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EDITORIAL PAGE

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OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS

By George Castillo

Douglas County faces a big and important challenge now that the state Legislature has set up the machinery for county home rule.

The legislation implements the home rule constitutional amendment overwhelmingly approved by voters last November.

The measure provides that county charters can be drafted by a county committee appointed by legislators and county commissioners. If they fail to take the initiative in setting up a committee, they can be compelled to do so by initiative petitions signed by 10 per cent of the voters.

On the face of it, the home rule enabling law appears to be a good opportunity. Where, under state law, counties have been run almost entirely under regulations of the state, now it appears that they can streamline the system to meet individual county needs.

It certainly makes possible removal of faults and defects which were built into the system of state rule. Now the people of each county can decide how they want their courthouse machinery to operate.

Improvement Needed

There have been many indications as the county business has grown that county government could be improved with a savings to the taxpayers. This is the chance that makes it possible.

It's a job that's long since overdue, but it's also a job which will take a considerable time to do properly. For that reason, it's evident that work should be begun as soon as possible.

Judge V. T. Jackson of the County Court has indicated the matter of home rule should be investigated. That investigation should start post haste.

Douglas County needs home rule now, but that is impossible. So the next best thing is to get it started now. The job of streamlining a five-million-dollar business and arranging the government operations to follow more closely what the people need will take a lot of time.

It will no doubt fall the lot of the three members of the county court to initiate the job of forming a charter. They shouldn't let grass grow under their feet before taking this step to bring county government up to date.

The action of the Legislature in completing the implementation of the home rule measure is the culmination of a movement that reverses the trend toward control from central government. It may not be an omen, but the vote that made it possible showed a great number of taxpayers were in favor of it in this instance.

County governments of the state have been ruled in detail by the state for a long time. The amendment presented to the people was drawn up because it was felt counties should have freedom to choose their own form of government.

Amendment Paves Way

Whenever government can be carried on at the local level it should be done. The amendment paves the way for that when it says "a county charter may provide for the exercise by the county of authority over matters of county concern."

This means the charter can prescribe the organization of the county government, provide for the number, election or appointment, qualifications, tenure, compensation, powers and duties of officers the county feels it needs.

It will mean the saving of money in the long run and a better job of providing the services requested by people of the county. It will also make possible a flexibility the unwieldy control from the state level did not offer.

County home rule is one of the best opportunities for returning the government to the people that has been offered for many years. The efforts to make it effective should begin as soon as legally possible.

Bruce Blossat

We Must Know The Truth

Nothing could be more irresponsible than ill-founded, alarmist talk involving the dangers of radioactive fallout. But a good deal of evidence is turning up these days which doesn't fit that category at all.

Testings of wheat and milk show surprisingly high amounts of the dangerous by-product, Strontium 90. Recent reports have it that this material falls to earth much faster than was earlier thought, and is therefore not in the stage of relatively harmless decay imagined.

Another notion knocked out not long ago was the idea that the spread of fall-out is pretty even around the earth. It seems now that it tends to touch the land with maximum impact in those regions from 25 to 50 degrees north or south latitude. This of course includes the heavily populated areas of northern United States.

THE REAL EXTENT of the peril represented in these newer findings is not at all clear. What is plain is that the fall-out problem is more acute than we had believed, and that we need intensive new studies both on its impact on the earth and its effect on human beings either directly or through their food supply.

Fall-out, too, is not the only trouble some problem associated with nuclear experiment and production. The disposal of radioactive wastes is of mounting concern.

At that stage when our civilian nuclear power program is well along, we will have to get rid of some 50 million gallons a year of so-called high-level radioactive waste. Nobody conversant with the problem imagines for a second that it will be a simple problem.

FEELING increases in this country that the Atomic Energy Commission is not the agency to sit in judgment on these vital questions of national and world health. As the developer of nuclear weapons, it cannot come to this issue with detachment.

In The Day's News

By FRANK JENKINS

More today about the town of Poodosa — which appears to have been settled upon as the inhabited place nearest to the pin point on the map that is known as the "geographical center" of the United States.

What is a geographical center? It's just what it says. It's the center of a given geographical area. It is established by a complicated system of mathematical measurements and computations. What does it mean to the town nearest to this pin point? Not much. It is supposed to have some tourist possibilities, but I doubt it.

How far out of your way would you go just to see a pin point that is the geographical center of the U.S.?

Not very far, I'd guess.

But— This is significant: Ever since it was established, the geographical center of the United States has been moving steadily WESTWARD. Nearly 300 years ago George Berkeley, an English churchman, Bishop of Cloyne, coined the magic phrase, "Westward the course of empire takes its way." About a century later, John Quincy Adams plagiarized Bishop Berkeley to this extent: "Westward the STAR of empire takes its way."

Keep your eye on the West.

Great things are in store for the WEST.

Speaking of the West, my colleague of the Medford Mail-Tribune, Eric Allen, takes a crack at our mythical State of Jefferson.

"Otherwise classified," he says, "as a State of Mind." He adds: "As for this newest 'state' proposal, it is a nebulous affair, designed, apparently, as a rallying point for those who oppose what are feared as encroachments on independence in thought and action of 'big government,' whether it be at the state or national level."

"Go your ways, good people of the State of Jefferson. We choose to exert our independence by acknowledging that No Man is an Island — nor is a state, even a state of mind."

Tut! Tut! Eric— If Plato, 20-odd centuries ago, could dream of the perfect state, why can't we here in Southern Oregon and far Northern California dream of the perfect state?

In the greatest of his dialogues, The Republic, Plato outlined his plans for an ideal state. He believed that the purpose of the state is to train its citizens to be upright and virtuous so that they may be truly happy. He knew this ideal state could never be formed in an imperfect world, but he held it up as a goal toward which people should work.

His thinking has made an im-

mense impression throughout all the 20-odd centuries that have followed him.

If Plato could dream of a State of Mind, why can't WE dream of a State of Mind?

If man can't DREAM of perfection, how can man ACHIEVE perfection?

Compensation Act Signed In Alaska

JUNEAU, Alaska (AP) — Gov. William A. Egan has approved a bill giving Alaska a new and broader workmen's compensation insurance act.

Egan said he signed the measure "notwithstanding a number of personal reservations which, in my judgment, are outweighed by the necessary and desirable features of the bill."

The governor took particular note of the strong campaign waged to have the measure vetoed.

Opponents of the bill contended increased insurance costs required by its provisions would discourage industrial development of the new state.

The measure was bitterly opposed by the state's logging and pulp industries, supported by other business in the state.

Opponents contended its enactment would increase compensation insurance coverage costs by at least 25 per cent, discourage new business investment and add to Alaska's high living costs.

Hal Boyle

Wonders Of New York Impressive To Writer

NEW YORK (AP)—New York is a beautiful town.

Right now after a hard spring and a winter to stun its inhabitants, it looks like a cactus thorn stuck out like a cactus thorn to the drum of revival.

In the warm, bright air, Manhattan turns toward tomorrow with a yawn of sureness.

It is wonder all over. Now you don't know where the next bud will bloom or where the next ticket will bloom from.

The sun, emerging from weeks of clouds, breaks out dark glasses and decrees ten times ten million freckles.

The magic moment of difference has come. The policeman gives an unfinished lecture. Traffic goes more slowly than usual because this is a day when everybody is

Hatfield Raps '59 Legislature

SALEM (AP)—Gov. Mark Hatfield said today the 1959 Legislature looked backward instead of into the future.

Commenting on the session which ended early today, Hatfield said the Democratic-controlled Legislature "provided only another patch on the crazy quilt of Oregon taxation."

The Republican governor, who recommended a one per cent gross income tax to bring in new taxpayers, said the tax program adopted his present taxpayers harder instead of broadening the base.

He said the Legislature did take a step forward in approving tax relief on capital gains reinvested in Oregon. Hatfield said this will encourage investment and provide new jobs.

The governor also listed as accomplishments the reorganization of the Department of Agriculture, repeal of the anti-picketing law, approval of the uninsured motorist clause in automobile liability policies, and changes in unemployment compensation laws to increase the sagging unemployment fund.

But Hatfield said that "a taxpayers rebellion in Oregon is avoidable only if we in government administer with economy and efficiency."

Young Salmon Released

PORTLAND (AP)—The Department of Interior announced 39 million fall chinook salmon fingerlings are being released in the Columbia River this week.

James Marlow

Chances Of Agreement At Geneva Held Small

WASHINGTON (AP) — Secretary of State Christian A. Herter—with small hope and a deliberate diplomatic secretiveness—sets out today for the Western foreign ministers meeting with the Soviets at Geneva next Monday.

Thus will begin a series of talks which grew out of Premier Nikita Khrushchev's demand last November that the Big Three Western Allies get their troops out of West Berlin by May 27. If the talks blow up, there may be serious trouble ahead.

It seems too much to hope for any agreements at Geneva. Herter himself said in a radio-television talk to the nation Thursday night:

"I do not go to Geneva with great expectations. Negotiating with the Soviets does not warrant much optimism."

But if the American, British and French foreign ministers can get along with the Soviets at Geneva without vituperation or propaganda, there may be a summit meeting later this year between President Eisenhower and Khrushchev.

Herter explained—but only in the most general terms, leaving details vague—that he and the other Westerners would propose to Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko who is, in effect, only a messenger boy for Khrushchev.

But what happens if the Soviets balk? Will the West yield some ground? Perhaps. But it was at this point that Herter deliberately created a diplomatic fog, either because the Allies are not agreed on what to yield or because they want to keep the Soviets guessing.

"We will not deviate from our basic principles," Herter said. "But we are willing to negotiate about their applications, provided that concessions from us are matched by equivalent concessions from the Soviet Union."

Such concessions already have gained the diplomatic description of "fall-back positions" if the Soviets won't buy the initial demands but show signs of talking business if the West yields on some points.

One of the unhappy features of this meeting—before it starts—is the possibility, much speculated upon recently, that the Allies may be fairly well agreed on their initial demands but not at all on concessions they might make.

Soviet Hedge Possible For this reason, the Soviets may try to split the Allies with proposals of their own. The Western proposals were agreed on by the American, British, French and West German foreign ministers last week in Paris.

Because the Westerners hope the talks with the Soviets at Geneva would be, as Herter put it, business-like and not a propaganda exercise, the Western foreign ministers didn't, and Herter didn't, reveal their proposals in detail.

He said they would lay it down for the Soviets at Geneva. He outlined this much—hardly a revelation, since it already had leaked out—of what the West would suggest to Gromyko:

1. Reunification of Germany, with the understanding it would not be done suddenly but would take time to work out.

2. Then some kind of arms control in Central Europe but not by

itself since each step in this kind of program would have to be linked with a similar forward step in the reunification of Germany.

3. And finally a free Berlin. But—until the other two programs were carried out the Allies would insist on their rights in Berlin. But when Germany was unified, Berlin could be considered free since it would be the capital of a reunited Germany.

This kind of program would take years to work out. It's been called a package deal. It's unlikely the Soviets will buy it. What they have demanded is that the Allies get their troops out of Berlin and sign a peace treaty with East Germany.

Khrushchev has already made it clear he wants no part of a unification plan that might deprive Communism of East Germany. It's a foregone conclusion the West won't buy any unification that lets Communism swallow West Germany.

In short: The most it seems reasonable to expect from the Geneva meeting is talk. If this meeting goes well, it may be the beginning of many other long-drawn-out talks. But if these initial Geneva talks blow up, hold your hat.

Things in this world may get ugly.

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