

CORVALLIS BOOSTING FOR PAVED STREETS

Will Build a Magnificent Boulevard to the College--Paving Boom Started Address on Civic Pride

Corvallis, Ore., July 15.—The Commercial club of this city gave a smoker last night to start a campaign for civic pride and paved streets, and the beautiful rooms of the club were crowded with boosters for a greater educational center at the west side railroad junction. A high school and magnificent boulevard from the river to the college are talked of and the first spikes were practically driven at the meeting last night which was attended by 300 of the live men of the Benton county metropolis. The principal address was as follows:

Civic Pride and Paved Streets.

Civic pride and street paving are the first and the last letters of the alphabet of patriotism. All progressive policies in a city must emanate from civic pride. Personal pride in your business, or personal enterprise in improving your property or beautifying your premises are commendable private virtues of great benefit to the public. But public enterprise, public spirit, civic pride are a new and, in some communities, almost unknown virtues.

Civic pride is the product of educational influences. Private enterprise is a selfish virtue of which the community gets the indirect benefit. Public enterprise is an unselfish virtue, exactly the reverse, of which the community gets the direct benefit and the private citizen the indirect benefit.

How Civic Pride Is Developed.

The influences that produce civic pride or public enterprise are the press, travel on the part of citizens, commercial organizations and public improvements. While the first three develop sentiment and produce the community spirit that eventuates in action on the part of the majority, every public improvement is an object lesson that spurs not only the community that makes it but every other community in the state to similar action. Communities like to outdo one another. The other day a Salem man came home from a trip across the continent and said the court house at Fort Wayne, Ind., was the most beautiful public building he was in. Less than two weeks after publishing his interview the papers at Portland are talking of erecting a \$500,000 court house at that city. Forty years ago Marion county talked of hanging in effigy the county court that ordered an \$100,000 court house built. Today we are studying how it may be reconstructed to accommodate the growing public business.

Set down this axiom of public policy: Money honestly expended on any public improvement is never lost. It is the best investment that any community can make, and every dollar so invested is a potent influence in the development of a higher civic pride for the elevation of future generations. A single block of paved street is a silent argument day and night for the paving of other streets. There are sermons in cold concrete, arguments in asphalt and books on civic pride in bitulithic pavement.

Charters Must Be Right.

To achieve the highest results in any community, civic pride must have free room for activity under a progressive city charter. Several of the Willamette valley cities have defeated charters the past year, but it was probably due to lack of proper presentation rather than because the charters themselves were too progressive.

Main points in such charters should be to take in all the territory that is properly municipal or likely to be directly benefited by municipal policies and improvements. Salem has a territory three miles long and two miles wide. Formerly two-thirds of the city territory now in was outside and paid no taxes to keep up the city while getting benefits from proximity of location. The second feature of the charter should be sound finance. A budget distributing and securing control of expenditures is absolutely necessary. This includes power to make public improvements over the protest of the element devoid of all public spirit. Third, the charter make public improvements on the important departments in one person.

Government in Commission.

Many American cities have adopted

ed the plan of government by commissions of three or five persons. Galveston, Texas; Los Angeles, Cal., and Des Moines, Iowa, are notable examples. If three county commissioners can successfully govern a whole county, why not a commission government for a city? The Des Moines, Iowa, plan has attracted widest attention. Two years ago the entire city was put under the control of a commission of five men, of whom the mayor is one and is made executive of the Department of Public Affairs by virtue of his office. The departments are:

1. Public Affairs.
2. Accounts and Finance.
3. Public Safety.
4. Streets and Public Improvements.
5. Parks and Public Property.

Give People Control.

The Des Moines plan combines with government by commission the initiative and referendum and the recall, and direct nomination of candidates. By the initiative the voter can force the enactment of legislation demanded by the majority of the electorate even though opposed by the commission. By the referendum the electorate can check unwise expenditure of public funds, the granting of improper franchises, or the adoption of an ordinance objectionable to the people. The last provision is considered the most important of the three—the recall. While the commissioners are elected by the voters for a definite term, their tenure of office can be terminated at any time. Thus the governing body is always directly and immediately responsible to the governed.

By amendment to the constitution all Oregon cities have the powers enumerated in the Des Moines plan, and can adopt the commission system without recourse to the legislature.

Non-Partisan and Business.

It is now generally conceded that good municipal government demands non-partisan and business administration. The best advertisement that any city can have, the greatest stimulus to civic pride and public enterprise, lies in the fact that partisan political rewards for political activity be absolutely cut out of all the calculations. The time when a political machine levied tribute on vice to carry primaries, and then exacted contributions from all office-holders to carry the party ticket to success is happily past in most well developed communities. One of the greatest stimulations to the growth of the city of Salem is the establishment of a city and school government in which there is not a dollar of graft possible. In a city where graft dominates civic pride is exhausted in combating boodles when it should be exerted in building up the community. Any partnership between municipal government and vice is fatal to real public spirit. A city that cannot make public improvements without licensing vice in some form cannot expect to make any real and substantial growth in any direction.

Public Improvements Pay.

Public improvements pay on their own account. The city of Portland owes much to publicity work, but a great deal more to the civic pride and public spirit of its property owners who insist on paving streets, constructing sewers, laying sidewalks and cross walks, opening parks and boulevards, and building many bridges. From three to five millions are thrown into the public improvement pool every year, and that money circulates. Nine-tenths of it is expended for labor, common and skilled labor, and labor in nine cases out of ten lives from hand to mouth and the nimble dollar circulates and benefits and blesses every hand through which it passes. These dollars very seldom get back into cold storage. It is the dollar that is salted down, that never moves but draws interest, that enriches its owner alone and too often impoverishes others, and the community that has the right balance between the active and the inactive dollar is the community where business prospers, property improves, and the sunshine of prosperity smiles on the efforts of the masses of the people.

Most Cities Too Easy.

Why is Seattle the swift city of progress? Because all improvements are very expensive. It takes three feet of foundation for an asphalt pavement. The city rests on soft, shifting, spongy blue clay, that has to be taken out and rock material hauled in. Four to six horses are employed to haul a cubic yard up these hills. Ten dollars a load for gravel or sand. Three to six hundred dollars for paving in front of a 50-foot lot. Property of a half block was recently sold for \$300,000 street improvement assessment. Queen Anne Hill pavement will cost \$20 a front foot. At Salem, we groan over six dollars a front foot. If Corvallis were not so level, if it had more obstacles to overcome, it would be a better city. If it had to put in a \$200,000 sewer system, or be exposed to an epidemic or washed away, if it had to cut streets through solid rocks, if it had to bridge the river to save its retail trade, there would be a demand for public spirit and civic pride would rise to meet it. It is because you have had nothing to do that you have done nothing. It is because so much has been done for Salem that so little has been done by the city itself.

Corvallis Has Pride.

The people of Corvallis have more pride than almost any city in the valley. They have put in mountain water, which no other city but Portland has in the Willamette valley. Salem will spend half a million some day for that purpose, but it will not be done until the state capital is threatened to be taken away from us. Salem has put in a \$70,000 high school and found it the best investment ever made to bring people to the city and advertise to the whole state that we are becoming the great educational center. Corvallis could not make a better investment that to meet the demands of the whole state that they cease to rely upon a state educational institution to do their high school work. A determination on the part of Corvallis today to erect a model high school would go farther to secure liberal appropriations for the Agricultural college than any other step you could take. That would make Corvallis the educational center of the Willamette valley, and do you know that there is no asset today that pays a community such large dividends as educational enthusiasm? You have the pride and you should buy a little enthusiasm to go along with it.

A free high school with fine athletic grounds in a city like this is a great drawing card that brings large families to live in the city. The parents figure that the children can be at home and go through the high school and then they will know what they wish to follow for life, and the high school is one of the greatest sources of civic pride for any city. It would build your city and build the college.

Policy of Justice.

One great fundamental reason why you should pull for a high school, for a bridge across the Willamette, a sewer system, and paved streets is because all such public improvements involve a policy of justice that does not prevail in any other system of making improvements. The Commercial club, the stock company, the cannery or the new railroad are all the result of effort on the part of the public-spirited citizen who is in active business, who is too often paying rents, or straining himself with private capital to carry on a factory or business in open competition with the whole world. But when you develop public spirit to the point that something is done by levying a tax for a special purpose you are putting the whole community under the load instead of a few well-meaning citizens. So-called public spirit is often private robbery in which those least able to be robbed are the victims. But when you build a bridge, dig a sewer, construct a school building, or pave a street everybody benefitted has to help pay the bill.

All Interests Taxed Alike.

Paving a street or building a sewer levies upon the property of the railroad company, the lodge, the church, the bank, the city and the county, the unsettled estate, the non-resident, the dead men—whether physically or merely civically dead—great and small—all are assessed as much as benefitted and the majority of such interests would never of their own accord make any such expenditure for the public good. Hence the necessity of having charters right, of having public sentiment right, of educating courts, city and county authorities and the conservative of every community, that the time has come for the community to go forward. The beauty of this system is that when you make good improvements—and you cannot well make them too good—the burden that falls heaviest falls where it benefits most and upon

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Program for Corvallis.

I would recommend as a program for Corvallis that you pave two streets at right angles, one running from the river to the State college, and then your principal business street. Start in on the business blocks where the property pays the highest rents, and pave at least three blocks. It will divert so much traffic to that street that the rest will be easy. There will be some mistaken opposition. Big property owners and big interests may resist any kind of paving adopted, but if you act wisely and adopt a high-class, expensive pavement that in a city like this will practically be indestructible, the property will have but one bill to pay for this kind of improvement in the lifetime of present owners. One thousand feet of pavement on Court street, Salem, has converted the whole city to the wisdom of paving the principal streets, and if we had paved those streets 20 years ago, Salem would now be the largest inland city on the coast.

Effect on Your City.

Your principal business street paved and a beautiful boulevard to this magnificent Farmers' college that the state and the United States are building and maintaining for you, every foot of property would double in value the first year. Forty blocks now worth \$60,000 to \$80,000 would be worth \$120,000 to \$160,000 and half of them would change hands inside of two years, net profit to the owners of the property \$30,000 to \$40,000 or more than the cost of putting down the most expensive paving. The property that did not sell at advanced prices would cost the owners more for taxes, and yet their comfort would be enhanced ten times as much as their increased taxes would amount to.

Greatest Effect of All.

But the turning loose in your midst of money for this improvement would have the best effect of all. Most of this money would be spent for common labor and material that you have right here at home, and the laborers and mechanics would immediately spend it for necessities for better clothing and furniture, for new stoves and footwear and millinery, and pay old bills which they cannot pay without some form of public employment. More laborers who have no home of their own would buy cheap lots and erect little homes in your suburbs and your churches and your lodges would all thrive, and Corvallis would be a hive of industry, a happy busy place, where men and teams would not starve half the time for want of employment, as has too often been the case in our valley cities at certain times of the year. The one-lunged town where people struggle for an existence without public improvements in the employment fund, are a sorry place for the poorer class of citizens.

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