

Attorney Offers Seven Reforms To Lower Taxes

Moore Urges Repeal Of Covert Road Law, Other Measures To Ease Real Estate's Burden

Inflated real estate values and special assessment improvement programs, conducted in more prosperous times, are responsible for Oakland County's present deplorable financial condition, but through the adoption of seven reforms he advocates the excessive burden of taxation can be lifted, A. L. Moore, Pontiac attorney, told members of the United Service Club, of Royal Oak, last Thursday.

In his address, Mr. Moore cited the large amounts of delinquent drain and Covert road taxes which are later charged back to the general roll, and the improvements, therefore, come to be special assessment obligations but are added to the general tax roll.

Mr. Moore's program advocates that:

- (1) The Covert road law be repealed, since under its workings hundreds of acres of property have been confiscated.
- (2) The drain laws be amended, since under them the county drain commissioner can build a drain that is, in reality, a sanitary sewer, something not intended.
- (3) The state take over all unpaid installments of special assessments on Covert road bonds outstanding when such roads were built as a part of trunk line highways.
- (4) A referendum act to make it possible for counties to abolish the township-county form of government and establish a single unit government to effect local economy.
- (5) All primary school funds be derived from indirect taxation, since in the less populated school districts, at least, the school tax should not be levied directly against property.
- (6) Local expenses be cut wherever possible.
- (7) State laws be amended so that the state tax commission which sets values on properties in the state should not have the mar-

A Bird in Hand



One Thanksgiving shopper who believes that a bird in hand is worth two in the bush is Little Miss Ruth Brown, above, who is shown here smiling in anticipation of a great feast from the big fellow in the foreground. Ruth got the turkey at the Monterey County Fair at Del Monte, Calif., recently.

majority vote of the board to which appeal from these values is made.

Survey Was Made

The First Detroit City of Detroit and the board of auditors recently made a survey of the interest-bearing indebtedness of

by this process, is far too high. Yet the state tax commission places the valuation still higher and last year increased our valuation by \$112,000,000. From this there is no appeal, since the state tax commission constitutes the majority of the board of appeals, is it likely that they will reverse their own figures?

Let Court Decide

"I would like to see the assessing officers in the southeastern part of the county put the value of lots back where they belong, at their true cash value and stand together as a unit to preserve these values.

"Then, if the state tax commission comes along and tries to raise these figures, let the case be tested, not in state courts, but in the federal court. As a lawyer, I say to you that no court would uphold the higher values when the assessed valuations amount to confiscation and are such that they could not be realized by sale in 200 years.

Something Wrong

"In Southfield township, delinquent returns are 60 per cent; in Royal Oak township, 61 per cent; in Royal Oak city, 32 per cent on city taxes and 43 per cent on state

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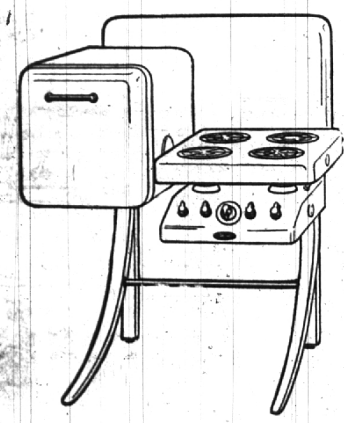
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THE DETROIT EDISON CO.

of Oakland county and its every subdivision and found this to be \$63,566,000, or \$302 for every man, woman and child. The interest alone on this sum each year at 4 1/2 per cent could be apportioned at \$13.59 per capita," he said.

"The board of auditors further found that the direct indebtedness of the county was \$2,903,014.84 and that the indirect indebtedness was \$13,999,000, or a total of \$16,902,014.84.

"In addition there was \$1,265,000 placed in the budget recommended by the ways and means committee and adopted by the board of supervisors to cover overdrafts in county funds, and the board was forced to authorize the auditors and the committee to borrow some \$2,200,000, which must later be raised by taxation.

Bigger Budget

"The amount of the budget as adopted for this year was \$2,856,660, or \$698,808 more than last year. The reason for this large increase, despite reductions in general funds, was the huge overdrafts in the poor fund and in the general funds to meet Covert road and drain bonds that should have been paid from taxes which went delinquent. Added to the general budget is \$612,000 in Covert road taxes at large and when all taxes, state, county, Covert road and drain are added together, the county's tax bill this winter will be \$6,134,762.

"The superintendents of poor report that they have spent this year, \$753,019 in temporary relief and \$105,904 in general relief, a total of \$858,923, or three times the amount spent in any other single year.

System At Fault

"The fault for this large amount of poor relief does not rest with the poor commissioners, but with the system and the conditions under which they work. I advocate that the state laws permit the poor commissioners to have larger powers to allow them to co-ordinate their work with each local government.

"I further advocate that a man who receives relief should return that relief, dollar for dollar, in labor and results to the community in which he resides. The local municipalities must set up a program of public improvements, even though no provision has been made in the budget, so that the program will consume the labor that the man who secures relief should give.

"The county's figures for poor relief do not show the exact amount given for such relief, since the money and labor spent by charitable organizations is not included. It is a fitting paradox that this, one of the richest counties in the state, still must spend such huge sums for poor relief.

What's Capacity?

"Why do we owe and how can we pay?

"I recently asked several Detroit realtors the question: What is the potential housing capacity of the Detroit metropolitan area in a 50-mile radius out of Detroit.

"One firm set the figure at 40,000,000. The firm that referred me to Prof. Fisher of the University of Michigan, who estimates such an area at 4,000 square miles, and with the same density of population as existed in Detroit in 1920, he sets the potential at 52,100,000 persons. He says that he considers the metropolitan area to include an 11-mile circle and gives the possible population of that area as 7,808,000 and extending it to 25 miles to include Pontiac, approximately 20,000,000. Before that growth is reached, several hundreds of years will be passed.

Valuation Too High?

"Yet somebody buys 20 or 40 acres of land, assessed as farm land, subdivides it and places a price on the subdivision as lots and the assessing officer comes around and assesses it inside of about 12 months from 300 to 500 per cent higher. On that assessment, taxes have to be paid.

"Supervisors have declared that the county's valuation, arrived at



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