

Tax warriors recall '68 battles

By KEVIN HARDEN
Of the Emerald

While Oregon taxpayers grow angry and legislators try to decide what to do about it, candidates for nearly every office in the state are choosing sides on Ballot Measure 6, the 1.5 percent property tax limitation.

The entire state is in an uproar.

And it has all happened before. Nearly ten years ago, during the turbulent sixties, a property tax limitation measure very similar to 1978's Measure 6 was the focus of another political fight-to-the-death. That fight left the limitation hanging on for 10 years. Now voters are trying to bring that limitation back to life.

Since the November election in

1968, the property tax problem has been on at least three separate ballots and has been disguised at least two different times. Voters in 1969 and again in 1972 turned thumbs-down to property tax relief in one form or another.

But none of those measures matched the 1968 limitation measure as closely as today's Measure 6, and, say supporters of the limitation 10 years ago, the effects of the 1968 measure wouldn't have been as great as they may be this year.

The saga of Oregon's Measure 7 on the 1968 general election ballot began under similar circumstances as Measure 6.

According to Sen. Ed Fadeley, D-Eugene, the drive to place Measure 7 on the 1968 ballot started with several supporters who, like their counterparts today, wanted to attack the federal income tax system but chose the state property tax system instead.

Their decision was based on the fact that they had more access to the state tax system, Fadeley says. They grabbed for the one thing they could be certain to change.

That grasp on state government was premature, Fadeley says, because the dollar was worth more 10 years ago.

"We didn't have quite the same feeling about inflation taking so much of our money back then," he explains. "The rate of inflation wasn't as great in 1968 as it is now. But now, if you know the dollar won't buy anything anymore, you want to hold on to as much of them as you can."

The 1968 measure, while provoking the same feelings about a loss of essential civic services and cutbacks to the school budgets around the state, had one advantage to Measure 6: it was originally written for Oregon tax laws. Measure 6 is written to conform to California tax laws.

Had the measure been approved, it would have repealed the



state's 6 percent limitation on annual property taxes, changed that to a one and one-half percent limitation and would have forced the elimination of some tax exemptions enjoyed by churches, lodges and other property.

All that, one supporter of that measure says, would have been better than what will happen next year if Measure 6 is approved Nov. 7.

"No, I don't believe all the horror stories (about Measure 6)," Ralph Coan, a Portland realtor who supported the 1968 tax limitation measure. "They haven't happened in California. And they wouldn't have happened here if our limitation was passed ten years ago."

Both the support and the opposition to Measure 6 is lining up almost the same way they did in 1968, Coan says. But history may not repeat itself.

Although the 1968 measure was defeated by nearly 300,000 votes, Coan predicts Measure 6 to pass "like a breeze."

"Very frankly, I haven't been paying too much attention to what has been going on with this new measure. I hope it passes. It would have passed ten years ago if the people supported it like they

are now."

The reasoning behind the 1968 measure and Measure 6 are almost identical, Coan says. Ten years ago the angry taxpayers wanted to cut off funds to the state government. That's the only way to stop government overspending.

"At the time when it failed to pass and the whole thing was over, the general consensus among supporters was that the politicians got the message," Coan says.

But that message, to stop spending taxpayers' money on unnecessary programs and projects, has taken 10 years to get through. It still hasn't been heard by all the legislators in Salem, Coan says.

"They haven't done a damn thing about it and they never will."

Fadeley, however, disagrees. Since the first limitation scare 10 years ago, the Legislature has made progress on property tax relief, he says.

Changes in the way the state school system is financed and direct relief to homeowners and renters have been the major steps toward tax reform, Fadeley says.

The Legislature has increased the amount of money the state pays to local school budgets and has implemented the Homeowner and Renter Relief Program as part of a tax reform package over the past 10 years.

While those changes may not seem like much to the middle income taxpayer, who has watched his tax dollars increase by nearly 100 percent since 1968, they are better than what was offered in California, Fadeley says.

But Coan disagrees with the relief offered by the Legislature. The state is still taking too much money from the taxpayers and not giving enough in return, he says.

"The only solution is to cut their (the Legislature's) funds. And if that doesn't work, you just get some new politicians."

Bromberg storms into Eugene

By LISA GORLINE
Of the Emerald

David Bromberg and his band will come to Eugene Friday, to take The Place by musical storm.

Long a recipient of well-deserved praise from a clan of followers, Bromberg has only recently emerged from the restrictive bounds of the cult artist and into the mainstream of popular acclaim. He has played behind such performers as Bob Dylan, Ringo Starr, Mississippi John Hurt, Tom Paxton and Chubby

Checker. But the session work was tributary to a long courtship with the New York and small club circuit.

In 1970, the Philadelphia native embarked on a solo career that has harvested tangible results. Signed by Columbia, he produced four albums before switching to the Fantasy label, and the subsequent release defied the "inadequacy myth," associated with smaller labels.

"How Late'll Ya Play Till," covers the entire spectrum from folk, country and country-based rock to

blues, jazz and the glorified-ballad. The latter has been blended into a humorous musical concoction that is Bromberg trademark.

His latest endeavor ("Bandit in a Bathing Suit") pursues this versatility even further. It includes a disco instrumental, '50s style vocal techniques and some chanting of a religious bent.

In concert, Bromberg is indeed a multistyled musical wizard. Trading off between electric and acoustic guitars, and equally proficient with fiddle or mandolin, he forays comfortably into disco-bump or Irish folksong.

Despite all Bromberg's acclaim, one might wonder why, as a reviewer put it, "Bromberg's obviously not a household name, except around musician's houses, where he's something of a god." Recognition came late, perhaps because Bromberg fits no particular category.

Critics describe him as "electrifying," as having complete control of his audience for an immediate exchange of creative energy, "spontaneous and totally sincere." He has dedicated his life to music.

"I've no hobbies beyond playing guitar, fiddle, and mandolin," Bromberg says. A welcome relief from the common pretentiousness of modern artists.

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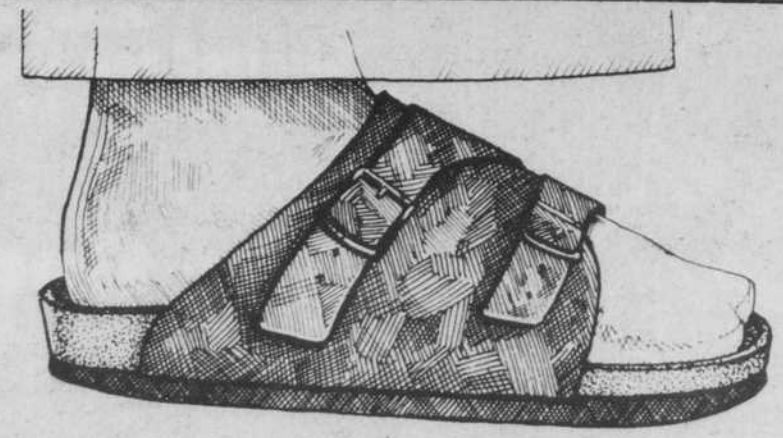
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