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HILL INTERESTS TO PUSH RAILROAD TO CALIFORNIA

(Oregon Journal) From financial circles in New York comes a story of an alliance between Hill and Gould interests that indicates early entry of the Hill railroads into California.

The combination was effected some 18 months ago, it is said, for the purpose of admitting the Hill lines into California territory in exchange for allowing the Western Pacific to meet its competitors on an equal footing in Portland and Oregon.

According to this information the route from Portland is to be by way of the Willamette valley and up the McKenzie river to the low pass through the Cascades, thence along the high plateau and debouching into the Sacramento valley through the Pitt River pass, making the connection with the Western Pacific a short distance north of Sacramento.

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In Oregon this would probably indicate that the announcement made to Eugene people by an official of the Hill lines that the tracks extending to that city would not stop there, had a pretty definite translation in plans of the system.

It would open up a great timber district on the McKenzie and reaching the east side of the range would tap additional timber in the corners of Douglas and Crook counties and form a junction with the Hill line south of Bend, where a contract has recently been announced for its extension.

THE REAL FOOD PROBLEM.

THE New York State Food Investigating commission has issued a report of its committee on markets, prices and costs, of which this very interesting resume has been prepared by W. E. McKenna for "The Public."

This report deals with the food problem in some of its aspects, but not in all. For example, it explains that combinations to fix prices, whether of sellers or buyers, have only been examined incidentally as part of the economic inquiries into cost.

Nevertheless, many of the committee's findings are interesting. The consumer will no longer be able to lay the flattering unction to his soul that he himself is entirely blameless for the high cost of living.

Consumers buy in packages when they could buy cheaper in bulk; they want choice cuts of meat and insist on eating steaks and chops, although these things are becoming extinct; they run up bills and sometimes neglect to pay; they have a weakness for adding stamps, and they want small packages sent home instead of carrying them.

One flagrant instance of the last-named offense is related, which aroused a grocer to rebellion and caused him to declare that he would deliver no order of less than three eggs or of one pint of milk. It is partly owing to these mental and moral imperfections of the consumer that the retail business is so expensive.

For the committee finds that while the retailer adds an average of 33 1-3 per cent to the price of goods, only 5 per cent of this is profit. The rest is cost. So, from an economic standpoint, the retailer is a failure and must go.

The high operating costs of the individual retailer," says the report, "make his elimination inevitable." When he does go, it may be some consolation to him to remember that he will lose only five per cent, and be in no further danger of hearing over the telephone a soft soprano request for an egg and a half.

Wholesalers and jobbers also have their troubles. They are hampered by inadequate market, trucking and storage facilities; and this, of course, does not help to solve the problem of the high cost of living.

What of the producer? A visitor from Mars might imagine that in this era of high prices the producer is rolling in prosperity and working overtime to increase his output.

He might be if the high prices were going to him. But the committee does not find this to be the case. Here are some quotations from its report: The producer seems to be receiving about forty per cent of the retail price.

This is absurd. He should receive from sixty to seventy per cent. The failure to secure good prices and fair treatment for producers is very injurious to our food supply. The producer (of milk in this case) is placed in a position where he must either submit to the prices fixed by these interested dealers or go out of business.

Many farmers have chosen the latter alternative. The failure of the producer to realize an adequate price the committee ascribes largely to lack of organization and to the fact that goods have to be shipped to commission merchants whose methods are not always above suspicion.

MENACE TO LAND DOES NOT APPLY TO ROGUE VALLEY

(By Prof. P. J. O'Gara.)

Press reports regarding the danger which confronts farming on arid lands have caused people to wonder if the statements that have been made have any bearing on the Rogue River valley.

It may be stated emphatically that the reports sent out by the department of agriculture have no reference to this district, but rather to the arid intermountain and other districts, principally where large reclamation projects have been under way for some time.

In these districts the difficulty all lies in the fact that alkali is the real menace. Besides "wearing out" of the soils by "saturation" is due to the character of the soils and subsoils. The soils in question are what is usually called "volcanic ash," containing practically no humus and only a small quantity of nitrogen.

The mineral salts, though sufficient for the needs of agriculture for a number of years, are largely in the available form and are easily carried away by the use of too much water. In many cases the subsoils are sandy or are underlaid with coarse gravel, hence percolation of the water from the soil carries away plant food.

Once the water from the surface soil reaches the gravel it cannot be brought back by capillarity, hence the plant food carried in it is lost. Of course, alkali is, after all, the great "soil poison." Wherever it is present, sooner or later, all lands lying at lower levels are ruined by it, due to the seepage and washing which takes place, unless sufficient drainage is secured.

In the earlier days of reclamation only the lower levels were irrigated; now the higher benches are being covered with water, with the result that all lands lying below are being more or less injured. The more alkali in a region the more the ultimate damage. The people of Rogue River valley little realize the heritage they have.

Here we have a district of more than a quarter of a million acres of available agricultural lands, and when these acres have been settled upon there will be fully another quarter of a million acres which may be opened up. But the most wonderful and interesting thing is that in the entire valley there is no alkali.

The country does not belong to the "arid class" or even the semi-arid class, so far as its soils are concerned. The soils are varied, there being about eight general types, and about fifty-four varieties, all of which are arable. The soils are not of the type which will readily wear out. The structure of the soils and subsoils is such that "wearing out" by saturation will not be so likely.

The irrigation of the higher levels cannot affect the lower levels by adding or bringing down deleterious salts, because alkali is unknown in Rogue River valley. The rational use of water could therefore only produce good. There is an old adage which says "a lime country is a rich country."

If this is true, the Rogue River valley has wealth beyond the dreams of a Croesus. A rational system of agriculture would make this country richer and more productive twenty-five years from now than it is today.

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MAY ROBSON TO BE SEEN AT GRANTS PASS

May Robson will be seen at the Grants Pass opera house on next Friday, Feb. 7, in the role of "Granny" in "A Night Out." She not only rejuvenates her daughter but has the same effect upon everyone in her audiences.

It is to laugh and there is not a laugh missed by anyone. She is a sweet scream and as charming as her gown of lavender and old lace. There is not a single solitary problem in the whole play, just one luxurious, long laugh, with just a spice of quaint, old-fashioned feeling thrown in here and there.

BURNS WELCOMES A PROBE LAND FRAUD CASES

NEW YORK, Feb. 1.—Congressional investigation of Oregon and California land frauds, provided for in a resolution introduced in the house by Representative Ferris, is welcomed by Detective Wm. J. Burns, according to his declaration here today.

"I most earnestly hope and pray that the resolution is passed," said Burns.

Master mechanics at the various navy yards have received substantial wage increases.

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