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WHAT DEVELOPMENT OF LAKES MEANS TO OREGON

State Should Invite Capital By Leasing Summer and Abert Lakes in This County

The following, under the caption "Review of Action of State Land Board in Turning Down Development of Salt and Soda Industry in Southern Oregon," was published in the current number of the Pacific Coast Manufacturer at the request of C. M. Sain, who is now in Portland.

The Oregon State Land Board recently refused an offer of a million and a quarter dollars made by New York parties for a lease of Summer and Abert Lakes, the payments to extend over a period of years.

Mr. Jason C. Moore, of New York, came here with three million dollars to invest in the development of these lakes. He agreed to spend a million dollars a year for the first two years.

The State Land Board declined to entertain Mr. Moore's proposition. In other words it begged the question by passing the matter up to the legislature and withdrew the lakes from the market.

Mr. Moore left and is now investigating the alkali deposits of California. If he finds what he wants in that state he will not return to Oregon. As matters now stand I do not expect him to return.

Let us inquire if the State Land Board did a wise thing in rejecting this offer to develop these Oregon lakes. The action of the board was virtually to drive three million dol-

lars out of the State of Oregon to be invested in California.

In this exposition I do not mean to question the good faith and honesty of the members of the board. But we have a right to ask if in their wisdom they have served the best interests of Oregon.

It is true that Oregon still has the lakes and therefore has lost nothing. It may still have these lakes in a hundred years just as they are today. And in this century of time it may never receive a dollar in benefit from these lakes just as it has had no benefit from them in the last sixty years. Is this what Oregon wants, to keep those lakes? Or does it want them developed for the benefit of Oregon's people of today?

The action of the board was doubtless prompted by the publication of sensational reports of the fabulous wealth contained in these lakes. The lakes were said to be worth 460 million dollars and to it was agreed that if the state got a dollar a ton royalty it would receive 40 million dollars for its permanent school fund. It was no news to the board to be informed that these lakes contained 40 million tons of salts. In my original application to the board three years ago for a lease of these lakes I gave my estimate of their tonnage, accompanied by certificates of analyses of the waters, as follows:

Table with 4 columns: Substance, Sum, Lake, Lake Abert, Totals. Includes Sodium chloride, Silica, Sodium carbonate, Sodium bicarbonate, Potassium sulphate, Potassium chloride, Sodium sulphate.

I had to do considerable figuring in order to make the total come out even 40 million. I gave the area of the lakes as 83,200 acres and the average depth as seven feet.

Since that time I have charted the bed of Summer Lake and found the average depth is only four feet. Lake Abert will probably suffer a similar reduction in tonnage, but for promotion purposes I left them at 40,000,000. However, when Dr. Lazelle, the Portland chemist, experted the property for McArthur Bros., who turned it down, his estimate of the tonnage was just about half this amount.

By the simple expedient of multiplying by ten we arrive at the large figure of 400,000,000 dollars. And if the state gets a dollar a ton royalty its treasury will be enriched by forty million dollars. There are two ways of looking at this proposition and this is one of them.

There is in the Coos Bay field 300 million tons of coal. If we sell this coal at ten dollars a ton it would bring into the state eight billions of dollars. Why not do it?

There are billions of tons of nitrogen in the atmosphere over Oregon. It is absolutely free to any one who wants it. Nitrogen is our most valuable fertilizer and it is worth three dollars a ton before its fixation to calcium or sodium. Why not sell this at three dollars a ton. However, if it costs four dollars a ton to get it down out of the sky something more than a blue sky law is needed to make both ends meet.

However, let us keep to the salts. The census of 1910 tells us that about five million tons of table salt is consumed per year in the United States and the average price is about two dollars. That is about ten cents per capita. In Oregon this would mean an outlay of \$75,000.

We would use about a million tons of sodas annually and spend about \$18,000,000. This is about 20 cents per capita, or \$150,000 for Oregon.

The highest quotations for potassium sulphate is \$43 per ton, and we spend about ten millions a year for potash salts. This is ten cents per capita or \$75,000.

Thus if supplied the home demand for these salts at the prevailing rates we would get \$300,000 a year. Mr. Moore's proposition was to pay the state at the rate of \$75,000 a year for the first ten years after the works were in. In order to do this it is evident he would have to raise the price to Oregon people, increase

On the other hand the Mineral Industry describes a lake in East Africa that contains 35 square miles of "solid soda." It is said that East African deposits are sufficient to supply the world for 700 years. They pay no royalty.

Wonderful changes are taking place in the chemical world. The Hooker Chemical Company of Niagara Falls has a secret process to produce these salts by the use of electricity. Manager Bush of this company came out to look at the Oregon lakes and condemned them. The highest price on caustic soda is about \$40 per ton. Mr. Bush told me that in the manufacture of bleaching powder they produced caustic soda as a by-product that cost them absolutely nothing.

In California they are spending three million dollars building a railroad into Searles lake. They are after the potash and expect to deliver soda at Tidewater practically at the mere cost of transportation. They have no royalty to pay.

My original proposition was to pay the state a dollar a ton royalty on its soda and fifty cents a ton on the table salt. After spending a hundred thousand dollars I found it was utterly impossible to promote the lakes on this basis.

But let us get nearer home for a comparison. Just north of Lake Abert lie the four Alkali lakes. These are mainly dry deposits held by two California companies as mining claims. One is the John D. Sprockles group and the other the Gilbert-Willis. These lakes contain about five million tons of the purest soda in the known world. It runs as high as 98 per cent. Alkali has the edge on both Summer and Abert in the cost of production. Alkali lake has soda enough to supply the present demand in Oregon for more than five hundred years. It pays no royalty to the state, not even taxes. Yet no crocodile tears are shed because California parties came here and gobbled up this vast natural wealth of the state.

There remains but one salt to be considered and without this the Oregon lakes would not be considered of any value whatever. This is potash. A sensational article was published saying that this potash was worth 56 million dollars. If you take a pencil and figure it out you will see that the potash salt in Lake Abert is 3.79 per cent. In Summer Lake it is only 3.46. The Century dictionary tells you that the ocean itself contains one-twenty-fifth of four per cent.

Thus the ocean is richer in potash than either of these lakes. Sea water is absolutely free to any one who wants it. All you have to do is to set up a plant and take out your own potash. You would have to pay no royalty to the state. It would cost you nothing to get to tide water with your product. You can figure out a hundred billions worth of potash in sight. The only trouble is that it would cost you more to get it out than the potash is worth.

E. E. Free, the U. S. government geologist recently spent three weeks at Summer and Abert Lakes investigating them as a possible source of potash supply and condemned them. I have passed fourteen of the best years of my life in trying to promote these lakes as a potash proposition. A score of times when I thought I was on the eve of success experts have turned the thing down. The difficulties in the way have been the lack of transportation, the cost of separation, the engineering problems to be overcome and the uncertainty as to title. The state does not own the beds of these lakes. They belong to the national government. Yet it refuses to take a million and a quarter dollars for the lease of its rights to a thing that it does not own.

Not until I fell in with Mr. Moore was there any substantial progress. Mr. Moore worked for a year with expert chemists and discovered a secret process for the separation of the salts, and I after sleeping with the proposition for thirteen years found a solution to the engineering problems. A score of other expert engineers had tried and failed. Then we raise three million dollars for the development of the lakes and State Land Board turns us down.

Let us see where Oregon loses by driving this capital away from the state. Why is it that Oregon with greater natural resources than California or Washington has less development, less population than any of the others? Is it because of its attitude towards capital?

What will the people of California do if Mr. Moore finds a soda deposit that suits his purpose? Will

its commercial clubs tender him banquets or will its people hurl brickbats at him through the public press? If I lived in California and after fourteen years of constant effort succeeded in raising three million dollars for the exploitation of one of its numerous soda lakes would I be regarded as a public enemy?

Any royalty that Oregon receives from these lakes will be a mere tithe in comparison with the general benefit that will result. In order to make these lakes profitable there must be development of collateral enterprises. These salts enter largely into other manufacturers.

The United States produces annually 267 million dollars worth of paper and wood pulp. The best paper is made from our Oregon pulp by the soda process, a ton of soda to 20 tons of paper. The paper industry of the United States now employs 81 thousand persons. With cheap soda Oregon will become the greatest paper manufacturing state in the Union.

Woolen textile manufacturers amount to 435 million dollars a year and use nine million dollars' worth of chemicals, mostly soda. The industry in the United States employs 175 thousand persons. Here should be manufactured into fabrics all of our Oregon wools.

Instead of shipping our beef cattle from the Oregon ranges to Chicago and the canned meat back to Alaska we should have our packing houses here in Portland. The total yearly output of our meat packing houses is more than a billion and a quarter dollars. The industry employs 108 thousand persons.

One of the problems of the packing houses is to dispose of the tallow and other grease. The soap manufacturers of the United States pay 23 million dollars a year for tallow and other grease. To work up this tallow into soap use more than five million dollars worth of soda. The total soap output of the country is 111 million dollars a year and 18 thousand persons a year are employed.

The glass manufacture in the United States amounts to 92 million dollars a year and the industry employs 72 thousand persons. Soda and potash are essential ingredients in the manufacture of glass and Oregon is said to have a fine quality of glass sand.

Explosives manufacture in the United States amount to 40 million a year and employ seven thousand persons. These chemicals are used largely in the making of powder.

More than 21 thousand persons find employment in the fertilizer mills and the total output is 103 million a year. These salts are the basis of the fertilizer manufacture.

With cheap soda and potash and cheap hydro-electric power Oregon should secure a large share in all of these manufactures.

Oregon could well afford to give those lakes away as a subsidy for the sake of getting these industries established in the state and the increased population they would bring. But Mr. Moore did not ask it. He is willing to pay what any fair minded man must say was a reasonable royalty for the use of the waters of these lakes. This is all that the state has to sell. We care nothing whatever for the land in the beds of the lakes. It is entirely useless for our purpose and the state or the United States may well keep that.

H. N. Lawrie, chairman of the Oregon Bureau of Mines and Geology in an address on why taxes aviate, delivered at the Reed College 1915 conference, last Saturday, gave as the reason the lack of development of our natural resources. Mr. Lawrie estimated that Portland alone was importing ten million dollars a year in building material and said: "If such industries were well established here it is also evident that the increase in population alone would tend to lessen the tax burden by subdivision of the total expenditure."

He was not speaking of the alkali industry and the establishment of soda manufacturers would do more than all the others to bring population and distribute the tax burden. Moreover the lease of these lakes to Mr. Moore would put directly into the treasury a million and a quarter dollars.

I am satisfied that Mr. Moore by the use of the process he has discovered and my secret engineering plan is the only man who can develop these Oregon lakes and make them pay. If Mr. Moore gets established in California the industries that will follow in his wake will go to California and not to Oregon. Mr. Moore at the head of the powerful syndicate which he has organized will then be a formidable barrier against the development of these Oregon lakes and they will stay just as they are for the next hundred

(Continued on Page Seven)