

The Governor Speaks

BY GOVERNOR ROY J. TURNER

Governor Turner gives the reason behind the 36 million dollar bond proposal. He proposes that the bond program is the only suitable way of meeting building needs.

(Through *Sooner Magazine* Governor Roy J. Turner addresses the thousands of organized alumni of state owned institutions of higher learning on the proposed 36 million dollar bond issue subject to September 27 vote. Originally, the speech was prepared and presented to representatives of the various institutions, but was considered so timely and concise that we asked permission to print it.—D. A. B.)

The privilege of bringing a message to this group of alumni of our Oklahoma colleges is greatly appreciated. I want you to know that I am grateful to you for the public-spirited way in which you have responded to the call for this meeting.

By being here, you offer convincing proof that you have a personal interest in the grave problem now confronting the state institutions of Oklahoma. If you will bear with me for just a few minutes, I would like to tell you something about this problem—and something about the solution, which has been proposed.

We have deteriorated buildings and over-crowded conditions at our state institutions because we have neglected repair work and needed new construction over a long period of years. Little of this work was done during the depression years, and none of it was done during the war.

The depression and the war may have given the state a valid excuse for this neglect, but we have no valid excuse now. Our last legislature made the largest total appropriations in the history of Oklahoma—yet our buildings are still neglected.

When it became apparent to me that pressure on the legislature for highways, education, public health, and many other state services would leave nothing with which to meet our critical building problem, I proposed a bond issue for this purpose.

Some of our legislators demurred and assured me that building funds could—and would—be provided from the general fund. At the time I asked for submission of the bond proposal, I pointed out emergency needs totaling approximately \$11,000,000.

Tax increase proposals were introduced, but none was passed. The legislature again turned to the bond proposal as offering the only means through which our building problem can be met.

Our needs in this field are far, far in excess of \$11,000,000. These needs vary only as to the degree of their emergency character. That is why the proposed bond issue has been set at \$36,000,000. Our surveys of institutions reveal that that amount represents a fair approximation of our actual needs.

It goes almost without saying that we could spend two or three times that amount on desirable improvements.

From this then, let me make this point very clear—I hope it is a point that will stay with you—

Our present state tax structure will not support a building program that will meet the actual needs of our institutions. The only way we can achieve a satisfactory institutional building program is by bond financing—or by a heavy increase in taxation. I don't believe that any citizen of Oklahoma wants a round of general tax increases.

I am aware of the fact that there has been considerable confusion over the question of how we can vote bonds and still not raise taxes.

I hope that everyone here will take the trouble to get a clear understanding of what this financing proposal is. . . . And once it is understood, I hope that each of you will find opportunities to explain it to others, who might be confused.

If the bond issue is approved, all bonds and interest will be paid off with two cents, or less, of our present five-cent per package cigarette tax. These taxes are now being paid and definitely do not involve a tax increase.

There will be some, who will raise the question of whether two cents of our cigarette tax will be enough to pay off the bonds plus the interest they will bear.

Let me answer that just this way:

If we issue \$6,000,000 worth of bonds every year for six years, for a total of \$36,000,000, the largest annual amortization payment throughout the life of the bonds will be \$2,088,000. Last year two cents of our cigarette tax yielded \$3,271,000. There you are with more than a million dollars to spare.

The question will also be raised as to whether it will be necessary for the legislature to replace the two-cent cigarette tax diverted from the general fund with some other kind of tax. To this I say, "Definitely, no." Our general fund can support building appropriations of more than \$2,000,000 a year with ease year after year.

But \$2,000,000 a year is not going to do the job that must be done for our institutions. We shall never get the job done by dragging it out for 18 or 20 years. That is largely what has caused the trouble at our institutions now.

I do not recommend issuing all of the bonds at once and plunging into a wild flurry of modernization and new construction. But I do say that the program can be carried out efficiently, economically, and with splendid results for all of our institutions over a reasonable period.

We can do a complete and over all program of building modernization and repair, and we can build and equip enough new buildings at all of our institutions to relieve over-crowded conditions for a long time to come.

And mark me, and mark me well, when I say that we shall never be able to do this without bonds or without a heavy increase in taxation.

I sincerely believe that people who vote against the bonds will be voting for that tax increase. Con-

ditions at many of our institutions have become so intolerable that some legislature is going to come in and get the job done with higher taxes, if no bond money is available for the work.

Leaking and sagging roofs and ceilings, splintered floors, cracked walls and window casings, worn out heating systems and plumbing—all of these, plus wards where twice the proper number of patients are housed—cannot be tolerated forever.

A fire under such conditions would leave a scar on Oklahoma that would take much longer to heal than it would take to retire the bonds.

Most of us think of a building as a stationary object, but figuratively speaking it is not. Our institutional buildings can deteriorate, and they are deteriorating now. The longer we permit them to deteriorate, the greater the ultimate cost to us.

Oklahoma was not built on a philosophy of deterioration. If we resort to that kind of a philosophy now, we are a backward and all through state.

The people of Oklahoma were never offered a better opportunity than the one coming up at the September 27 election—an opportunity to move forward on all institutional fronts without paying a dime's worth of extra taxes.

Let's take it.

Board Supports Bond Program

The executive board of the University Alumni Association voted in July to support a proposed \$36,000,000 state building bond issue to be voted on September 27.

Ted Beaird, '21ba, executive secretary of the association, said approval of the issue came at a special meeting in Oklahoma City with 51 officers and board members of the association present.

Beaird said the association will contact its 25,000 members and ask for active support of the issue.

"The board felt," Mr. Beaird said, "that under the present tax structure, the legislature could not provide for the building programs of the various state institutions and that in the development program of the state the proposed bond issue was the solution to the problem."

Mrs. Thompson Wins Awards

Mrs. Mary Gray Thompson, '21fa, of Oklahoma City is winner of two awards in the Altrusa International essay contest, "Our American Heritage."

Mrs. Thompson was awarded first place in the seventh district, which included Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma. She was past president of the Oklahoma City chapter and now serves as chairman of the vocational information committee.

New Staff Member for Association

The newest addition to the staff of the Oklahoma County Health Association is Dr. Kelly M. West, '48med.

Dr. West will conduct the regular Thursday children's clinic in Variety Club Health center in Oklahoma City. West has been a resident physician at St. Anthony hospital in Oklahoma City since completing his internship at St. Luke's hospital in Chicago.