

COMMERCIAL CONGRESS PLANS
FOR POST BELLEUM CAMPAIGN

(United Press Staff Correspondent.)

NORFOLK, Va., Dec. 11.—With "the changed outlook," produced by the European war, as its theme, the Southern Commercial congress convened here today and will go thoroughly into the question of commercial preparedness to meet the anticipated cut-throat competition from across the waters with the return of peace.

Economic, financial, agricultural and commercial phases of the problem will be discussed by experts from this country and abroad. A number of the most notable men of the country are scheduled to address the congress.

DISTRICT PLAN BEST

(Continued from Page 1.)

this plan, and as the settlers are so good as to think kindly of his humble opinion, he has made a careful study of the situation, and hereby respectfully presents his views for their consideration.

The time is now but six months off when the present system by contract may be turned over to a corporation of water users. Also in 1918 list 6 expires and in 1920 list 19 expires and all unpatented and unsold lands in these two lists revert to the government and in due time will be thrown open to entry under the regular land laws. When you come to think of it, these dates are mighty close at hand and are full of much consequence to the settler. It therefore behooves the settlers to get together on some plan whereby they can most effectively protect their interests.

Before developing the District plan of organization, let us take a look at the contract provisions for transfer of control of the project to the settlers after June 17, 1917.

Page 85 of the Desert Land Board Report for 1911, paragraph 12:

"The party of the first part (The C. O. I. company, successor in interest to the D. I. P. Co.) hereby agrees that it will turn over in reasonably good condition and repair and free from all encumbrances * * * all reclamation works * * * to a corporation of water users after 10 years from the date hereof (June 17, 1917) provided that such corporation of water users shall have been duly and legally organized under the approval of the State Land Board."

(It may be noted in passing that the contract does not specify how soon after the 10 years from its date the company is to turn over the system to the settlers.)

* * * the total number of shares in such corporation authorized to be issued shall be equal to the entire number of irrigable acres in said Pilot Butte and Oregon Irrigation Co. segregations. They party of the first part (the C. O. I. Co.) shall hold shares equal to the number irrigable acres then unsold or unpaid for at the time said irrigation works are turned over to said water users corporation, and also the number of shares equal to the number of acres heretofore sold and upon which the party of the first part has a per-

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petual lien for maintenance unless the owner shall have contracted or paid for the release of such maintenance lien as hereinbefore stated."

The Voting Interests.

It is here seen that even after that indefinite date when the settlers should have control of the irrigation works, the company will retain such voting interest in the water users corporation as represented by the following acreage:

1st: Unsold lands, some 50,000 acres.

2nd: Lands unpaid for, amount unknown.

3rd: Lands contracted for under old forms 1 and 2, which have a perpetual maintenance fee of \$1 per acre per year, amount to about 23,000 acres.

Since the amount of acres sold under form 3 contract is in the neighborhood of 16,000 acres, it is reasonable to suppose that the settlers on the project, even with all contracts paid up, with no back maintenance fees, would not have sufficient voting power to do anything contrary to the desires of the company, who seemingly, would have about four and one-half votes to the settlers' one.

Should the settlers desire to own

and control the irrigation system completely, it is evident that the company interests outlined above must be acquired.

District Plan Offers Solution.

What the settlers need, in my opinion, is an opportunity to pull themselves out of an unpleasant situation, and that opportunity is offered in the Irrigation District plan, but I suggest to limit the plan to the brief outline below.

The district should include at present the contract holders under the Central Oregon Irrigation Company's constructed canals.

The raising of funds should be confined to the following purposes:

First: To the purchase from the Central Oregon Irrigation Company such water rights and properties as will insure the absolute control of all irrigation works in the hands of the district. 2nd: To taking up of all outstanding notes and unpaid liens of the present settlers, replacing them with district bonds maturing at 30 years, bearing 6 per cent interest, or moneys raised by sale of these bonds. 3rd: To such reconstruction and betterment of canals, headgates and ditches as may be considered immediately necessary to insure continuous and sufficient water for all users. 4th: To operate and maintain their own irrigation system and to defray the ordinary running expenses of the district.

Many other advantages may result from the district organization which may properly be called "by-products" as, for instance, the far better position the settler would be in to deal with the Federal government or the State in matters affecting the community at large. By cooperation with the O. A. C. and the Bureau of Markets of the U. S. Department of Agriculture, the settlers may be able to secure better prices for their crops. Other things will suggest themselves as the organization progresses.

Necessary to Acquire Rights.

But to return to the main object. It will be necessary to acquire from the Central Oregon Irrigation Company their rights to the use of the water of Deschutes river, certain interests in the North Canal Dam and Canal, the rights the company has in the unsold lands and other matters. This involves a careful valuation of property and the employment of legal and business engineering skill of high order, as some of these unsold

lands are reclaimed and some are not. The details of this procedure have yet to be worked out, but the problems appear to present no difficulties which a district organization could not overcome.

Also it will be necessary to consider ways and means of adjusting the lands belonging to the holders of forms 1 and 8 contracts, so that all lands be on the same basis in the control of the district. Arrangements must be made for taking care of the unpaid balances of liens and for redeeming settlers' notes and unpaid maintenance fees.

It would be a distinct advantage to the settlers to have their obligations to the company which are payable in 4 and 5 years and subject to more or less disturbances in the event of changes in management or in ownership of the company transferable to bonds at 6 per cent, maturing in 30 years, interest and principal collected as county taxes are collected.

It would also be a distinct advantage to the company that all notes and outstanding bills receivable be transferred to district bonds, the collection of which they are not burdened with. These bonds in a short time under good management of the district should become a readily marketable security.

Financing Made Easier.

Any improvements to the system, such as rebuilding the large flumes in the DeChutes canyon south of Bend, installation of concrete and steel gates and weirs (a much less expensive proposition than it sounds to the average man) or any other betterments, may be financed with much greater ease through the district plan proposed.

The general provisions for the organization of an Irrigation District as abstracted from Chapter 189, General Laws of Oregon for 1915, are briefly outlined below.

Fifty or a majority of land holders can propose the organization of an irrigation district which shall have powers very much as a municipality.

They must present a petition to the county court, together with a bond equal to double the amount of the probable cost of organizing the district, the bondsmen to pay all costs should the district fail to be organized.

Details of District Plan.

The court shall then hold a hearing on the matter to determine the boundaries, etc.

The court is to divide the district into five sections of as nearly equal size as practical and each section or division is to elect a director who must be a resident of Oregon and a bona fide owner of land within the division. The court may order, on petition of a majority of land holders, that there be three directors instead of five and that they be elected by the district at large.)

An election is then to be held to determine whether or not the dis-

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