there is something wrong about this.

"Those pioneers over there have a right to live and enjoy the fruits of their work and to be considered as

cause some projects which have been mentioned are unsafe and undeserving. Also because we have thousands of acres of logged off lands and other lands unoccupied.

"The 100 per cent margin necessarily loaded upon Carey Act projects, the excessive costs per acre, terms of payment and other conditions affecting Government projects and the impossible terms of various kinds affecting private or corporation projects, ought to be a sufficient answer to the first proposition. If we cannot discriminate, profit by past experience and discard the manifestly unsound project and administer such a trust honestly, wisely and discreetly, as thousands of other trusts are administered, then I am unable to answer the second objection. The impractical and unworthy enterprises we have with us always, but this does not deter use from proceeding with those which appeal to sound reason and ripe experience.

"As to the present abundance of other lands for settlement. Can we really offer them of a nature and on terms within the reach of the man and family who must start in with their bare hands? I think not.

"We no longer have that type of pioneer who without a dollar of capital can be expected to acquire and make productive the cheapest Willamette valley logged off lands anywhere. Without decrying the settlement of logged off lands we all know that it costs vastly more money and effort to make a start on them than on even the most expensively irrigated or drained lands. In my opinion the State would make a frightful mistake in undertaking the great expense of clearing them. There are many deserving families who would

make a success, with modest assistance by rural credit, on lands reclaimed and sold on proper terms, which the district's credit backed by the State's credit could safely offer. Canada gets from one to two hundred thousand of our best bone and sinew annually by giving every man who is a worker such a start whether he has a dollar or not.

Carey Act Benefits.

"Whatever may be said about Carey Act projects it must not be forgotten that they have been chiefly responsible for the increase of 6000 people and a valuation of over \$3,000,000 of farms in Crook county alone. Also, that in spite of the untoward conditions recently prevailing of the 70,000 acres reclaimed 50,000 acres have been actually sold.

"If this could be accomplished during the hardest period for such projects within our memory and under

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Tuxedo's Grip by Walt Mason

Tuxedo is the gripping smoke, a boon to every buyer; you take your pipe of English oak, of meerschaum, clay or briar, and fill it with the fragrant weed, the choicest man can gather; and then you have a smoke, indeed; and are you glad? Well, rather. Tuxedo has no kick or bite, suggests no "in'ning after;" its mission is to bring delight, and fill your heart with laughter. It caught the sunshine of the south, when it was green and growing, and brings that sunshine to your mouth, when out the smoke you're blowing. "Tuxedo's in a class alone," its smokers are declaring; "it has a fragrance all its own, that baffles all comparing." And thus it



grips the men who smoke, and holds their true affection; their trusty briar pipes they stoke, and never know dejection. Walt Mason