

SYNOPSIS OF STATEMENT
By
ED FLETCHER
TO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
HUMBOLT COUNTY

I appreciate the courtesy extended me by your Honorable Body to discuss for a few moments the question of tax values and the necessity of curtailing the expense of county government.

While I live in San Diego County I represent the Ward Estate who owns 6,000 acres of redwood timber in Humbolt County and 20,000 acres in Del Norte County. We have never made a protest before your Board of Equalization and have for the last 27 years, paid our taxes regularly until financial conditions made it impossible the last two years. We are making every effort to sell this property at a cost of approximately 50¢ a thousand stumpage both in Humbolt and Del Norte Counties.

I am not here to offend in any way but the fact remains you are assessing our redwood timber at approximately \$ per thousand feet stumpage or an appraised value of \$ a thousand feet while we are making every effort and as yet have been unable to sell even at 50¢ a thousand feet.

Several large holdings have recently been sold at much less than the appraised value made by your county assessor. I am pleading with you for this coming year to take under serious consideration the lowering of your valuations. It is being done all over the state. Yet the county assessor of Humbolt County places a value of approximately 50 million dollars this year as a basis of assessment, approximately the same valuation made in the years 1926, 27, 28, 29 and 30.

San Diego County the last two years has reduced its realty values 5%, Los Angeles County approximately the same and there is hardly a county in the state but what has reduced its assessed valuations 15 to 20%.

Taxes and assessed values have become so high that there is no question realty owners are on a strike all over the state and the nation as well with the result that there is a delinquency in Southern California of 20 to 50% in the payment of taxes this year.

The entire state of Oregon has an average delinquency of 45.12% with some counties such as Curry, 81.96%; Grant 77.75%; Wheeler, 77.54%.

I understand your neighboring county, Del Norte, is over 60% delinquent and conditions are getting worse.

Humbolt County troubles are ahead of them. This is my prediction.

I beg of you to cut down your budget from 15 to 25% at least and this coming year reduce your assessed values to conform to the actual conditions of Humbolt County will find itself 50 to 40% delinquent in its collection of taxes, unable to pay its interest and sinking fund on its bonds and will be crying for help as so many other counties of the state are doing today. You must cut down your operating expenses to fit existing conditions.

I have been active for years in Community Chest work. We are feeding 22,000 people today where we were feeding 14,500 a year ago.. Los Angeles County with its two and a half million population is wholly or partially feeding 475,000 people today.

The following data may be of interest. Since 1911 California has gained 107.64% in population yet its bonding indebtedness has increased 1914.52% or from \$5,677,500 to \$114,575,500. Since 1912 California counties alone have increased their debts from \$22,555,690 to \$234,415,578. The cities of California have increased their debt since 1911 from \$65,575,055 to \$574,415,578.

From 1917 to 1919 the Biennial budget of the State of California was \$81,122,662. The State budget passed by the last legislature totals approximately

\$265,000,000 or an increase of approximately 500%.

Excepting Nevada, California is the most heavily-taxed state in the Union. For the last calendar year, government expenditures in the state are said to have been: Municipal, \$255,969,671; Counties, \$545,292,761; and State, \$114,968,768, making a total of \$725,250,201, which, added to Federal tax collections of \$149,289,508, makes the year's total \$872,539,509.

This total of \$872,539,509 equals 53% of the basic income of California from Agriculture, Mining, Oil, Logging, Fisheries and Manufacturing.

Compared to the \$16,757 California incomes taxed by the Federal Government, the total tax bill exceeded the total income from salaries and wages; it was more than the total of business profits and capital gains; more than twice the amount received from realty profits, rents and royalties; and it was more than five times the amount of interest earned on loans.

Do you not think it is about time for us to investigate and retrench in your county to the bone?

I do not want to be considered a pessimist or an alarmist. I am known as an optimist but I want to impress upon you the fact that this is war, worse than 1918. It is our job to correct existing conditions. There is no question that if this is done we will, one of these days, be on the road to recovery and will have learned our lesson.

Ed Fletcher Papers

1870-1955

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Statement to Humboldt City

Board of Supervisors



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