

## WRIGHT TRIES TO PUT REPORT IN NEW LIGHT

State Highway Director Reviews Accounts Board Statement.

### ADmits SOME CHARGES

Admitting the charges of the State board of accounts in some cases, seeking to shift the blame in others and declaring the examiners of the board "juggled" figures in still other instances, L. H. Wright, director of the State highway commission, made a long statement concerning the affairs of the commission to a little group of members of the House of Representatives and outsiders in the House of Representatives last night. Mr. Wright in the course of his statement

said he had recommended that the "revolving fund" of the commission, which totaled more than two million dollars, be deposited with the Aetna Trust and Savings Company because he is a director of that company and for this reason thought he would receive special favors from the company.

2. Declared that the revolving fund was handled and advance payments of freight to contractors were made on the advice of the State finance committee. Mr. Wright said P. Goodrich was the head, and of Jesse E. Eschbach, chief examiner of the State board of accounts.

3. Admitted that in many cases material was purchased without advertising bids, but merely asking concerns personally for bids.

4. Declared that if he had his work to do over he would not change it in any material particular.

5. Insisted that examiners of the State board of accounts "juggled" figures in their report to show the overhead expense of his department to be much higher than it actually was.

6. Asked that the State highway department be granted a 10-cent levy and more, if possible, declaring it would need at least \$15,000,000 this year.

### SUMMITS HIS FINANCIAL REPORT.

In the course of his statement Mr. Wright submitted a financial report of his own in which he attempted to show that the overhead of his construction department is about 6.5 per cent. He declared that in the administration and office expense of the department amounted to only \$17,323 during the year ending Sept. 30, 1920, or six-tenths of 1 per cent of the total of \$250,635.16 spent by the department. He declared the overhead in the maintenance department amounted to 3.6 per cent. He arrived at the overhead expense of his construction department by adding 5.5 per cent of what he termed the actual overhead of the department to .6 per cent of the overhead of the bridge department he placed at 7 per cent.

Mr. Wright contended that the report of the board is wrong in stating that a large surplus remains in the treasury for road department payments this year. He said on Feb. 10 the balance in favor of the commission was \$1,300,191 and that \$1,882,826.29 must be paid contractors for work now under way, leaving a deficit of \$372,645.

### SAYS \$13,000,000 REQUIRED NEXT YEAR.

He said the amount available this year from taxes would be \$2,292,900, from automobile license \$2,000,000, and from individual property taxes \$300,000, making a total of \$4,782,900. Next year on a basis of a 10-cent levy he said the total would be \$8,400,000. He said that in addition the State must take up during the next two years \$4,750,000 in Federal aid funds in addition to another possible \$2,000,000 which may be available. He pointed out that on this basis the commission must then have about \$13,000,000 next year.

Mr. Wright made a detailed statement of the working of his department in addition to the figures in his financial statement. He said the cost of laying out the road in Indiana is much less than in other States, stating it amounted to only slightly over \$8,000 for laying out 3,200 miles of roads while the State of Wisconsin paid \$5 a mile for laying out its roads.

The revolving fund, the use of which the board of accounts criticised, he said, was made necessary because of the fact that the auditor's office will issue vouchers only twice a month and it was found necessary by the highway commission to make payments at more frequent intervals. He expressed the hope that some way could be found to place the administration of these funds in the hands of the Auditor of State. He said the plan was that of the State board of finance, the Attorney General and the State board of accounts and not that of the highway department. He said the board of accounts even selected the forms to be used in connection with the fund.

### FINANCE BOARD INCREASES FUND.

The department started with a fund of \$5,000 which the finance board increased at intervals to \$25,000, \$50,000 and finally to \$100,000.

"The auditor gave me a check for the amount necessary each month, and it was ordered deposited with the Aetna Trust and Savings Company because I requested that it go there," Mr. Wright said. "I am a director of the Aetna Company and that may have been the reason I asked that it go there. I believe I could get special favors there. At times the account was overdrawn as much as \$40,000 and the company was paid us."

Mr. Wright contended that the more than \$2,000,000 deposited with the Aetna Company was in no sense deposited on his personal account but was deposited on the account of "L. H. Wright, director." He said checks for pay rolls and materials go out of his office every day and the uncashed checks are turned over to the auditor.

"If the Legislature can devise any better way to take care of that money I would be thankful," Mr. Wright said. "The commission makes the statements that freight payments were made for contractors and that this gave successful bidders an advantage over unsuccessful bidders. I contend that this is true but this provision gave them an advantage. This provision was contained in our proposals and every contractor had the opportunity to take advantage of it."

### SAYS E SCHBACH APPROVED.

He said the railroads granted a reduction on freight paid by the State and that the war tax was eliminated. He said the payments were made with the approval of Mr. Eschbach and the attorney general. He pointed out that the State retains 20 per cent of contract prices and that in this way it is protected.

Mr. Wright next took up the charges of the board of accounts that the minute record of the commission is not complete. He admitted that the names of the unsuccessful bidders were not listed in the minute book because the commission passed only on the successful bids as awarded by the director. He said, however, that all bids submitted are on file in the commission's office and accessible to the public. He said that in some cases bids had been taken for automobile bodies and grinders and the commission

### Marine Is Retired



### DEMOCRATS PICK THOS. MEEKER AS CITY CHAIRMAN

(Continued From Page One.)

either by committeemen present or by committee holding proxies for absent members.

Frank B. Ross, retiring city chairman, who presided at the convention, read a letter from Dick Miller, Democratic candidate for mayor in 1917, and other party leaders spoke briefly.

Although the committee on rules, organization and order of business, composed of Thomas D. McGee, chairman; Frank Stewart and Louis Lurie, proposed and had passed a rule prohibiting nominating speeches, Mr. Ross permitted Mr. Riley, as a matter of courtesy, to make a speech.

### PROPOSES THAT BOTH WITHDRAW.

Mr. Feeney's backer, foreseeing the utter rout of his candidate, made the proposal that both Meeker and Feeney withdraw. Mr. Riley voted to grant the request to state that some harsh things had been said about Frank P. Baker, one of the leaders who backed Mr. Meeker and about himself, but that this was due only to the heat of the fight.

He said statements to the effect that he was the best man for the Republican organization because he was the minority member of the board of public works were due to "nothing more than jealousy and green-eyedness."

"The only thing I want you to know," he said, "is that the law creates the position of minority member and it had to be a minority member of some Democrat and my friends thought I was the best man for the French."

He enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1903 and served for fourteen years as a private and noncommissioned officer, rising to the rank of sergeant major. At the outbreak of the war he was commanding a company of Marines which landed in France in June, 1917, and served with the 5th Regiment of Marines throughout the entire campaign in France, taking part in the battles of the Chateau Thierry sector, St. Mihiel, Soissons, Champagne and the Argonne-Meuse.

He had purchased more than the original specifications called for.

The highway director insisted that these transacted in connection with the construction of the highway were regular and legal. He said the original bid was \$36,000, which did not include lighting, heating and fixtures. He said this brought the price up to \$67,000. He said that after the garage was built it was found that the roof did not meet with the city fire department and it had to be repaired. He said the roof was repaired, bringing the price up to something more than \$71,000. He said it also was found necessary to equip a laboratory in the garage built it was necessary to pay for the equipment and that the roof did not meet with the city fire department and it had to be repaired. He said the roof was repaired, bringing the price up to something more than \$71,000. He said it also was found necessary to equip a laboratory in the garage built it was necessary to pay for the equipment and that the roof did not meet with the city fire department and it had to be repaired. 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