

HIGHWAY GROUP MAKES REPLY TO HOLT'S CHARGES

Commissioners Deny Knowledge of Any Irregularities in Making Claims.

Helena, Nov. 12.—An eight-point defense to charges brought by Gov. Elmer Holt as a basis for removing them was set up Thursday by Montana's three state highway commissioners at a hearing before the chief executive.

Through counsel, the commissioners — Dr. H. J. McDowell, Great Falls; Buckwood Brown, Billings and L. J. Croomburgin, Missoula — filed, separately, 20-page answers to the governor's charges that they received state money through illegal or doubtful claims for fuel, oil, maintenance and expense.

The answers made a general denial of the charges and set out these defense arguments:

(1) The commissioners made the expense claim in "good faith." (2) They had no knowledge of any irregularity in making the claims. (3) The state received "many times the value" of the money paid out through the commissioners' services. (4) There was an adjudication of the claims when the state board of examiners approved them. (5) All claims of the commissioners were legal. (6) The commissioners, in making their claims, followed administrative custom and precedent. (7) No claims were made corruptly or with any knowledge of illegality. (8) "Governor Holt, in adopting in equity and good conscience" from charging the commissioners' claims were made illegally.

As a farthest defense, the answers contended the governor's charges were the result of the commissioner's opposition to him in the Montana primary election last July in which he was defeated for re-election on the Democratic ticket.

After the answers were presented by the defense counsel, George Hurst, Great Falls; Vernon Davis, Billings, and John Bonner, Helena, Governor Holt recessed the hearing until 9:30 a. m. Friday.

The governor, in making public his charges against the commissioners last month, cited them to appear before him November 6 to show cause why they should not be removed. The hearing later was postponed until Thursday.

"We are meeting to recode the charges I have brought against the three Montana highway commissioners to show cause why they should not be removed," Governor Holt said shortly as he called the hearing to order at 2 p. m.

Counsel for the commissioners immediately offered three separate demurrers to the charges, contending the governor's charges were defective on the principal ground that the

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Highway Commission Denies Governor's Charges

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