RURAL COUNTIES FOR LOCAL ROAD SYSTEM.

Plans for Big Bond Issues Already Under Way.

(From The Oregonian.)

Market roads, or local roads, for the improvement of which the farmers have been contending, will soon begin to materialize throughout Oregon. There have been critics of the policy of the state highway commission in that the commission has steadfastly pursued the plan of improving state roads before turning toward the local roads. Under the plan now agitated in several counties and with prospective legislation, the market, or local roads of the state, can be developed without taking a dollar from the state road funds.

Counties anxious to better their road systems are preparing to bond themselves. Already there is in sight about $5,000,000 of road bonds to be issued by counties. In some instances part of the money from the road bonds is to be used in co-operation with the state highway commission on state roads, while in other places the entire bond issue is to be applied to the farmer roads.

Counties Plan Bond Issues.

Counties which are planning bond issues and the amounts are as follows: Wheeler, $44,000; Gilliam, $260,000; Morrow, $290,000; Lincoln, $200,000; Marion $800,000; Yamhill, $250,000; Linn, $600,000; Malheur, $20,000; Polk, $260,000; Tillamook, $470,000; Lake $200,000. An issue of $300,000 was voted by Sharman county a week ago, and a $1,000,000 was voted by Umatilla last month. Wheeler had bonded its limit for roads but the increased valuation of the county is enabling it to put out an issue of $44,000.

Counties such as Tillamook, Umatilla, Sherman and one or two others want co-operation from the state. They are willing to put some of their money on state roads in order to hurry up the completion of the highway in their territory and to stretch the state funds as far as possible. Other counties, like Marion and Linn, prefer to devote their funds to local roads.

Marion Boosts Local Roads.

Thus, Marion, knowing the state highway commission must complete the Pacific Highway, the 50 miles through that county, will use its bond money to improve 130 miles of local roads connecting the various towns of Marion. Yamhill county is so anxious to help that farmers have agreed to grade some of the state road and the county is willing to contribute $2000 a mile toward paving the state road.

Counties which are bonding will have all or a large part of this bond money for the purely local roads, forming feeders to the main trunk system and eventually these farmer roads will gridiron the counties which are enterprising enough to bond themselves.

Millage Tax Proposed.

In addition to the bonds as a means for building the local roads, there is the proposed millage tax advocated by the state grange. If this measure, which will be acted on by the people at the special state election June 3, is favorably considered it will raise a 1-mill tax to be used exclusively for local roads and the money will be expended by the county courts instead of by the highway commission. Every county, with the exception of Multnomah, will receive in return from this 1-mill local road tax more money than it puts into it.

The farmer has the advantage in tmhis millage game no matter what angle it is viewed from. Most of the tax will be paid by the property owners of the cities and towns, but none of the money thus raised can be spent in incorporated cities or towns until every local road in a county has first been paved.

Rural Cities Will Benefit.

This completely shuts out the city dweller from a direct benefit. The towns will be indirectly benefited, however, by enabling the farmer to ride in on a good road to do his trading and bring his produce. The State Grange is particularly interested in the enactment of this proposal. Another advantage the farmer has in that in addition to his own money, spent on his own roads where he wants them, he will be aided by the other fellow's money.

There is in prospect still another law, which, if adopted, will advance the interest of the local road. This is a proposed amendment to the constitution which permits counties to bond themselves up to 6 per cent of the assessed valuation for roads. The present limit is 2 per cent. The law, if enacted, is optional with each county, and only those counties, like Klamath, which desire to take advantage of the opportunity to raise a large sum for road purposes, need invoke it. Such a statute will make it possible for counties now at their limit to take a fresh start.

From the time the state highway commission was organized there has been pressure brought on members of the commission to alter the policy of first building the state roads.

Policy Revision Denied.

The commission has declined to revise its policy for several good and sufficient reasons. One reason is that it will take all the money the commission can obtain to complete the comprehensive system of state roads now on the map approved by the people. Another reason is that every road of general importance is now on the map as a state road.

Still another reason is that the taxpayers who are furnishing the state funds are not concerned over local roads—those within the boundaries of a county—but that they are desirous of having all the state roads—those which go through one or more county—improved.

The final reason of the commission has been that there are so many local roads that if a start was once made by the state highway commission there would never be an end, that politics would be injected and that the constructive work of the commission would terminate on the spot.

The Democratic politicians are progressive all right. When it came to emptying the federal treasury of its contents they were not satisfied with the old-fashioned spade, but used a steam shovel.

The funniest object in the country is the man who insists there is still anybody in favor of war after the country has experienced more than two years of Democratic war management.