

Why State, County and School Taxes Are High

Republican State Committeeman Writes Interesting Letter To The Voters and Taxpayers of the County.

To the Editor:

There is always more or less agitation and discussion about high taxation previous to an election than at any other time, as well as a great deal of misconception and misunderstanding...

Without exception every taxpayer in the county is anxious to have his taxes reduced, so we are a unit on that point. And without blowing off a lot of "hot air" and talking a blue streak...

There are two reasons why taxation has been mounting higher for several years. One is that property is bearing too much of the tax load, and the other is that the people of the state, and Tillamook county as well, have demanded so many things and have voted taxes to pay for them...

The way to reduce taxes is for all tax levying bodies to retrench. There is, however, something more to be done than this. The people must quit voting unnecessary special taxation, quit asking the state, county, city and school districts for this, that and the other thing...

As an illustration of this, the school board of the Tillamook district schools took a little compassion on the overburdened taxpayers and decided to cut out some studies in the high school which some people seem to think could be dispensed with...

COUNTY TAXES FOR ALL PURPOSES AMOUNT TO \$920,612.36

By way of preface, it is well to mention that the total amount of tax to be collected this year is \$920,612.36. In Tillamook county, for all purposes, including state, county, city, roads, schools, ports, etc., and I will segregate that amount and place it under different heads, so as to make it clear and intelligible where taxation can be reduced and where it is impossible to do so under our present dual system of voting taxes and burdens on property owners.

Of the above amount 82 1/2 per cent was levied by the county and local authorities for schools, roads, drainage and water districts, and city and port purposes. How could W. M. Pierce cut these local taxes in two? It is up to the people in the local districts to do so. Yet Mr. Pierce admits that his promise of 50 per cent tax cut is intended to apply to state taxes only. Only 17 1/2 per cent of Tillamook county's taxes this year were state taxes, viz., for soldiers' bonus 2 per cent, for market roads 2 per cent, for state aid to elementary schools 4 per cent and for state higher educational purposes 5 per cent, the balance of 4 1/2 per cent going mainly to support institutions and paying expenses of state government. Only \$2,514,080 or six per cent of all taxes paid in Oregon this year were for general state purposes outside of roads and education while 94 per cent were taxes voted by the people of the state for local and district purposes. This proves that the tax problem is mainly local, and up to the people of the various districts and municipalities to solve.

STATE TAX

Tillamook county's portion this year is \$161,459.70. What have greatly increased the state tax is to pay monies voted by the people at different times and being fixed overhead charges, the state officials must make the state levy high enough to meet the expenditure. It is claimed by those who know, that apart from the monies voted by the people, the state government is economically administered.

PORT TAXATION

It required \$91,542.00 for the Ports of Nehalem and Bay City to pay principal and interest on bonds voted by the people in the two port districts.

DISTRICT AND HIGH SCHOOLS

For the education of the children and young people of the county, the taxpayers pay \$200,096.86, made up as follows:

Table with 2 columns: Item and Amount. Includes County School Fund (\$140,000.00), High School Tuition Fund (13,000.00), Union High School Fund (7,122.96), Special taxes levied by 45 school districts (139,973.90), etc.

According to Mr. Richards' logic who is butting into the affairs of the school district, the school boards are extravagantly wasting \$50,000 of the people's money, for he is wanting the school tax cut 25 per cent, which can only be done by reducing the salaries of teachers \$50,000. The school boards are the best judges whether this can be done.

CITY AND DRAINAGE TAXES

Under this head \$82,996.97 of the tax money is accounted for, as follows: City taxation, including Wheeler, Nehalem, Bay City and Tillamook \$40,887.45, Special drainage tax \$5,740.16, Fairview Water District 1,403.48, Forest Patrol Tax 4,539.88.

It will, no doubt, surprise most of our citizens to know that under the above four heads that it eats up \$526,095.53 out of the \$920,612.36 levied, and that it is impossible for the county court to make a reduction, for should it refuse to make a levy for any of the above amounts mandamus proceedings would be instituted, compelling it to make the levies for the different amounts. The county court is tied hand and feet, and must follow the law and the will of those who have levied and voted taxes. So this leaves \$384,516.83 to be accounted for out of this year's tax money.

AGRICULTURE

Under this head there is an expenditure of \$17,600.00 as follows: Stock Indemnity \$2,000.00, County Agriculturist 1,600.00, Club Work Leader 1,800.00, County Fair 1,500.00, Dairy and Food Commissioner 2,100.00, Dairy Herd Inspector 3,600.00, Fair Grounds 5,000.00.

CIRCUIT COURT AND JUSTICE COURTS

Under his head the expenses run up to \$9,400.00, as follows: Circuit Court \$6,000.00, Justice Courts 1,000.00, Expenses, District Attorney's Office 2,400.00. This does not include the salaries of the circuit judge and the district attorney, which is paid by the state. Jurymen and witnesses are paid from this fund, and should the cost of running these courts run up to double the above amount, the county court would have to issue warrants to pay the expenses.

COUNTY POOR

It costs the county \$11,000 to care for the poor and pay mother pensions, which must be paid by the county court.

ADMINISTRATIVE DEPTS.

For the salaries of county officials and supplies for their respective offices require \$48,280.00, as follows: Assessor's office \$4,600.00, School Superintendent's office 4,140.00, Treasurer's office 1,400.00, Sheriff's office 12,390.00, Clerk's office 7,500.00, County Court 8,000.00, Surveyor's office 3,100.00, Coroner's office 150.00, District Sealer 100.00, Trust officer 100.00, Health officer 750.00, Fire Warden 500.00, Auditor 550.00, Court house and jail expenses 5,000.00.

OTHER ITEMS

Other items are as follows: County Teachers' Institute \$250.00, Printing \$1,800.00, Advertising \$1,000.00, Library 1,000.00, Bounty 1,000.00, Elections 3,000.00, Re-erecting burned timber 20,000.00, Emergency Fund 1,000.00. Under these different heads it involves an expenditure of \$651,425.53 and after carefully studying every item, it is no easy matter to reduce taxation under existing conditions, for the reason that there are so many tax levying bodies and expenditures fixed by law.

These are the naked facts, and the real reason that taxes are high is because the people are to blame themselves, having voted a large number of taxes upon themselves.

ROADS AND BRIDGES

If any considerable reduction in taxation is brought about, the only place this can be done is to reduce the road fund, and to make a reduction of 25 per cent in the county taxes, as Mr. Richards is talking about, would mean that there would be no road funds, or a very small amount, to build and maintain roads in the county. This year's budget called for \$284,547.00, made up as follows: Roads and bridges \$208,000.00, Interest on bonds 7,850.00, Market roads 30,000.00, Special road tax in road district No. 1 38,797.00.

The county court apportioned \$69,990.00 to each of the three road districts, and \$20,000 market road funds to each district.

ROOSEVELT HIGHWAY

The county court has been quite fortunate in procuring a large amount of money for the Roosevelt Highway from the State Highway Commission, with bright prospects of securing sufficient state funds to finish that highway through Tillamook county next year, but it cannot be done if this county has no road fund to match state funds on a 50-50 basis. It may interest the people of the county to know how successful the county court has been in the building of this highway and the large amount of money that was obtained from the state, so will give the different items: Wilson River to Riverdale, \$13,843, paid by the state. Clatsop county line to Mohler (incomplete), 50-50 basis, \$93,468.90. Hebo to Neskowin (incomplete), 50-50 basis, \$149,676. Ten miles of paving, \$350,000, paid for by the state. Riverdale to Hobsonville, \$35,963.98, paid by the state. Neskowin to Lincoln county line, \$166,000.00, not costing the county one cent, paid for by state and federal money. Rockaway to Jetty creek, \$17,390 paid for by the state. Moore cut-off to Hebo, \$96,221.40, paid for by the state.

In addition to this the state expended \$50,000.00 on the Three Rivers and Sour Grass roads this year. This is a splendid showing made by the county court in its efforts to complete the Roosevelt Highway in Tillamook county. But there is another reason why the county court is hurrying on this work as fast as possible. As soon as the highway is complete the State Highway Commission will maintain it, which will save the taxpayers of the county thousands of dollars every year. If sufficient money is available next year, there is every reason to believe that the State Highway Commission will join the county in completing the road from Mohler, through Wheeler, Brighton, Rockaway, Garibaldi to the Miami bridge, the only section of the highway which is not provided for in this county. It was through the efforts of the county court that the location was changed from the Miami to the beach route, and the reason that it did so was because it would have to build the beach road, anyway, and being the most expensive to build, the state will help pay for it.

SOME SOUND ADVICE

Now, by way of deviation, to put a little pep and kick into this letter, I want to give the people of Tillamook county some good, sound, fatherly advice, which they should ponder over. It was through the efforts of the Roosevelt Memorial Coast Highway Association that the Roosevelt highway was made part of the state road plans, and which was instrumental in having a large amount of money expended on the highway, with the promise from the State Highway Commission and a pledge from the republican party, that the highway will be completed in the near future. A few disgruntled politicians have succeeded in splitting up both political parties on a religious question, and from present appearances a large number of voters are grabbing at a will 'o' the wisp, overlooking the fact that what they are advocating will do nothing for the up-building of Tillamook county and the coast counties and will retard the building of the Roosevelt highway, which, when complete, will bring thousands of visitors and thousands of dollars into Tillamook county and the state of Oregon. What they are advocating will not even fill up one chuck hole on the highway this coming winter. Tillamook people were

strong boosters for the highway at the primary election, and it is surprising that they should flop over to the democratic candidate for governor, for it was the democratic party that muzzed up the war and spent the taxpayers' money like a lot of drunken sailors, so much so that the county is not financially able to give the ex-service men a bonus, which they are rightly entitled to. Walter M. Pierce and R. G. Richards and the latest political monstrosity Louie W. Watson, who flopped over to the democratic candidate, are all talking about reduction of taxes. The democratic party increased the running expenses of the nation up to \$6,467,343,841 in 1920, and the republican party reduced it to \$3,372,607,899 for the present fiscal year, which is a saving to the taxpayers of \$3,094,735,941, and the republican party is still on the job reducing taxation. Why republicans can flop over to the spendthrift democratic party, and then complain about high taxation, is a mystery. Anyway, before a few months roll around those who intend to desert the republican party and vote for men who belong to the spendthrift party will feel sorry when they know how completely they are being fooled by disgruntled politicians.

When we went down to the depot and bade the boys good-bye, who had been drafted, no one asked them whether they were democrats or republicans, whether they were Protestants or Catholics, or whether they were German, French, Canadian, English or Irish extraction. They were our boys, every one of them, and we were one happy, united community family. That is the atmosphere we should be breathing today in Tillamook county.

My candid opinion is, and my advice to the people of the county is to vote for Governor Ben B. Olcott, and by doing so the Roosevelt highway will be completed in the near future, which will give the coast counties the greatest boom they ever had.

As Mr. H. M. Farmer has been highly successful in having so much of the highway completed in Tillamook county, it is the proper thing to keep him in office until the highway is finished, and for that reason I think it is to the best interest of the county that he should be re-elected. The splendid condition of the roads in all parts of the county is a splendid recommendation for Mr. Farmer.

THE \$104.52 PER CAPITA BUGABOO.

Mr. Richards complains that the per capita tax of Tillamook county is \$104.52, the highest in the state. The increase was brought about by the people voting money for so many things. This bugaboo of Mr. Richards is not going to scare the people, for it shows where a large amount of the tax money comes from. Over two-thirds of the land in Tillamook county belongs to non-residents, who pay 60 per cent of the taxes which go to educate the children, build roads and pay the running expenses of the county, which is all new money coming into the county every year. A blind man can see that by lowering the per capita less taxes would be paid by the non-residents.

PIERCE OBTAINED STATE MONEY FRAUDULENTLY

When Walter M. Pierce addressed Tillamook people at the county fair they little dreamed that he had been mixed up in a fraudulent deal involving state school funds. It is a fact, however, that in 1903, Mr. Pierce was in need of \$25,000, and to obtain this he decided his farm to other persons, each of whom borrowed \$5,000.00 from the state, which is the most that one person can borrow. Having obtained the \$25,000.00 loan from the state, the land was deeded back to Pierce. It is claimed that Pierce had some political pull and that was how the fraudulent deal was pulled off. Is that the kind of a man Tillamook people want for governor. It is not surprising that those who had made up their minds for Pierce are now going to vote the republican ticket.

But to get back to the question of high taxation, although I feel like most people that taxes are too high, it is going to be impossible to bring them down at one jump or in one year. It took several years for them to jump skyward, and it will take several years to bring them down. Anyone who will take the trouble to delve into this will have to agree with me, on account of fixed, overhead expenses. But with a united effort on the part of all tax levying bodies to retrench, this can be gradually brought about, but it is impossible if the people keep on demanding all sorts of things and voting money to pay for them, which the over-burdened property owner has to pay for.

With all due respect to my republican friends who have flopped over, blind-folded into the spendthrift democratic party, there is yet a few weeks for them to see the error of their ways, and return and vote for the good old republican party that is reducing taxation.

FRED C. BAKER.

COMMISSIONERS' COURT BILLS ARE ALLOWED FOR SEPTEMBER

GENERAL FUND WARRANTS

Table listing various bills and warrants with amounts. Includes E W Stanley, Justice court \$24.15, R. A. McIntyre, court house 15.00, Chas. I. Clough, supplies 103.35, Ernest Belleque 289.32, etc.

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