

# The Santiam News

Politically Independent

Entered at the postoffice at Scio, Oregon, as second-class mail matter.

PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY BY

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EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

## SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

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|-----------------------------|--------|
| One year in advance         | \$1.25 |
| One year, at end of year    | 1.50   |
| One year, at end of 2 years | 1.75   |
| One year, at end of 3 years | 2.00   |
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## HONESTY WITH THE PUBLIC IS THE AIM

THE COLLECTION and disbursement of public money, in Oregon, has become an immense business proposition. When we consider the state, school, county, municipal and road taxes, the aggregate amount becomes almost appalling. No private business in the state is so great, if we except the railroads. In collecting and disbursing such large sums of money, it would be most extraordinary if there were not leaks and extravagancies somewhere. Nor has there yet been discovered a system of public expenditures in which public officials have not found some means of grafting and are careless in spending public funds. Nor has there yet been discovered a method of assessment and collecting of taxes, by or through which all classes of property is assessed in an equitable manner and is made to bear its just proportion of the burden of government.

Because of this fact, there is a constant endeavor on the part of honest taxpayers and honest public officials to devise laws which will cause grafting officials and dodging taxpayers to be honest and true in shouldering public burdens, in the execution of public duties and in the expenditure of public funds.

To ascertain if public funds are applied to the purposes intended by the people in an honest and economical manner, frequent experting of the accounts of public officials are made. But, too often do these experts perform their experting in a perfunctory manner. If the expert happens to be a grafter, it is an easy matter to so balance the accounts of a public official that grafts and extravagancies are concealed until the statute of limitation has made the offender immune of punishment, when the discovery is made. The public then may reimburse the loss, but the criminal escapes all punishment.

Such a discovery was made a few years ago in the matter of Geo. W. Davis, who was then clerk of the State School Land board. Three years after the school fund was depleted, by him, of over \$30,000, the shortage was discovered. The shortage was, probably, discovered long before the three years had expired, but Davis had sufficient political influence to keep the fact quiet until he was safe from punishment. Now had the political control of the state been transferred to the opposing political party, Davis would, probably, have been convicted and punished as he deserved. But the same party remained in power and the Davis shortage was conveniently forgotten until the statute of limitation made him immune of punishment. To reach criminals of this class, either the three years limit to prosecution for such crimes should be removed, or there should be frequent changes in the political control of the state.

At the late election a new tax law was enacted which, practically, revolutionizes the method of levying and collection of taxes. The new law empowers each county to regulate and devise its own method of assessment and collection of taxes. It establishes home rule for the county upon the tax question. The success or failure of the new law is yet in the future. If it results in a more equitable method of assessment—if it causes property owners to be more honest in their reports to the assessor, the law will be a success and of benefit to the honest taxpayer. Otherwise not.

As an illustration how property owners neglect to truthfully report their holdings to the assessor, the tax rolls of the present year afford a glaring example. Under the head of "Money, Notes and Accounts," the roll shows that the people of Linn county have less than \$200,000 in cash on hand. The statement of the various banks of the county, show that the people have deposits of more than \$2,000,000. The inference to be deducted from this great discrepancy is that all men are liars about the time when the assessor makes his annual visit. A few years ago, an Albany lawyer was elected county judge. Prior thereto, a client, for whom he had done much business, in making his return of property to the assessor, reported but a trifling amount of money. The new judge, when examining the new tax rolls, discovered this fact. He at once cited this tax dodger to appear and show cause why his assessment should not be raised \$50,000. The client knew that he had the money and that the judge knew he had it. The raise stood and the client narrowly missed a criminal prosecution.

These examples of graft and taxdodging are referred merely to show, that when dealing with or for the public, men are less honest than when dealing with private individuals. They seem to think that when serving the public in an official capacity that it is their privilege to render the least possible amount of service and to exact the largest possible amount of pay. Even then some of them, too many, are not satisfied. They add to their salaries by every hook and crook and because of thus adding to their salaries in an unlawful way, they are called grafters. Such officials seem to regard the public treasury as a sort of bird to be by them, plucked at will.

The result is, derelict officials are responsible for the enactment of our direct primary law. Long drawn out contests by our legislature in the election of United States senators, caused the adoption of Statement No. 1. The refusal of the legislature to enact laws demanded by the people, is responsible for the initiative method of law making, and reckless and vicious appropriation of public money, by that body, has given us the referendum.

It can thus be seen that the people are constantly endeavoring to formulate laws which will make wrong doing on the part of the official more hazzardous and the punishment more certain and severe. Also, to make the ways of the taxdodger less easy.

However, as a rule, officials are honest and most men give a truthful return of their property to the assessor; especially if the property be visible. But there are others whose memories are very treacherous when in the presence of the assessor, and there are officials who never fail to graft the public when opportunity serves. It is such people as those last mentioned, who are the cause of the constantly increasing severity of the laws. The honest man does not require severe criminal laws to cause him to do right. He does right, not from hope of reward nor fear of punishment; but because it is right to do right. It is a matter of principle with him.

But as we have murders, thieves, dishonest officials and taxdodgers, we are compelled to devise laws of such severity, that wrong doing is reduced to a minimum. It is the dishonest and wrong doing people of the world who cause most of the trouble and most of the expense of government.

Our school board has arranged for a Lyceum course of entertainments, to be given, presumably, at the public school auditorium during the present winter, the first one of which is booked for the last of the present month. These entertainments are to be given by the best talent the country affords. The school board had to guarantee a stated sum, which is near \$500, to obtain the entertainments for Scio and the only method to obtain this amount, is through the sale of tickets for the course. The price of tickets for the entire course is only \$2 each. But, we are told, the tickets are not meeting with ready sale. Surely there are 225 people in Scio who will wish to attend the course and will come forward and purchase tickets. Unless something near the guaranteed sum is raised, the dates will have to be cancelled and Scio will miss the opportunity of hearing these really excellent artists.

Gradually the public is being forced to conclude that ex-President Roosevelt is of the "has been" class. A politician who blows hot air in one state and cold in another, is sure to come to grief in time. Mr. Roosevelt undertook what he now knows was an impossible feat in forcing upon the people of New York, a governor whom they did not wish. The feat proved an ignominious failure and many people are concluding that the ex-president can't come back.

# The Evening Telegram

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Write your letter and mail your check, postal or money order for \$3.50 at once as paper starts immediately, so the sooner you subscribe the more you get for your money. If you are already a subscriber, send The Telegram to your friends for a Christmas present.

The Telegram is a superb metropolitan evening newspaper, publishing the full leased wire reports of the Associated Press, furnishing all the news of the Pacific Northwest and the world. Its market reports are unexcelled. Its sports are up to date and written in good style. Saturday it runs a special magazine section and a four page comic, both in colors.

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The Weekly Santiam News and The Daily Telegram, Both Papers One Year For \$4.00 Subscriptions Received at The News Office

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