

STATE CAPITAL NEWS

- State's War Risk
- Defense Bluff
- Utility Tax Threat

By A. L. LINDBECK

Salem.—Should the state insure its buildings against damage from bombing raids or should it carry its own risk?

That is the question that is just now agitating the board of control.

Representatives of insurance companies have approached the board with a proposal to insure state buildings at the very low rates provided for this type of coverage. Even at this low rate, however, it is estimated that it would cost the state \$20,000 a year in premiums to insure all of its buildings against enemy bombs.

That the risk involved is very small is admitted but there still remains the remote possibility of an air raid that might result in damage to some state building. Should the board decide to carry its own risk and save the \$20,000 in premium payments and a bomb hit demolish the capitol or any one of a number of other state buildings it is realized that the responsible officials would be subjected to severe criticism for their lack of foresight. On the other hand it is also realized that these officials would be subjected to criticism if they should spend \$20,000 a year or any fraction of this amount for insurance against a raid that never materialized.

Threats of regional directors of the civilian defense organization to step in and take over the state set-up were apparently only a bluff to force acceptance of their demands for a greatly enlarged civilian defense effort on the part of the state. At least such was the assurance brought back from Washington, D. C., this week by Jerrold Owen, Oregon's coordinator of civilian defense, after a conference with James M. Landis, national coordinator. Ac-

ording to Owen the national coordinator regards civilian defense as a state rather than a federal function and there is no intention on the part of the federal organization to step in and interfere with the states unless they fall down on the job completely. The threats voiced by his subordinates were evidently made without the knowledge or consent of Landis who promptly rebuked his lieutenants for their assumption of this autocratic attitude toward state defense programs. Owen said that Landis was highly pleased with the civilian defense program in Oregon and explained that his criticism of the Pacific coast states on his recent trip through the west was not intended to apply to this state.

The need for improving the quality of Oregon prunes was stressed by members of the Oregon land use committee at a conference with Acting Governor Dean Walker and officials of the state department of agriculture in Salem this week. The improvement program has already received the approval of the Northwest Dried Fruit association, it was said.

Nearly 6,000,000,000 feet of logs were removed from state, county and privately owned lands in Oregon during 1941, according to a report by State Forester Nels S. Rogers. A total of 323,790 acres were logged during the year.

A full-time paid executive director is to be employed by the newly created Oregon highway traffic advisory committee, it was announced following a meeting of that body here this week. The director will be paid out of funds of the federal public roads bureau. The advisory committee operates as an adjunct of the office of defense transportation.

Oregon's coordinator of civilian defense, Jerrold Owen, takes exception to Secretary of War Stimson's declaration that danger of a Japanese invasion of the Pacific coast has been practically eliminated by the victories scored by U. S. forces in the battles in the Coral Sea and off Midway Island.

"It is most unfortunate that Washington officials seem prone to issue

statements in general terms which easily are misunderstood and cause confusion and uncertainty in this combat area," Owen declared.

In spite of the war secretary's assurance that this coast is comparatively safe from enemy raids Owen said that "civilian defense forces in Oregon are not relaxing its vigilance for one moment to trim its sails to the winds which flow from our nation's capital."

The "request" of Joseph B. Eastman, defense transportation director, that state and county fairs be dispensed with for the duration, has again placed the fate of Oregon's state fair in doubt. Eastman's statement followed by two days the announcement by the state board of agriculture that the Oregon fair would be conducted this year but on a greatly curtailed scale. Apparently the situation presents another illustration of the lack of coordination on the part of Washington officials inasmuch as Secretary of Agriculture Wickard only recently urged that agricultural fairs be continued throughout the nation as an essential defense measure. State officials who have commented on the Eastman "request" have declared it to be unfair inasmuch as it singles out fairs for elimination while making no mention of racing meets, baseball games and other events which attract as large, and in many cases much larger crowds than do the agricultural exhibitions.

In his statement of last week expressing his opposition to certain features in the Columbia power authority bills now pending before congress, Governor Sprague directed special attention to the proposal to freeze payments in lieu of taxes at present levels and warned against the menace of such a policy. Just what the effect of such a policy would be on future taxes can, of course, only be judged by the record of the past. This record, as gleaned from the files of the state tax commission show that the assessed valuation of electric utilities in Oregon have increased approximately four-fold in the past quarter of a century. Inasmuch as tax levies have also increased substantially in the same period it is safe to say that taxes paid by electric utilities in this state today are eight or ten times as great as they were 25 years ago. In the case of the Portland General Electric company (formerly the Portland Railway Light and Power company) this increase amounted to approximately \$1,372,000—from \$207,000 in 1916 to \$1,579,607 in 1941. Had the public power program been put into effect 25 years ago with its freezing of "in lieu payments at 1916 levels the millions of dollars in additional taxes now being paid by electric utilities would have been shifted to the shoulders of other property owners." Warning against the adoption of such a policy in connection with the public power program Governor Sprague pointed out that "the requirements of income for government show steady increase and it is only fair that expanding investments in electric enterprises should yield increasing contributions for the support of government. Otherwise the burdens borne by remaining property grow steadily more disproportionate as the total tax burden increases."

Clubbers to Vie in Meat Animal Contest

Oregon will again participate in the 4-H club national meat animal contest, in which one of the contestants from this state won a \$200 scholarship last year. Robert H. King of Moro was one of three national winners in 1941.

These contests for livestock club members are considered more important this year than before as offering an incentive for increased production of needed food, says H. C. Seymour, state club leader. Most of the larger livestock shows have been cancelled, which increases the value of such state and national contests.

The meat animal contest has been sponsored for 13 years by Thomas E. Wilson, who offers medals for county winners, watches for state champions, and four trips to the Chicago club congress and three \$200 college scholarships for the regional winners.

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Trashy Fallow in Eastern Counties Found Economical

A study of 50 typical Columbia basin wheat farms in Sherman and Gilliam counties has revealed that the cost of handling summer fallow by the trashy fallow method is not necessarily higher and may be lower than to use the regular so-called black fallow method.

Figures obtained in this detailed study showed that, while the cost of weeding is somewhat higher with trashy fallow, this is more than made up by the lower cost of plowing with the one-way disk compared with the regular moldboard plow.

The study was made by representatives of the Soil Conservation service in cooperation with the Oregon State college experiment station. A detailed report has just been issued as station circular of information No. 271, written by H. L. Thomas, Virgil D. Kennedy, and D. Curtis Mumford, of the cooperating organizations.

The trashy fallow method is generally recognized as the most practical way of controlling wind and water erosion in the wheat areas. Lack of proper equipment and doubts as to comparative costs and yields have kept it from being universally adopted, despite the encouragement of benefit payments under the farm program. Considerable research is still needed as to the best type of machinery and methods to use in handling trashy fallow under varying soil and stubble conditions, it is agreed by specialists and growers alike, although the current study has added considerable information.

Cost of trashy fallow in Gilliam county was found to be distinctly lower than black fallow, while in Sherman county the average was 41 cents per acre higher for trashy fallow if double disking prior to plowing was included as one of the operations for trashy fallow but not for black fallow. Otherwise the cost is lower for trashy fallow.

Of 43 farmers expressing opinions on comparative yields, 10 believed trashy fallow reduced yields, 20 reported no change, and 13 reported increased yields with trashy fallow.

STAR TO HONOR DADS

Ruth chapter 32, Order of Eastern Star will honor dads, those Masons who are members of the Star, at the regular meeting in Masonic hall tomorrow evening. There will also be initiation and refreshments, and all members are urged to attend, announces Mrs. Ella Bengel, worthy matron.

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