

THE SCIO TRIBUNE

ISSUED EVERY THURSDAY BY
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SOME MORE ROAD THOUGHTS

The people of Oregon have been spending a very large amount of money on roads in past years. But the results obtained have not been satisfactory. All feel that they do not get a dollar's worth of roads for the dollar expended. This is evidenced by the fact that at every session of the legislature, new laws to secure this result, are enacted. Yet none of these new laws seem to reach the result desired. They undoubtedly, lead towards the result desired, but are a failure so far as getting value received for the money expended. Possibly we are working from the wrong basis. If so, we can never reach the goal we desire.

Linn county has been expending, for the past ten or fifteen years, more than \$100,000 annually on her roads, if we include the volunteer work donated. Yet many and, in fact, all our roads, if we except a stretch here and there, are not up to the standard we desire and which modern traffic demands. Nor is it probable that we will spend less to improve our roads in the years to come, than we have in the past. We will always strive to reach a higher degree of road perfection.

Most of our people are bitterly opposed to floating bonds, with which to build roads. They are opposed to mortgaging the future and the transmitting of a bonded debt to their children. As a general rule of financial action, the idea is praiseworthy. But if we can reach the degree of perfection with our roads which we desire, will we not transmit to our children a blessing rather than a burden?

Let us look at the road question from the bond angle and see if we cannot reach the good roads desideratum, yet not overburden ourselves or our children.

As before stated, the average annual road expense in Linn county is, in round numbers, \$100,000. This sum would pay interest on \$2,000,000 of bonds, (for bonds of this character could be floated easily at 5 per cent). 500 miles would easily cover the main roads of Linn county. Suppose we bond the county for \$1,500,000 and expend the same judiciously on these 500 miles of road. This would give a sum of \$3000 for each mile of road. What could we accomplish with this sum? We could hard surface those where the heaviest traffic existed and surface the balance with a heavy coating of crushed rock. And yet we would have \$50,000 annually to keep the main roads in repair and improve the side roads as well. We could do this without adding to our present tax burden.

The amount of saving on horses and wear of vehicles would be almost incalculable. Then the increase of load of our present vehicles without increasing the motive force, would be practicably doubled. Think of it farmers! If you could

haul 100 bushels of wheat as easily as you now haul 50, or two cords of wood as easily as you now haul one, what would you gain? How many days work would you save in one year? Enough, you will say, to pay your road tax.

Now about transmitting a burden of debt to our children. If we continue our present system, we will transmit the responsibility of paying \$100,000 or more yearly to maintain our roads up to the present standard. We would transmit no heavier burden by the bond plan, but would transmit a system of roads, by which they could do double the amount of work without increasing the cost over present conditions.

Another feature. With the class of roads which bonds would make possible, every acre of farm land in Linn county would be enhanced, at least \$5 per acre. This, on a 160-acre farm would pay the road tax for many years. True, it would not add to the productive quality of the land, but the time saved would enable the land owner to improve his land by better drainage or the placing of fertilizers which would increase productiveness.

Think of this problem, farmers! You would be the chief gainers. The business man would reap only indirect benefit, yet he would help pay the road tax—would help adding the \$5 per acre in value to your farm.

It may be urged against the bonding plan that the annual interest would be sent out of the county and so out of local circulation. If our farmers and business men would take up the bond issue, then this objection would be overcome. The money would be all kept in the home circulation and finally, would all drift back into the hands of those who purchased the bonds in the way of interest.

Unless some scheme akin to that above outlined is formulated and adopted, we cannot get money enough together to bring our roads up to first-class condition and so that they can be enjoyed by the people of today. It will not be many years until every farmer owns his automobile or auto truck, when this class of roads will be regarded as a necessity. Why not get them now so that we, of today, can enjoy them, when the expense will be no greater than what we now bear.

THE CLOSING WEEK

This is the closing week of the Oregon legislature. The work of the session is completed and the members can repair to their homes to be commended or blamed as the case may be.

All the new members of the body were elected under promises of reform and the reduction of taxes. Have they made good their pledges? When the sum total of the appropriations is made up for this session, it will be found to be nearly as great as that of the session of two years ago. True, things have been changed about a bit, but the same old graft exists, mayhap with a change of name. The two great leaches of the state, the U. of O. and O. A. C. come out of the scrimmage unscathed. Linn county's delegation has struggled hard to hold down expenditures, but the teat hangers are too strong in their grip upon the state treasury. The Tribune, however, commends our delegation for the efforts they made.

The state senate seems to have been the more economical of the two bodies and originated most of the tax-saving legislation. So if the people conclude to abolish either body, the House of representatives should be the body eliminated.

As a matter of fact, the legislatures of the past have created too many ways to spend the state's money for any one session to cor-

rect, let its intentions be ever so good. Until some anti lobby law is enacted and which will have to be enacted by the people, we are not liable to have much corrective legislation enacted by the legislature. The lobby pressure is too strong for the average member to withstand.

The fight for economy and less taxation is still on the people's hands. They have the power if they will but use it. The initiative was enacted by the people to do things which the legislature refuses to do; the referendum to veto the things the legislature does do. Let the people act.

Linn county pays about \$21,000 annually to support the state's two leading colleges, located respectively at Eugene and Corvallis. We are, therefore, paying this sum to keep up those towns. You people of Albany, Lebanon and other towns of the county, not only keep up your own towns but you are taxed, indirectly, to keep up Eugene and Corvallis. No wonder property commands a better price there than the property of other towns in the state, corresponding in size to these especially favored cities. The rest of the state is paying them a subsidy.

A member of the legislature is authority for the statement that the University of Oregon millage tax fund provides \$410 per student per annum, for that institution. This looks nice (?) when placed along side of the less than \$10 per scholar the state provides for our public schools. For every dollar, Mr. Taxpayer, you get to educate your boy or girl up to and including the eighth grade, you pay \$41 to give your richer neighbor's boy or girl a college education. Is this exactly just and fair?

One of the worst grafts authorized by the legislature of 1913, has been knocked out by the present body. The work of the states' accountants have been found both incorrect and expensive. The experting of the county affairs of this county was costing about \$550 per year, by private accountants. When the state got hold of matters, the cost was more than doubled.

As a matter of course, Secretary Lane would be selected to represent the president at the opening of the Panama fair at San Francisco. The President's duties prevented his personal attendance.

One thing should be placed to the credit of our legislature. It has not created any new commissions and has killed a few of the old ones.

Congress has but two more weeks to live. It is doubtful if the ship purchase bill gets through.

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