Capitol To Be Built Upon or Near Old Site

Further Move is Opposed as Sentiment Among Solons "Jells"

Use of Federal Fund to Buy Some New Land Held Possible

By C. A. SPRAGUE

Legislative sentiment is commencing to jell with reference to the "major problem" of the special session. And this the direction of the coagulation:

First, the new capitol will be constructed on or near the old site.

Second, the legislature will not appropriate any large sum over the $3,500,000 state-federal amount to be used in purchase of land.

Factors which work to the elimination of some of the suggested sites, Candalaria, Bush pasture, Morningside heights, are: the constitutional inhibition against moving the capitol outside the old city limits, and the dread of loss and inconvenience by starting a new development remote from the present buildings.

May Appropriate Sum To Assist Purchase

The final solution may be that the legislature will appropriate a certain amount ($500,000 is the maximum limit) and empower the commission to buy additional land adjacent to the present holdings. This would permit expansion north, south or east. With the use of ten per cent of the $3,500,000 sum, this would be sufficient to purchase the Willamette campus or a considerable area north of Court street. The amount of special appropriation would be reduced by the city's contribution or by increase in the percentage allowed on the federal grant.

Suspicion that PWA rules may prove costly encourages some sentiment in favor of Oregon's going ahead on its own. Senator Burke has a bill to that effect, for a $2,000,000 structure on the old ground. Engineer Hockley of PWA, however, was emphatic in saying that experience showed the increases were slight over private construction. Home state loyalty favoring use of Oregon materials even at higher prices may also work against accepting the federal grant which requires that contracts go to lowest bidders.

Slow Gear to Prevail For Another Week

This week will see the legislature move on slow gear. The capitol committees are pace-setters and they cannot break traffic rules. They are still curious to know how the supreme court feels on going to the environs of Salem. They want more information from technical men as to whether one or more than one building should be built now. Section two is still to be settled, which covers the commission to handle the job. Finally the committees are not yet ready to say: "Let X mark the spot" where the new building goes. The senate committee will act this week however; and the bill should be through the senate by the last of this week or first of next. The house may take several days because members there, all up for reelection next year, dread this vote like they do the Townsend bill vote or a chain store measure.

The senate organization, largely hold-over, with experienced membership, is functioning smoothly. The house which began with many ruffled feathers is smoothing out nicely now. There are still some patronage sore spots. But Speaker Latourette has established himself; and is getting quite a coherent backing. While some of his following is quite independent, particularly with respect to backing Governor Martin, Latourette is bridging the

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gap and endeavoring to keep satisfactory relations with the executive department.

Gov. Martin made a very impressive message. He spoke with assurance, with knowledge of his subject, and his words carried conviction. The follow-up was not so good. Somewhere the signals got mixed and the administration was thrown for a yardage loss at the opening hearing on the capitol question. The explanation is that the planning board did not expect to appear except to answer questions, though its printed report was adequate. Gov. Martin wisely did not appear before the committee because that would have been anti-climax. So the state case for expansion was not well presented the first night. This weakness was offset the second night when speakers were more eloquent, both for and against expansion.

Three factors diminish the governor's personal power at the session. First, his office is remote from the legislative halls; second he has no liaison officer able to do a good job of herding legislative mavericks; and third, in lifting the bars against all but emergency legislation he threw away his weapons for control of recalcitrants, most all of whom have special bills of their own.

Funnel Mouth Wide But Outlet Small

Law-making will not be restricted to settling the capitol question. Members say: "Here we are; only a few are on the capitol committees. Shall we do nothing while these committees work? Why not get in and do something on meritorious legislation? At any rate the funnel mouth is wide; but members will find the outlet vent very small. The house rules committee has a means in resolution No. 2 which will enable it to kill off most of the bills that come in.

Meantime also there is time for political fence-building for the next session. Franciscovich remains a candidate for the senate post of presiding officer; and his selection as head of the important capitol construction committee marks him for heir apparent. The house is still too badly flummoxed to get bearings for the 1937 session. The caucus a week ago boxed the political compass both on the republican and the democratic sides. There are too many members, also, with slim chances of coming back.

Meantime nobody talks about hurrying home; and the session sails are set for the full 20 days.