

The News-Review

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TAX PROBLEMS STUDIED

By Charles V. Stanton

Interest has been general throughout the state in the work of the legislative interim committee on taxation, which held a tax clinic in Salem last week. Ideas were almost as numerous as the number of persons attending. Opinions frequently were in conflict. There was, however, general agreement on two points — taxes are high and taxes will go higher.

State and local taxes, it was pointed out, amount to \$618,000,000. This figure, however, must be increased if the state is to maintain services demanded by the people, provide adequate schools, retain key personnel, etc. Oregon is expected to continue its rapid rate of growth. Growth adds to tax problems.

The puzzle the interim committee is endeavoring to solve is how to invent a painless method for extracting more money from already overburdened taxpayers.

It is quite apparent that the surtax on Oregon incomes is out. That, of course, was to be expected. The surtax was an emergency deal.

The last legislature had to provide money to meet a prospective deficit. Appropriations are made for two years. The rate of withholding was increased from one to two per cent, but the increase couldn't go into effect until 1956. So the surtax had to be applied to 1955 income to cover deficit spending for one year.

Sales Tax Considered

The interim committee also has indicated that it will recommend a sales tax. Oregon voters have rejected a sales tax five times. There is some evidence, however, that sentiment favoring a sales tax is growing steadily.

One reason for this change is that too many people now are not carrying their fair share of the tax burden. If more revenue must be provided by taxation, it is obvious that equal distribution of the tax load is essential. A sales tax is one way to assure that everyone, including out-of-state visitors, pays into the treasury.

The claim is made that the sales tax places an unfair burden on low income classifications. Undoubtedly this is true with respect to persons on fixed income, many of whom now pay no tax.

The wage earner, however, can be assisted by raising exemptions on income taxes, so that those in the low earning category would not be charged on income.

If the sales tax is made an integral part of an overall tax structure, I believe it has a chance of passage. I do not believe it can be passed if presented as an additional tax. Adjustments must be made to relieve income and property taxes before voters will sanction a sales tax, in my opinion.

A sales tax, however, is a comparatively painless form of taxation, as is the withholding tax, although both are nuisances to merchants and employers who must collect and report them.

Legislative Power Wanted

Much discussion surrounds the proposal to give the legislature authority to attach the emergency clause to tax measures. It is charged that the existing law, prohibiting an emergency clause on measures pertaining to taxation, handcuffs the legislature in providing a firm tax program.

It is doubtful, however, whether Oregon voters will relinquish their hold on the purse strings, particularly while taxes are of so much concern.

Had there been no limitation on the power of the legislature, we would have had a sales tax long ago, despite public opposition.

The legislature has on several occasions proposed a tax on cigarettes.

Many of us contend that a tax on cigarettes is a sales tax on one item only and is a measure involving prejudice rather than equity. We believe that no one item should be singled out for taxation simply because some people have a prejudice against that item. Why, for example, should there be a tax on cigarettes but no tax on coffee? If cigarettes are to be included in a general sales tax, that's a different matter.

But we are apt to get similar "prejudice" taxes, and an avoidance of unpopular forms of taxation, if legislators, subject to various pressures, have the right to impose taxes without referral to the people. Consequently we can expect considerable opposition to removal of the limitation on the power of the legislature to impose taxes.

Hal Boyle

ELEUTHERA, Bahamas (AP) — More leaves from a sun-burned notebook:

Did you ever hear of the old Maine farmer who yearned all his life to see Boston?

Finally, one morning he decided he simply had to satisfy his curiosity, so he caught the early milk train to the city. That same evening he returned home on another train. Plumb tucked out, he sat down to rest by the stove in the general store of the hamlet near which he lived.

"Well Ezra," asked one of his neighbors, "tell us—what was Boston like?"

"To tell you the truth I still don't know," replied the old farmer. "There was so much going on in the station there, I never did get out to see the city."

Tourists who come to the Bahamas and spend all their time in Nassau, the capital, remind me of that old farmer. Nassau is no more the Bahamas than New York City, Miami, or Los Angeles are America.

To get the full flavor of the Bahamas, you have to go out to "the out islands," some of the 3,000 islets and cays scattered over 70,000 square miles of turquoise seas. To them still clings the savor of the picturesque Bahamian past.

It isn't hard to do. You can sail to many of them in a few hours. You can reach others in a half hour from Nassau by air.

One of the most interesting is Eleuthera, a curving island a hun-

dred miles long and ranging one to 10 miles in width, flung like a boomerang against the Atlantic waters.

It was here that a group of London gentlemen, calling themselves "the company of Eleutheraian adventurers," first sought to establish a brave new world (Eleuthera comes from a Greek word meaning "freedom") in 1647.

The venture was a financial flop. Since then Eleuthera has known many economic ups and downs. It has been the haunt of pirates and shipwreckers, buccanniers and cotton barons; it has survived many a hurricane and many a heartache.

Today it is "the bread basket of the Bahamas" and the site of an American missile base. It has a thriving dairy and growing cattle herds. At Rock Sound, Arthur Vining Davis, the American aluminum titan, is building a multi-million-dollar resort center, complete with an 18-hole golf course designed by Robert Trent Jones, the Michaelangelo of the fairways.

Reader Opinions

Conflicting Articles Confuse School Issue

ROSEBURG — There have been two articles printed in The News-Review, one originating from our school principals, the other from Kenneth Simon, that have been attempts at sidetracking or confusing the issue of school policy. Before there are any more, may I suggest that those contemplating this course familiarize themselves with the discussion at the school board meeting preceding the vote that followed, which resulted in the duly passed motion to make the next vote a policy test issue.

I propose to answer here in part, the complaint and published request of the principals and Mr. Simon's inferences, hoping this will remind them of the various remarks, meeting attendances and suggestions they have been receiving in some profusion for the past two years, and also for the information and the consideration of the public.

Let us first review the issue. I quote from a member of the school board, "for the first time, the issue, 'Education, as it is taught today' is squarely before the people. A 'Yes' vote means the voters believe public education should be doing all the things it is now doing in the manner it is now doing them. A 'No' vote means the voter believes public education should not be doing all the things it is now doing in the manner it is now doing them."

Mr. and Mrs. Average Citizen are not hampered by a multiplicity of theories and practices. They know only the result of the educational policies as they are practiced today as well as their cost, and who can blame them for questioning what and how things are being done?

I now quote from a request for pertinent information, appearing in the June 18, '54 issue of The News-Review, only one paragraph so as not to remove the thought from the context: "A word about standards. In every question we have a range of opinion — from the extremely conservative to the very radical. When I went to school some twenty years ago, it was not to a little red school house, and I am sure few of us would have returned to even that era; on the other hand, neither would we lend any more weight to the other extreme of the scale. Since the voters approve the school operation by a decision of board members, on this instance, by budget approval, their opinions and desires, whether it be the legal requirements or something over and above, is the standard and not the 'ideal situation' as advocated by some. Very few people would want to deprive the child of a good education nor hamper the teacher by false economy, but ask any farmer about the law of diminishing returns. Have we reached or passed that point in our school system? Can we not have these pertinent factors explained to us so we, the people, paying the bills, can make a proper decision."

Well, the budget was passed by scarce tactics that year by quite a series of publicity releases, and the present "philosophy of education" rolled merrily along. During the year building needs for increased enrollment were considered, and this same "philosophy," knowing full well the urgent need for more basic classrooms the very next year, recommended, and the school board followed with a request for \$225,000 for eight rooms at Hucres and \$207,000, for completion of the second phase of Joseph Lane. This second phase consisted of \$27,000 for a cafeteria, \$34,000 for a corridor and two classrooms, and \$146,000 for a gymnasium. Now, for the end result: we find that the cafeteria was not built. The two classrooms and the gym that up to now we are again asked to allow an additional amount for it in the coming bond election.

Joseph Lane has a large multipurpose room equipped as a gymnasium, which is an adequate substitute for the new gym. Allowing approximately \$50,000 for sanitary facilities to provide for the P. E. program, that would leave \$100,000, which had the administration and the school board recommended, would have built eight classrooms and equipped them at Joseph Lane, Hucres or Green, thus relieving the burden of the more classrooms this year. This, by admission and act, is the result of the "philosophy of education" we are laboring under.

On May 9, '55 a public hearing was held in the Central Jr. High auditorium. Quoting from the news story of The News-Review in the next issue, "District 4 voters by the score, at least four hundred of them, turned out Monday night to let the budget board know how they felt about the budget board's intention to resubmit the budget as is, if no voters had valid suggestions. The board was literally covered by suggestions. At least eighteen persons voiced oral opinions. Two speakers came prepared with suggested cuts and recommendations which were incorporated within the minutes of the session."

I now quote from those incorporated suggestions: "The events of the past few years, culminating in this meeting tonight, appears to express more of a lack of confidence in handling of this matter in general as well as the increasing of the tax burden. The object of our appearing here tonight is to point out ways to regain the necessary confidence as well as to suggest ways to reduce the budget without seriously curtailing or eliminating any of the presently recommended courses of study. Inasmuch as the affairs of this school district have become the subject of such controversy, it becomes increasingly important to find some middle ground where all factions can settle their problems harmoniously. It is suggested that, since the people are the ones who have the children and pay the bills, let them, the people, be the final authority of what they want their children taught and how much it is necessary to spend. We believe the people of this school district are intelligent enough to make deci-

sions provided they have the course of study and the budget presented to them in a form the average person can understand.

The dollars and cents figure as represented by the amount we are asked to approve would not be so bad if we could feel confident in the required level of performance the present administration sets. The present vogue is to grade according to an average curve, and a student is often graduated from a subject with scarcely more than 50 to 55 per cent assimilation of the subject. When you and I went to school we would fail on a 67 or 68 per cent. Our youngsters can now proudly exhibit a 3 (average) grade for the same performance. These figures are the school's figures, not mine. Also we find, upon inspection of our grading system that credit, based upon time spent, is given for each subject, whether it be for Reading (English), Science and Mathematics, Chorus, P. E. or Ceramics. No doubt there is a certain educational value in expressing yourself in one of these latter courses, but in my opinion they are far from equal value. The only qualifying requirement I can find is that twenty of the forty-four credits necessary for graduation are required subjects. These consist of a four year sequence of English, Freshman Social Studies, then History and American Problems, one year of Natural Science, one year of Mathematics and two years of P. E. And, as above described, a very minimum standard of performance will slide the student through. Our books, our teachers, and our school plant are about tops, but, why and where, the student is not required to match up. As you can see, the philosophy of education presently in use, places its emphasis more on social living and not enough on basic education.

Let's take for example three kids: one goes to school only because the law requires him to; the second is going through high school; the third is going on to college. Which of the three could most afford this type of education? The college boy, because in the event he is not adequately prepared, he can attend remedial classes, while the others will have to do on what they have gotten.

If you like the present system and do not think it could be improved or should not stand an evaluation then vote "Yes" on April 19. If you believe there are theories and practices that should be exposed to our knowledge, or if you think the system is so good it could stand an evaluation anyway, then vote "No." Let's settle this issue by an overwhelming vote this time so there can be no doubt as to what the people want.

M. H. Young
Roseburg, Ore.

Reflective Thinking Lost Art In School Problem
ROSEBURG — Cool, reflective thinking is becoming a lost art in Roseburg, in the current controversy over school problems.

The newly formed citizens' committee is a highly volatile, highly vocal group, with whose aims and aspirations one may sympathize, but with whose methods one questions. This group has confused local problems with state problems to an extent that the local problems have assumed a secondary role of importance, which is not the true case.

The citizens group should realize that a dragon cannot be vanquished by stomping on its tail. Neither can peculiar local problems be remedied by castigating state agencies. The group is attempting to solve two separate problems at one fell swoop. It should concentrate on remedying local problems, and attacking state problems through considered legislative action.

The defenders of the current program have failed to recognize and admit weaknesses which can and should be remedied. Both sides have failed to recognize that there are in the Roseburg schools many competent and intelligent teachers, who, if given an opportunity to speak, could help solve the problems now existing. The reason most of these teachers have not spoken is that through a diabolically unequal plan of evaluation, in which the teacher is evaluated by the administration but then has no opportunity to evaluate the administration in turn, a teacher soon learns that to stay in a school system, he is wise to keep quiet on controversial issues. One other reason many teachers have not spoken out is that they have not been asked to.

All teachers in the Roseburg system are not in accord with present policies, and, contrary to popular belief, they are given the right by their Code of Ethics to speak out on basic school policies when these policies are being determined.

If the current controversy continues, the educational program in Roseburg will suffer if either of the sides which have aligned themselves triumphs. A third and common sense approach should be found.

It is vitally necessary that the present administrative policy and present educational philosophy be revamped. A suggested solution would be for interested citizens from either, both, or neither side to request constructive suggestions from Roseburg teachers, assuring them that their positions in the schools would not be put in jeopardy.

This solution would bring forth intelligent suggestions from professional educators who know whereof they speak, and would provide the citizens of Roseburg with a sound and expert basis on which to vote.

Public opinion has requested that these issues be clearly spelled out. Such a plan would answer that request.

Glenn Leuning
Roseburg, Ore.

Peter Edson

WASHINGTON (NEA) — Rumors that important but unnamed Democratic leaders are organizing a "Draft Harry S. Truman for President" movement constitute one of the largest April Fool political stories of this dizzy campaign year.

No responsible Democratic source has so far been willing to lend his name to substantiate or support it.

Democratic National Committee headquarters bows out from making any official comment on the grounds that it is not in business to pick or favor particular candidates before the national convention.

Unofficially, members of President Truman's White House staff still doing business in Washington say there is no logical reason why Truman should run again. The rumors that a draft is developing are characterized as pure gossip and thumbsucking.

PRESIDENT TRUMAN personally took himself out of the 1956 race about as definitely as anyone could in a Kansas City interview March 28 and again in St. Louis March 30. He declared that 30 years in public office were enough and that he had no desire to be president again.

Mr. Truman will be 72 years old in May. At the end of the next four-year presidential term he would be 77. That in itself is considered enough reason to make a return to the White House impossible for him.

President Truman has been telling his old cronies to stop all talk of making him a candidate. He has been nominated delegate-at-large on the Missouri delegation to the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Mr. Truman has declared previously that he wants to go to Chicago free to talk to all candidates. He is expected to play a prominent part in picking the party's final nominee.

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Green Peter, Hills Creek Dam Survey Bids Taken

PORTLAND (AP) — A low bid of \$14,950 was submitted to Army Engineers Monday for survey work at the site of the Green Peter project on the middle Saniam River.

The bid came from Duncan, Shaw & Dobyns of Sweet Home for two five-man parties for about 65 days of surveying. They also will be required to do some survey work at the Hills Creek project on the middle fork of the Willamette above Oakridge and make releveling surveys on the Willamette near Eugene. There were seven other bidders with bids ranging up to \$31,850.

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