Statement by J. E. Bennett (1)

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12-29-1933

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Dec. 29, 1933.

STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONER J. F. BENNETT

Your paper of yesterday carried a signed statement of some merchants of the Front Street Market in re my position and attitude towards this Market.

First, I wish to say that some of those who signed the letter have stated to me that they were not familiar with the contents of the letter. If they had been they would not have signed it, and have apologized by letter.

My position in regard to this Market has been that there was no public demand for it, that the initiation of the project and the methods and kind of a contract that the City of Portland signed, all are of such a nature as to lead me to believe that selfishness, if not worse, was responsible for the building of the same, and in order that I might not be tied in with this group, I asked, when I became a member of the Council, that those who were sponsoring the program refrain from bringing before the Council emergency ordinances, which one vote would kill, as I wanted to keep my skirts clean in the matter, and consistently vote NO on all ordinances touching upon the Market, for the reasons above set out. Notwithstanding my warning in this matter, emergency ordinances were consistently brought before the Council, with one purpose only in mind, to either compel me to vote for them and thus align myself with the other promoters, or else be placed in a position that might be misunderstood by the public.

This Market Company knew 6 months ago that they were going to require paving on Front Street and they also knew 6 months ago that I would vote against any emergency ordinance that was introduced, therefore they have only themselves to blame when their sand-bagging methods fail to be successful.

An attempt of a few of these merchants to lead the public to believe that my opposition has anything to do with any interests my family may have on Yamhill Street will fool nobody except themselves, for the reason that the new market is not doing any business and is therefore not a competitor to those on Yamhill Street or any place else in town.

Another reason why I shall continue to oppose this project, especially if they should attempt to unload it upon the City, is that in my judgment the City has no business going into the business of renting all sorts of stores, such as are contained in this Market, which is not only in direct competition with all of the merchants in the City of Portland, but is in direct competition with the property owner who owns property on Portland's business streets, and who we are expecting to pay the taxes to support our City government.

If the City should take this Market over, it will immediately, property, building and all, be taken from the tax roll. This addi-
tional burden of taxes must then be carried by other real property, and if, as is proposed in the contract, utility certificates be sold for the purpose of buying the Market from private promoters, then one or two things are pretty sure to happen; either those who invest their money in the utility certificates will lose their investment, or else the City, in order to protect them, will be required to make appropriations from the General Fund, as it has done in the case of the Golf Courses, which in turn will be a direct burden upon the taxpayers of the City of Portland.

This, I believe, clearly sets out my position in this matter and constitutes not only my attitude at this time, but my future attitude as well, in this or any other project of like nature.

J. E. Bennett
Commissioner of Public Affairs.