

# THE LANE COUNTY NEWS

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And Remember to Get a Stop-Over for Springfield.

SPRINGFIELD, OREGON, THURSDAY, AUGUST 5, 1915.

## NOT THE SYSTEM, BUT THE MEN.

With all these new fads and fancies in municipal government there will be no marked improvement unless men of exceptional ability and integrity are selected to fill the offices, which is proof conclusive that it is not the system, but the men who administer it that makes good city government.—Vancouver, Wash., Columbian.

The character of the officials is indeed the determining factor in the question of good or of bad municipal government. The commission plan or the city manager plan offer systems that make it easier for efficient men to get the city's work well done. Galveston, Dayton, Des Moines and a dozen other cities are cited as successful examples of the commission or the city manager form of government. The claim is made that the city manager of La Grande, Oregon, saved the city \$35,000 the first year he was in office. On the other hand complaints are arising that the cost of government of Portland has vastly increased under the commission plan.

We are of the opinion that the good results, where the results have been good, have been due to the strong ability of the men placed in charge, and, furthermore, to the keener interest taken in municipal affairs by citizens generally following the radical change in the handling of city affairs.

Then, too, claims of vast reductions in the cost of running a city need to be explained. The reduction may have been brought about by the curtailing of some necessary public function; it may mean that public improvements, paid for by bond issues, are compared with another year's activities in which there were none of these improvements. The question is not how large amount of reduction in cost was made, but how much of a reduction in the tax levy was possible, while outstanding obligations are being reduced.

That charter forms are more or less immaterial when a set of officials determines upon an economical administration is evidenced by the city of Staunton, Virginia. The charter provides for the old-style mayor-and-council government, with the usual number of standing committees. These committees were named, in accordance with the charter, but their work consisted largely in ratifying the actions of the city manager—the first one, by the way, in the United States.

## PANAMA CANAL'S FIRST YEAR

The Panama Canal started operation under the handicap of the war as well as under that other handicap inseparable from new undertakings, but its earnings in the first year, from July 1, 1914, to July 1, 1915, exceeded expenses by about \$224,000, the earnings having been \$4,424,306 and the cost of operation and maintenance \$4,400,000. This balance falls far short of paying interest on the cost, which, at 3 per cent on \$400,000,000 would be \$12,000,000, but traffic will doubtless increase this year and when the war ends the estimate of \$10,500,000 a year made by Prof. Emery R. Johnson for the first year may be reached or exceeded.

The canal's showing impresses on us one of the strongest

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objections to Government ownership of those public works which should pay their way. Had any private corporation invested \$4,000,000 and shown net earnings over cost of operation amounting only to \$2240, gloom would have spread from the directors down to the small stockholder, and there would have been talk of a receiver. The promoters could not have raised the money without a better prospect than this. The Canal can dig into the Treasury for interest on its bonds, but the railroads, which in April had a net operating revenue of \$65,866,046, had to begin by paying out of that sum \$11,106,959 for taxes, and the larger part of the remainder went for interest on bonds.

The Canal was built as a matter of national policy, not with a view to its earning interest on its cost from the start, but there is not the same defense for other enterprises which the government is asked to undertake. The ability to collect taxes to pay for any scheme it adopts makes Congress unbusinesslike in adopting public work and it makes officials wasteful in managing them. The best safeguards for good judgment and economy are a hard headed board of directors, and the necessity for paying interest.—Oregonian.

## CRYSTALIZING PUBLIC SENTIMENT.

Out of the many plans that are being offered for the advice of congress in its legislation on the Oregon & California land grant case, gradually is coming the view that there are certain broad claims that are entitled to a hearing, no matter what particular plan is adopted.

First of all, is Oregon's claim that these lands, now subject to taxation, should not be alienated from the tax rolls. Already a goodly portion of the counties in which these lands are located is reserved by the federal government for its timber. To increase these reserves would lessen the counties' resources without in any way lessening their obligations in the matter of roads and schools and preservation of the peace.

Another point that is being brought to the fore is the variable character of the lands. Some are valueless; some are valuable, the average approximating \$10 an acre. Some of the lands are suitable for farming, some have valuable timber. Some of the timbered land will be useful for farms after the timber is gone; some is valuable only for its timber and once that is cut, the acreage will be valueless.

Out of the conception of the character of the lands within the grant comes two propositions:

The lands should be sold to those who will utilize them—not necessarily to settlers, for there are lands there which are valuable, but not to farmers.

The lands should be sold at approximately their market value. To sell at an arbitrary price like \$2.50 an acre would be to invite a scramble for the valuable lands, and involve the grave likelihood of serious scandals.

Based upon these principles, together with others that may be worked out, some plan ought to be formulated that will carry a measure of justice to the railroads, to the counties affected, to the state of Oregon and to the nation.

"Humanity First" is the American doctrine that irritates European militarists as much as does the Monroe doctrine.

Among the horrors of civilization is Philadelphia's newly coined word "Jitneur," applied to the driver of a jitney bus.

One fancies that a rousing Christian Endeavor convention in a European capital would do some good.

While the inventors are inventing they might invent some cheap and sane substitute for war.

Salem, Aug. 2.—100 men are now at work grading railroad from Grants Pass to Hays Hill.

The \$1,250,000 S. P. bridge across Coos Bay is to be done by Oct 1st.

Work has begun on the Valley and Siletz railroad from Arlio to Independence.

Plans are on foot to establish a paper mill at Albany. Spinach raising has become a big industry near Gervais this year.

Construction on the first part of \$100,000 improvements at Winino Hot Mineral Spring, 35 miles from Eugene has been started.

Hubbard voted bonds for \$15,000 high school.

It is announced that capital has been secured to finish ce-

ment plant at Gold Hill.

Many hoppers are in demand in Willamette Valley for next month.

The Columbia River salmon run this year is the best on record.

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