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HOPE OF THE FUTURE.

In Irrigation Lies the Salvation of the Nation.

George H. Maxwell Sets Forth Clearly and Plainly What the People Must Do With Their Acres of Arid Lands.

[From the Anaconda News, July 25]

George H. Maxwell, executive chairman of the National Irrigation association, delivered an exceedingly interesting and entertaining lecture last evening at the Margaret. The subject of Mr. Maxwell's lecture was irrigation and he handled it in a manner which showed that he has given the subject the deepest thought. During the entire two hours of Mr. Maxwell's lecture his listeners were held in closest attention. Mr. Maxwell's profound knowledge of the question upon which he talked was clearly evidenced throughout the entire lecture. His argument was set forth clearly and plainly. He did not attempt any great flights or oratory. He knew he addressed men who like to hear the truth and hear it in plain words. Mr. Maxwell, however, made up for his sparse use of big words by his intense earnestness. He has a way of getting right down to the bottom of his subject and he has ever in mind the fact that it is his chief aim to make his audience understand instead of bewildering them with long and involved sentences. Last night's audience was heart and soul with Mr. Maxwell. They had come there to hear the vast problem of irrigation elucidated and they heard it. They applauded the speaker liberally, but were not boisterous in their demonstration. They took into their minds the points which Mr. Maxwell set forth and they will think them over calmly at their leisure. Mr. Maxwell has an excellent voice and a splendid stage presence. His words come with distinctness of bell notes and could easily be heard in every part of the house.

The lecture was under the auspices of the Deer Lodge County Trades and Labor assembly. John K. Boardman, city attorney, presided, and introduced Mr. Maxwell in a few words.

Mr. Maxwell at once plunged into his subject. He said that although the people of Anaconda do not live in a community where irrigation is a matter of vital importance at this time, the people of this region are daily becoming more concerned with it. In that way he accounted for the interest which is being taken in the meetings throughout the country. The purpose of the organization which he represented was to impress upon the people of the nation the importance of irrigation. So far, unfortunately, only a few realize the magnitude of the possibilities which the problem involves. If one were to ask every man he meets what should be done with the waste waters of the west, 99 out of a hundred would say he didn't know. But the light is rapidly spreading and the people are coming to a realization of what is before them.

"Irrigation to day is not only one of the greatest questions before the people. It is by all odds the greatest, and the people are going to solve it as they solve every other great question." The land problem, said Mr. Maxwell, is the underlying basis of social economy. Macaulay said that the republican institutions of this country would endure so long as there is an outlet for the surplus population; when the outlet is stopped and the cities begin to get blocked then the republican institutions will begin to crumble and fall. Mr. Maxwell did not subscribe to the prophecy. The American people had grappled with great questions before and they had solved them; they are solving them today. The fact that about all the land where irrigation is not needed has been taken up and converted into farms is not a cause of alarm. There are millions upon millions of acres of rich and fertile land in the United States which awaits but the magic touch of water to make it blossom and bloom even as does the land of the Mississippi valley.

The people own two-thirds of the entire western half of the United States. What is it worth, what are its capabilities, what will it accomplish and do? The government owns 100,000,000 acres of land which is capable of reclamation by irrigation. The government land alone in the western territory is enough to support a population greater than the entire population of the United States at this time. If the flood waters that now go to waste and carry destruction with them as they go were stored in reservoirs and used as they are required for the reclamation of land the "great unwatersed empire of the West" would, within ten years, afford homes, and comfortable homes, for ten times its present population.

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Mr. Maxwell dwelt at length and with great force upon the reclamation of arid land in relation to coming generations. New opportunities must be created, said the speaker, for not only those who are in the world to-day, but for those who are to come after us. What is to become of the boy? That is the question. It rests upon the people of to-day to provide him with the same chance as they themselves had. It is their duty to give him everything that American citizenship implies. The only way this duty can be discharged is by opening up to this coming generation the lands of the West, even as the lands of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys were opened for us by those who came before.

In those regions, however, continued the speaker, the opportunities were at hand for every man. He who had a span of horses and a spade received immediate benefits. It took no bank account, no capital, to cultivate the lands of the Middle West. Only the strong arm of industry was required. It is not so in the West. The individual man is powerless in the great desert. He is hopeless alone. He is as unequipped to cope with the difficulties that beset him at the very beginning as he is to wash away with a wave of his hand the mountains which surround Anaconda.

The fundamental proposition is that the federal government must furnish the capital necessary to reclaim these desert, these arid lands. The federal government must build these great irrigation works; it must bring the water on the land, so that when the home builder strikes his plow into the ground the water will follow the furrow.

Every one knows that the federal government is spending millions upon millions every year for the construction of great levees and breakwaters on the Mississippi. It has lined the river for hundreds of miles with the great, high embankments, is building reservoirs at the heads of the Mississippi and the Ohio for the purpose of holding back the flood of waters so that the lower country shall not be inundated and its property destroyed. If this money were spent in building dams in the foothills and on the bench lands where natural opportunities are presented for the construction of dams, the flood of waters would be held back, and later could be turned to account upon prosperous farms instead of carrying death and destruction into the low lands as they now do.

Mr. Maxwell said that to talk of private construction of irrigation works is futile. It simply cannot be done. The government must do it, and the water must forever be held free for the benefit of the user.

The speaker paid a high tribute to labor organizations and said it lay within their power to accomplish this thing, which would bring such a bless-

ing upon millions of people. The labor unions of the West must carry the doctrine into the cities of the East. They must point out to their brethren in the overcrowded sections that, while the reclamation of arid lands would be of inestimable benefit to the West, it would be tenfold more beneficial to those of the East. The labor organizations soon will be confronted with the desperate situation in the East of two men for every job. There is no way to relieve this congestion unless the lands of the vast western domain are thrown open and placed within the reach of the actual settler. Therefore it is the duty of labor organizations to make plain to their fellow workmen the great necessity for finding an outlet for the surplus of labor with which they soon will be face to face.

The speaker quoted statistics to show that with 1-100th per cent of the area of California irrigated that portion produced more in farm products than the entire value of the mineral output. In Colorado the situation was the same. In that state one and one-third of one per cent of the area is irrigated and its products exceed in value the sum total of the whole mineral output. The area of public land in Montana and Idaho, exclusive of that under private ownership, exceeds the entire area of France. Yet France supports a population of 35,000,000 people. The same number could erect and maintain homes in this region.

Mr. Maxwell sounded a note of warning against the danger of water monopolies. When canals and reservoirs and irrigation works are built by private interests, as they are to a considerable extent, the owners of the land should organize land owners canal companies and sell shares of the stock to farmers and not sell any water rights of syndicates. He urged the adoption of an amendment to the Montana constitution declaring all irrigation works to be public utilities, the theory being that the water necessary to irrigate an acre of land shall belong to the acre of land itself. The speaker deprecated the control of canals and water rights by irrigation companies. He said that such companies stand toward the farmers who buy or rent the water in the relationship of landlord and tenant, and the Anglo-Saxon makes a mighty poor tenant.

Mr. Maxwell's concluding remarks were devoted to an appeal for unity of purpose and organization for the furtherance of the plans he had outlined during the course of his address. He paid a high tribute to the industrial school system and maintained that every county in every state should be equipped with an industrial school. In California, his home, he said the educational system ends at the state university.

One boy out of every thousand gets to the university, the other 999 fall by

the wayside. They had one industrial school at Pasadena, said he, where a boy learns everything to qualify him for the battle of life. A boy who goes through that school comes out of it ready to do his part. He can build a house or he can sink an artesian well, or he can put up a pump; in fact, he can do anything and everything that is necessary for him to do to make a living. The girls learn to cook and to keep house. The speaker denounced the system of higher education where a boy learns how to translate Latin and Greek and where he learns all about trigonometry and such things, but does not learn how to do anything where by he can earn an honest living.

At the conclusion of Mr. Maxwell's lecture he was given a hearty hand of endorsement by those who had listened to him in rapt attention. The distinguished irrigating expert will lecture at Butte to-night. Thence he goes to Helena, to Bozeman, Livingston and Billings, leaving the state on Sunday for his home at Chicago. Mr. Maxwell has just come from an extensive tour of the northern portion of the state. He spoke at points along the Great Northern, in a region where the subject he discusses is one of vital interest to the people, and everywhere he meets with a hearty welcome. Mr. Maxwell expects to return to Montana again for a second course of lectures in the near future, and the people of this state will greet him cordially. In the meantime it is the earnest hope of those who were entertained by him last evening that he may meet with the utmost success wherever he goes and that the great principles which he expounds may find indorsement in every community.

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