

# House Democrats split over speaker

## Rural 'Hornets' buzz urban liberals

By DANA TIMS  
Of the Emerald

Two popes were selected in the time it will take members of the House Democratic caucus to agree on a speaker for the 1979 legislative term. But the deadlocked cardinals in the Capitol don't promise to send up the white smoke of decision anytime soon.

House Democrats, have met periodically for the past month and are divided into three factions: the liberal, urban majority, led by Rep. Hardy Myers, D-Port.; the conservative, rural "Hornets," headed by field burning proponent Jeff Gilmour, D-Jefferson; and a mixture of hopeful moderates who have aligned with Gilmour's Hornets in the name of "party unity."

The split has left both groups short of the 31 votes necessary to elect a speaker—and far apart in demands and expectations. It

may, however, be as close as they are going to get, leaving the possibility some Democrats might defect to form a coalition with the Republicans.

"Quite frankly," says Rep. Grant Kerans, D-Eugene, "they (the Hornets) are political reactionaries and are paying off old slights."

Kerans claims the Hornets felt mistreated by last session's Speaker Phil Lang, and now are "being obstructionists, with very narrow ends."

"It's not a matter of philosophy, it's a matter of personalities," says Kerans, a Myers supporter. "They don't want concessions, they want unconditional surrender of all power to them."

A coalition between the Hornets and the Republicans is a real possibility, according to Kerans. He says his group is not about to grant the Hornets chairmanships

of the Ways and Means, Revenue and Agriculture committees—all positions they've demanded.

"Talent and ability have played a big part in determining positions in the past," says Kerans. "These people haven't shown me very much."

Kerans' charge that the Hornets are "obstructionists," and "anarchists," is echoed by former House Speaker Dick Eymann.

"Their goal is to embarrass the majority of the party," says Eymann, who served as speaker during the 1973 session, when the Hornets first banded together.

"They'd do something like vote with the minority party on something as trivial as adjournment, just to cause embarrassment to the majority," he says.

Eymann noted that the Democratic caucus adopted a rule during that session requiring all members to support the majority in decisions of leadership and procedure.

"If that rule were being enforced, there would be no problem," states Eymann. "During that session I fired Dick Magruder and Jeff Gilmour as chairman and vice-chairman of the Consumer and Business Affairs committee for not following the majority of the

caucus. That took the sting out of the Hornets, and I didn't have any problem with them for the rest of the session."

Gilmour, on the other hand, claims his is a philosophy whose time has come.

"Our philosophy is more conservative than the Portland-area Democrats, and we feel the people are behind us," says Gilmour.

About half the 21 members who

In the name of "party unity" Grannell, Rep. Ed Lindquist, D-Milwaukie, and three other moderates joined the Hornets.

Yet the centerpiece of a demand received by Myers late Monday night dealt with a guarantee of Lindquist remaining, or Grannell becoming, majority leader—second-ranking position in the House.

It underscores the point that a



## Legislative Issues

support Myers are from metropolitan Portland.

Gilmour denies the possibility of forming a coalition with the Republicans, but also denies that his group of 13 is in the minority, even among Democrats.

"My group is growing larger every time," says Gilmour, who picked up five votes at a caucus meeting last Monday night. "There's no doubt in my mind I'll win."

Rep. Bill Grannell, D-North Bend, one of the five who joined Gilmour's Hornets, represents a middle group. Because of continued polarization, he predicts the speaker will come from the Democratic caucus but, like each of the last two popes, may be a compromise candidate.

"It's basically a rural-urban split," explains Grannell, who originally planned to run for speaker himself. "Hardy and the Portlanders have decided they want to control it. But that won't hold the ruralites."

Grannell concedes that to follow the 1973 rule would allow for easier election of a speaker. "But ultimately," he adds, "if ruralites don't participate, you still don't have control of the Legislature."

lot of power is being handed out and people are scrambling and bargaining mightily for it.

For his part, Myers credits the stalemate to the rise in conservatism among caucus members. "There were no real key races that have altered the Legislature," Myers assesses. "But among returners, there is a more cautious mood, a conservative air."

"It's hard to say exactly where we are," says Myers. "But I don't see the prospect of an agreement with the Hornets. Our lines are pretty well drawn."

Kerans, the liberal, predicts the Hornets will form a coalition with the Republicans. Grannell, the moderate, says if a coalition had been possible, it probably would have formed by now, but adds a "maybe." Gilmour, the conservative, claims there is "no way" his Hornets will join the Republicans.

But as the Democrats continue to claw and inflict damage on each other, as well as the taxpayer—they'll run up a bill of \$35,000 per day for each day they remain deadlocked after the Legislature convenes on Jan. 8—the Republicans are waiting quietly.

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