

The Ferguson Forum

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INTEREST



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TAXES

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Promise Highway if \$10,000, Thompson Resigns, To Quit Salary Stays at \$8,000

Austin, Tex., May 4.—The resignation of R. A. Thompson, highway engineer, unless the Fortieth legislature in special session grants him an annual salary of \$10,000, was indicated Saturday night.

Questioned as to his attitude toward action of the Senate Finance Committee in cutting recommendations for his salary from \$10,000 to \$8,000, Thompson declared he was "promised \$10,000 a year and expected the promise to be fulfilled. If the legislature fails to approve, I then shall announce what I shall do."

Following a long conference with Governor Dan Moody regarding the budget of the highway department and the work that is being done, Thompson said Saturday he would resign as consulting engineer of the Garza Lake project near Dallas.

This step, while it was not asked by Moody, is being taken, Thompson said, "in order that I may devote my entire time and be free to work only in my position as chief engineer of the highway department."

Moody said he did not oppose Thompson's outside work in the past and had made no attempt to force the resignation.

Some Women Can Bear Twins Every Year and Beat Men as Lawmakers, Says Lady Astor

London, May 4.—Lady Astor, who enlivened the proceedings of the House of Commons recently with a vigorous attack on opponents of a bill, subsequently defeated, to prevent the dismissal of women public service employees on their marriage, defended her own position as a married woman in public life.

"The more I see of public life," she said in a talk with a correspondent for the Associated Press, "the more I care about home life, but I don't want the law to regulate what work I should take up. That is my affair, as it is that of any woman employed in the public service."

One of Lady Astor's assertions in her Commons speech was that she knew some women who could have twins every year and still be more efficient than some members of Parliament in conducting the public business.

"It was my husband who started me on the downward path from home to the House of Commons," she said.

After Escaping Law 48 Years Man Gives up for Old Offense

Dublin, Texas, May 4.—Several days ago an elderly man walked into the office of Sheriff M. D. Hassler at Stephenville and said to Deputy Sheriff Ross Pearcey: "My name is Russ Holloway, and I live in Callahan County. I was indicted in Erath County in 1879, charged with the murder of a man named Roberson, and I want to surrender."

Holloway told Deputy Sheriff Pearcey that after his indictment in 1879 he made his escape, and for almost half a century has been a fugitive from justice, traveling almost all over the world. He is now 72 years old. After employing counsel he was released on bond of \$2,500 and departed for his home in Callahan County.

Marion Roberson was killed on Saturday night, March 29, 1879. Billie King, Constable in Dublin at the time, deputized Bud Keith, Marion Roberson and John Ross to help him serve a warrant. The shooting grew out of an attempt to make an arrest on a charge of carrying a pistol. The law making it unlawful to carry concealed weapons had just been enacted. Marion Roberson and John Ross were killed in the shooting. Both funerals were conducted from the Ross home by the Rev. R. D. Ross, a pioneer Baptist preacher of Dublin, and both were buried in a double grave in the Old Dublin Cemetery.

HUDSPETH NOT TO RUN FOR MAYFIELD'S SEAT NOW

Austin, Tex., May 3.—Congressman Claude Hudspeth from El Paso, here in the interest of appropriations for the School of Mines there, said he is not a candidate for the United States senate and will not run against Earle B. Mayfield, contrary to some reports.

Beauties Come From Other Lands to Vie With Home Charmers

Galveston, Tex., May 4.—Galveston Island still was talking today about the five girls who stopped here briefly Sunday en route for a tour of southwestern points, prior to entering the second international pageant of pulchritude here on May 21, 22 and 23. Royal was the welcome accorded to the girls, who came to America from France, Italy, Portugal, Luxembourg and Cuba maintain the standards of feminine loveliness of their countries in competition with American girls.

The Mallory Line pier was gay with bunting and thronged with people on the arrival of the French liner Niagara, bearing the beauties to this country. The girls were greeted by a reception committee headed by Mayor J. E. Pearcey, who presented them with keys to the city.

A luncheon and reception at Hotel Galvez, and automobile rides about the city preceded the departure of the girls, accompanied by their chaperones and foreign newspaper correspondents, for New Orleans, where they were joined by "Miss Spain."

Canada Starts Move to Put Embargo on Rum Running Trade

Washington, May 4.—The Canadian government today invited treasury and state department representatives to meet in Ottawa next month to negotiate an anti-rum running treaty. It will be similar to pacts now in effect with Great Britain and Cuba.

L. C. Andrews, dry chief, said the Canadian treaty would be a formidable weapon in checking the influx of liquor into the United States by water.

A HIGHWAY EXPLOSION

To use a Mama Hannah expression, "Hell's tore loose in Georgia." However, this time it is not in Georgia, but it is in Austin, the capital of Texas. The papers tell it in different head lines. The Dallas News says "that Moody pours oil on angry road waters." The Fort Worth Star Telegram says that "Moody policies given first open blow." The Austin American says, "Dan endorses position of road board."

In any event, though, everybody says the Highway Commission of this administration has gotten into trouble much quicker than was expected. R. A. Thompson, the Chief Engineer of the Highway Department and Highway Commissioner Cone Johnson seem to be the center of discussion. When the Highway Department was appointed everybody thought that the chairman, Ross Sterling, would be the dominating factor in the Highway Commission. It has developed though that he has but little to say, and when he does say it, it is of such small consequence that nobody pays him any mind. Nobody has ever found out yet how to make money take the place of brains. The possession of one is not evidence of the possession of the other.

But the trouble is over Johnson and Thompson. Johnson has already become frantic and desperate. In so many words, he says that if things don't go to suit him that he will resign or die and that all appointments were made strictly on merit—whether the appointee voted for Ferguson or Moody and that no Chamber of Commerce or delegation of citizens are wanted by the Highway Commission in their labors. In other words, poor old Cone has gotten hot in the collar and is telling everybody to go away back and sit down. It is the talk of Austin, and a great surprise to many, how the appointment seems to have gone to Old Man Johnson's head. Two Senators who were strong in support of Moody are now astraddle of the Highway Commission's neck because they say that the Highway Commission is playing too much politics.

Nobody blames the Moody administration for putting the Ferguson people out and the Moody people in. That is what they had a right to do and I think they were wholly within their political rights in doing so and they are doing it to a Queen's state and when Old Man Cone says they are not making political appointments and everything is done on merit he either makes an incorrect statement or the ravages of age have set so heavily upon him that he does not know what is going on in his own department. Frankly, I think Cone knows but he is just playing to the galleries. The reason why I say so is because the main appointment made by the Highway Commission, but which appointment was announced from the governor's office before the Highway Commission ever had a meeting, to-wit:—the appointment of R. A. Thompson as chief engineer, has no merit to back it or law to sustain it. Listen to me, Brother Cone, while I read you the law, as you shout that everything is done on merit. Article 6906 I-6 D Civil Statutes, among other things says "the State Highway Commission shall elect a State Highway Engineer who shall be a competent Civil Engineer and a graduate of some first class school of civil engineering, experienced and skilled in highway construction and maintenance." I do not know Mr. Thompson personally but on information, which I deemed reliable, I charge that Mr. Thompson is neither experienced or skilled in highway construction and maintenance. I challenge Mr. Johnson, when he talks about appointment on merit alone, to name the construction or maintenance road project that Mr. Thompson ever had any connection with and I challenge Mr. Johnson to show where Mr. Thompson has ever had any experience or skill in constructing or maintaining anybody's roads anywhere. I have been informed that Mr. Thompson, when discussing the duties of his position, stated that this road business was "Greek" to him. If I am wrong Mr. Thompson can correct me. The University authorities advised me that Mr. Thompson graduated in the University in 1900—27 years ago. While this may be true, nobody will contend that at that time the University of Texas was a first class school of engineering. So, Mr. Johnson, it is up to you. Let's have the facts on your big appointment, which you say was on merit, skill and experience in road matters.

But the astounding thing is that Mr. Johnson admitted in open session that his chief engineer is now holding two jobs. They admit my charge of two weeks ago that Thompson was drawing \$500.00 a month for two days' work in the week for the City of Dallas and drawing \$600.00 a month for four days work in each week for the State of Texas. Johnson says that no other engineer will be permitted to take any kind of private employment. The question is then, if it is wrong for one of the subordinate engineers to take employment how can the employment of the chief engineer be permitted? Johnson says that this two job position on the part of Thompson will continue two months longer. I call on the attorney general to stop this misuse of public funds and Governor Moody has publicly stated that he does not approve of Thompson's holding two jobs. I call on him, as governor of the state, to demand of his highway commission that Thompson either resign or get on the job.

It is amusing to read how the highway commission is promising to spend millions when less than thirty days ago Brother Johnson went up in

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Moody Called in to Quiet Row Between Highway Board and Senators Fixing Budget

It has not been so long ago since the newspapers were parading under flaming headlines and with big type reports about the Texas Highway Commission under the administration of Governor Miriam A. Ferguson. The impression had been created that when Dan Moody became governor the highway commission would become a scene of harmony and Sunday school tranquility, but Cone Johnson has ordained otherwise. Commissioner Johnson has become a roaring, rip-snorting, rantankerous figure in the highway and brooks neither criticism nor advice.

In view of the great publicity given the Ferguson highway bodies it is appropriate that the Forum give its readers the following highly thrilling report of a recent session of the Moody highway commission which was published in the Dallas Morning News of Saturday, April 29, having been furnished by the special staff bureau of that paper from Austin:

Austin, Tex., April 28.—Gov. Dan Moody spent an hour Thursday as peacemaker between the Highway Commission and members of the Senate Finance Committee, following a heated clash. The row occurred in the forenoon and immediately after lunch the Governor remained an hour in executive session with the committee.

The mix-up arose over charges as to the policies of the commission, Senators being ignored, communities not having favorite division engineers and pavement types of road. Senators and others in high official positions have not been given much recognition by the present commission. It was said, and apparently this ruffled them. The session was warm with Cone Johnson of the commission taking a leading part and with sniping done at R. A. Thompson, highway engineer.

Moody told the committee the commission has a hard job with much responsibility and for that reason it should bear with it. However, the Governor said he did not approve of the highway engineer taking private employment, which is to end in two months, while drawing a salary from the State. The Governor also thought some of the salary figures requested by the commission were possibly too high, but said he had left the whole highway administration to the commission, which is to end in two months, and that it was responsible. He also indicated that he had every confidence in it. As to the division engineers, Moody said he knew only three selected and that they appeared to be capable and well recommended.

As soon as the Governor left the committee went to work on the Highway Commission's budget. It cut many of the salaries where raises had been requested, but not to present figures. After its tilt with Thompson the salary for that position was fixed at \$8,000, as against the present \$7,000 and the \$10,000 asked by the commission.

Johnson said emphatically that Senators, Representatives, Chambers of Commerce or others can not use influence with the commission in obtaining aid for roads and that "merit alone will control." He said that while the commission was glad to receive members of the Legislature their presence was unnecessary, as the County Judges were well able to present the needs of the counties and the commission was best able to decide whether it has the funds available for such work.

There were warm exchanges between Johnson and Senators Westbrook, Parr, Fairchild and Holbrook.

It developed that some Senators are worth because division engineers were removed by the new commission and others appointed. Johnson said the removals were a result of the complete reorganization and a determination "to bring the Highway Commission into the confidence of the people."

There was a disagreement between Johnson and Parr as to the type of roads, Johnson asserting that the new policy is to require permanent construction and that no aid will be allowed unless the road has that as the ultimate plan. Parr remonstrated that cement is being given the preference and he charged that it was "due to the activities of a man once named as a possible Highway Commissioner." Johnson as vigorously denied that this man had any influence with the commission and said he had never talked with him about such matters.

Johnson explained the different road types and declared that cement or other comparable permanent plans are required in the interest of economy. He said millions had been spent on gravel roads only to have them blow away in a few years and he also said it costs \$20,000,000 annually now to maintain the roads and if the same type was continued the cost would be \$15,000,000 in five years from now. These are the reasons the commission insists on permanent highways, he said.

R. A. Thompson, chief engineer of the commission, came in for attention, Parr charging that he has taken private employment while drawing a salary from the state.

Johnson answered that Thompson was in the midst of the final work on the Garza Dam project for Dallas and could not be spared from it at this time, but that as soon as it was completed Thompson would terminate that employment.

"Mr. Thompson has received several other offers of private employment," added Johnson, "but has turned them down and will take none."

Johnson also said that no division or other engineer with the department will be permitted to take any kind of private employment.

Thompson also made a statement of his Dallas employment, saying it was understood with the Governor and with the Highway Commission that he would complete his Garza Dam work. It would last not more than two months longer.

When "Cone Johnson" declared "there are no politics mixed up in this matter," Parr heatedly interrupted:

"There may not be now, but there will be two years hence," he said. Johnson answered:

"All right. You will find me right there telling the people about this very thing. I still am a young man. I made 200 speeches in one campaign and I will make 300, if necessary, to advise Texas of this matter, and I will start on the splendid roads built under the direction of this commission in Senator Parr's own district."

Another angle was the appearance of Milton Howe, a private engineer of Houston, who said the State didn't have a job he would even consider.

"I was in town on business and hearing of this meeting I came to plead for adequate salaries for the division engineers for the Highway Commission in the interest of efficiency and economy," said Howe.

Questioned by Fairchild and Parr, Howe said highway matters had been set back several years by former policies in making wholesale changes.

All of this came when the members of the commission had completed their presentation of the budget needs for the coming two years. The commission also appeared before the house committee, but the session was stormy.

Senator Holbrook wanted to know why a certain district engineer was not reappointed and the same question was asked as to others.

Johnson said the commission decided on a complete reorganization and that all the eighteen division engineers were replaced and that "no alibis would be taken from them." He said Thompson had prepared the list, but that the commission approved it and assumed responsibility for it.

People were complaining of these changes, the Senators said, and Johnson answered that where one such complaint had been received the commission received 100 in commendation.

"No man has been employed or discharged because of politics," said Johnson. "Merit alone has guided this commission."

Fairchild—You voted for Ferguson two years ago?

Johnson—Yes.

Fairchild—Then you are drawing a pension.

Johnson—I say emphatically that no man has been fired or hired because he supported Moody or Ferguson. No such influence controlled us.

"You can dynamite this budget into smithereens," continued Johnson, "because of our action, but the fact remains we are striving for efficiency. These division engineers are not going to have any alibis. That was the trouble with their predecessors. Their employees were hired on orders from Austin. Not so with us. The Austin-appointed employees defied orders when they did not suit them. We have told our engineers to pick their own employees, for we are going to hold them responsible."

Fairchild said that in discharging one division engineer, Thompson said the commission let him out and the commission told him Thompson did it, and he would like to know the straight of it.

"We ordered the list made by Thompson and we approved it. You can see how it was done, as there is no secret about anything we do," answered Johnson.

The question of Senators being ignored came up again and Parr said his people in the past had asked him to appear before the commission and

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