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Committee supports field burning bill, 4-3

By MARY BETH BOWEN
Of the Emerald

SALEM — The members of the Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee took a stand on the field burning issue Wednesday.

Judging from the 4-3 split that surfaced, the bill they produced will reflect the interest of grass seed growers.

The split came after Chairer Sen. John Powell, D-Halsey, recommended that growers be allowed to burn 235,000 acres this summer. The current phase-down law allows 95,000 acres. Powell also proposed amendments to Senate Bill 535, sponsored by the Oregon Seed Council, and asked if the other committee members agreed with the "policy direction" of his recommendations.

"Fire away," responded Sen. Mike Thorne, D-Pendleton, "Let's pass it now." Joining Thorne were Sens. Bob Smith, R-Burns and Chuck Hanlon, D-Mountaineale.

But Sen. Jan Wyers, D-Portland, commented that Powell's question was a moot point.

"Haven't you had four votes throughout?" asked Wyers. "It's been my impression all along that this was going to be pro seed council kind of legislation."

The committee's 4-3 pro-grower slant has been apparent during the past two months of public hearings.

One of the key questions the committee now faces is what size of acreage increase will pass the House, the Senate and the governor's office.

Powell's recommendation is larger than what Gov. Straub supports — 165,000 this summer and 135,000 next summer — but smaller than the unlimited acreage requested by the Oregon Seed Council. The City of Eugene on the other hand is asking that the current phase-down be maintained at 95,000 acres this summer and 50,000 next summer and thereafter.

Straub said Wednesday that he couldn't "swallow" Powell's acreage recommendation, but declined to say whether he would veto it.

At Wednesday's work session Powell said the primary policy question is whether the health and environmental problems caused by field burning are serious enough to justify putting some grass seed growers out of business.

"If the facts show there is an overwhelming problem attributed to field burning, then we should tell people in that business to get out," he said.

Powell also cited a 1976 Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) report on air quality in the Eugene-Springfield area, which said slash burning appears to have a more significant impact than field burning.

Powell's recommendations to the committee included regulating slash burning on private and state-owned land; placing the field burning research committee under the jurisdiction of the DEQ, and restricting open field burning to a 12-day period in the southern Willamette Valley and a 20-day period in the northern valley.

Wyers asked Powell to comment on the argument made by Eugene representatives that putting 5,000 tons of fine particulate from field burning smoke will prevent the Eugene-Springfield area from generating new industry, since further pollutants would violate federal air quality standards.

Powell replied that, in his opinion, the smoke management program operates in such a way that the smoke "doesn't stay in the air shed for a long time."

Also testifying was Scott Freeburn, DEQ field burning coordinator, who listed his agency's objections to the grass seed growers bill.

Freeburn said he particularly objected to a provision of SB-535 that repeals the DEQ's power to enforce field burning regulations.

"The smoke management program would be meaningless if we didn't have the power to enforce any of the rules established," he said.

Freeburn added that the DEQ supports the Environmental Quality Commission's acreage recommendation, which the governor also supports.

Only philatelists may get food stamps soon

In two years, reform of all federal welfare programs should mean "the end of the food stamp program as we now know it," said Agriculture Secretary Bob Bergland to the House Agricultural

Committee in Washington on April 5.

Bergland was testifying to Congress specifically about Pres. Jimmy Carter's proposals to change the food stamp program, which expires Sept. 30.

The most controversial part of Carter's proposal involves abolishing the purchase of food stamps. Instead of "buying" food stamps, a household, which would pay \$57 in cash for \$130 worth of stamps, the household would simply get the difference outright, in this case \$73 in food stamps.

"This should help the elderly on fixed incomes the most," says Bob Hill, a Eugene food stamp supervisor. "They often have fewer deductions and have to pay high costs, for instance, \$38 for \$50 worth of food stamps. Now they'll get the difference free."

Carter's proposal aims to bring about 880,000 households, which now do not have the cash to buy coupons, into the program.



World at a glance

From Associated Press reports

Carter to initiate energy taxes

WASHINGTON — Pres. Carter will propose use of the federal tax system as an instrument of austerity forcing Americans to conserve energy, including standby taxes on gasoline at the pump, congressional and administration sources said Wednesday.

Some specifics of the President's April 20 energy message are still under review, but White House Press Secretary Jody Powell indicated most of the work is complete.

Union leaders meet with Carter

WASHINGTON — Clothing union leaders and AFL-CIO Pres. George Meany went to the White House on Wednesday to give Pres. Carter the same message union members were pushing in demonstrations across the nation: clothing imports are threatening American jobs.

Carter and Robert Strauss, the U.S. trade ambassador, met with the labor leaders for 35 minutes.

Afterward, Meany told reporters he hoped to get a favorable response from Carter.

ERDA proposes waste sites

PORTLAND — A federal agency proposed nuclear wastes be stored temporarily at four regional sites until a solution is found for final storage of radioactive material.

Bill Luch, a member of Oregon's Energy Facility Citing Council, said Tuesday the U.S. Energy Research and Development Administration (ERDA) has proposed four temporary sites: Hanford, Wash., granite deposits in upstate New York, salt domes in Mississippi or Louisiana and deep salt beds in New Mexico.

No use cryin' over spilled coffee

MEMPHIS, Tenn. — Police were called out to guard the cargo when a tractor-trailer rig overturned here Wednesday, dumping 38,000 pounds of coffee with a retail value of \$175,000.

Police said they believe mechanical failure caused the truck to overturn on a highway cloverleaf.

The driver, Tony T. McCabe of Fordyce, Ark., was hospitalized in satisfactory condition.

Bill proposes psych board

SALEM — A bill which would create a new state board to evaluate the status of persons found to have been suffering from psychological problems while committing a crime received testimony Wednesday in a House Judiciary Committee hearing.

The bill would create a Psychiatric Security Review Board, to which persons found to be not responsible for a crime due to mental illness would be referred.

The board would act almost as a parole board, with the authority to discharge, conditionally release or commit to a state institution a person who has pleaded not guilty due to insanity.

The bill, House Bill 2382, further stipulates a person committed to an institution would have the right to apply for a discharge every six months, and the board would have to re-evaluate the case at least every five years.

The bill was suggested at the request of the governor's task force on corrections. Supporters of the bill said it is more responsible than the present system, and builds in due process requirements.

Opposition to the bill came in part from the Lane County Adult Mental Health Program. Les Gagnon, the manager of the program, said the \$1.5 million appropriation for the program is inadequate.

He added, if the bill were to pass, Lane County would be "fortunate" to meet evaluation requests. "We would be able to provide very little in the way of long-term treatment," he said.

In addition, it would cut about \$450 million in aid to families with incomes above the poverty line, leaving an estimated 5 per cent of food stamp recipients in those upper ranges of eligibility.

Hill also remarked he thinks one reason this reform has not occurred earlier is it goes against the philosophy underlying the food stamp program.

"The program was designed in the beginning to help raise the nutritional level of America's poor," he says. "But I think they've found out that if a person's diet consists of Pepsi and pretzels he won't change it when he gets food stamps."

Hill explained the present system recipients are forced to spend their food stamp allotment on food. But if Carter's proposals go through Congress, recipients' money once reserved for food stamp purchase now might not even go toward food.

Thus, the consequences of the proposed reform will be mixed,

says Hill.

Another notion in reforming the food stamp program which could have affected students further, but was not part of Carter's proposal, was establishing a flat, standard deduction rate in determining eligibility, rather than the present system of income deductions.

"Right now students are allowed deductions on tuition and mandatory fees," said Hill. "But if there were a flat deduction for tuition across the country, maybe students at this university would be paying higher tuition than would be allowed in figuring deductions. That, of course, would have an adverse effect on them."

All of Carter's proposals are not new. But Bergland's remarks before the House Agriculture Committee indicate Carter is indeed reviewing the entire welfare program. Consolidation of existing programs as well as the establishment of a guaranteed minimum income have been mentioned as possibilities.

Thursday, April 14, 1977