

The Santiam News

Politically Independent

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THE TAX PROBLEM

WHEN MEN PAY MONEY they expect to receive or have received, value or what they consider would be value therefor. If what is received is more than the sum paid, the margin above cost is regarded as profit, if less, a loss is scored. But there are many payments of money, wherein no direct return is expected. Notably is this true of the payment of tax moneys, in any form in which they are made; yet we expect to receive, indirectly if you please, an equitable return therefor. The citizen is required to pay quite a sum of money annually for the support of city, county, state and national governments. If he is frugal and energetic and thereby has accumulated property, he is required to pay more than if he had been profligate and the proverbial "rolling stone." But for the money he pays the tax collector, he expects to have the title to his property protected, to have better schools and better roads. In return for this money the benefit is both indirect and direct.

We know that our various governments to be conducted acceptably to the people, must have officials who are capable and trustworthy and who are required to devote their entire time to the matter. Of course they must be paid to do this work and, in most cases at the present time, the pay is liberal. For the benefit of society, we must maintain penal and eleemosynary institutions. Taxpayers may regard the return in each of these instances as being direct; for we do not want criminals nor crazy people running at large. So, also, in the case of our public schools and roads, the benefit being immediate and direct. But much of the state's revenues are paid for purposes which are not direct and the taxpayers have to draw largely upon their imaginations if they can figure out any benefit whatever.

It is difficult to figure out wherein the average taxpayer is receiving benefit for the sum annually expended in the support of our national guard. True, the large brick buildings in various cities and towns erected at public expense in whole or in part, are quite convenient for public assemblies, etc., but the guard itself is of no benefit whatever to the state at large. We know that the trained soldier in time of war is a valuable dependence to the country; but two or three weeks training of our farmer boys creates an army able to withstand foes, either within or without. History shows that the average American taxpayer can be converted into a trained soldier in less time than the citizen of any other land in the world. For this reason, the expense of maintaining a national guard and expensive brick and stone armories, is a profligate waste of the people's money. The taxpayer gets the very smallest possible return for money expended for this purpose.

Then the very large sums we are expending annually for our state colleges, is a matter in which the taxpayer has to draw largely upon his imagination to figure out that he receives any benefit. Our last legislature appropriated just about one-fourth of the state's revenues for our three recognized state colleges. If we base this expense upon the average finished product of these colleges, we find that each graduate is costing the state about \$2000. True, there are many students who do not complete the required course of instruction to reach graduation, for they cannot afford the expense; nevertheless what the state

supplies is supposed to be free. And, in the case of the Oregon Agricultural college, an experiment station is maintained and a farmers short course in agriculture, dairying, etc. is given, from which some small benefit is derived. Yet the knowledge gained therefrom is almost infinitesimal when compared to the people of the whole state. Any intelligent farmer can and does work out these results and, in many instances, better than do our high salaried professors at O. A. C. Indeed, we can point out specialists in agriculture, horticulture, dairying, stockbreeding, etc., who never saw the inside of an agricultural college as a student, who can give these high salaried gentlemen cards and spades in their particular line of industry.

Anyway, wherein is the graduate of the State University, O. A. C. or Monmouth more valuable to the state or society than is the graduate of Willamette or Pacific universities? Again will the taxpayer have to draw heavily upon his imagination to discover any benefit to the average taxpayer.

When we know that the state pays less than \$10 per year per scholar for the support of our public schools, and more than one hundred times that amount for our state colleges, it is no wonder that we now see referendum petitions out against the extravagant sums of money voted these colleges at the last session. We know that there is a moral duty resting upon the taxpayer, to provide the best possible opportunity for the education of the rising generation. The future of our state and nation rests largely upon how well we perform this duty. But, are we performing that duty in the best possible manner when we give five per cent of our boys and girls a college education and furnish the other 95 per cent but an eighth grade life equipment?

As a rule, and a safe one too, no city, county nor state should spend public money for any other purpose than that which will be beneficial to all. If a public expenditure tends to the benefit of only a comparatively few persons, it is unjust and contrary to the spirit of our state and federal constitutions.

The business of running our county and state governments, has grown to be very large. Men who are accustomed to handling a few thousand dollars only as private citizens, as public officials are required to expend several hundred thousand dollars. If the legislator or county official is honest and broad-minded, he will spend money for purposes, only, which are conducive and beneficial to all the people. If he will but see that the people get a fair return for the money the people pay in taxes, he will be on the safe track.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

SCIO IS ATTEMPTING to replace a charter which is antiquated and antedated with one which is up-to-date and which supplies the conditions required by a modern town. When our present charter was adopted, the people of that day were without the convenience of railroads, telephones, etc. and other conditions which seem to be a necessity of the present day. They did not figure that Scio was, in time, to become a modern town and of importance and that it must accommodate itself to the requirements of modern conditions. The old charter contemplated that streets and sidewalks should be improved upon a sort of volunteer basis and that if one or two contrary and stingy individuals did not wish to improve their streets and sidewalks, they did not have to do so. At least, the old charter is of such a shaky character that it is doubtful if such contrary individuals could be forced to do their part as citizens.

The new charter provides that when a majority of the property owners on a street wish to improve the street, one or two who do not wish to bear their share of the expense, cannot prevent; yet the proposed charter protects the rights of the property owner even better than the old one. It provides that the mayor shall be a member of the council and have a voice in all matters which effect the welfare of the city. Every citizen should read the proposed charter carefully and thoughtfully, then go the city hall and read the old charter, then consider which will meet the conditions of a modern town the better. But, above all, do not misrepresent the provisions of the new or proposed new charter purposes to do.

The NEWS desires to see Scio improve and keep pace with the progress of neighboring towns. It does not wish to see progress hampered with obsolete fundamental law. There are many conditions it would change, if it could; but because it cannot make these changes, it is not going to sulk nor go to other towns to trade. It believes in the rule of the majority, and if that majority says "no," it will submit with the best grace possible and, we hope that all interested, will submit in like manner. This is the only basis upon which a republican government can exist.

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