

If lawmakers were journalists

They would be fair, accurate and incorruptible

PORTLAND (AP) — The way they tell it, if lawmakers were allowed to be journalists for a day they wouldn't miss any stories, they'd be more fair, more accurate and they wouldn't be manipulated.

That was what four legislative leaders from Oregon and Washington said when given an opportunity to grade reporters and say how they would handle the reporters' jobs.

At a dinner Friday of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi, some of the lawmakers had stern words for the reporters, their editors, and editorial and headline writers.

Oregon House Speaker Grattan Kerans, D-Eugene, chastised reporters for covering only the flashy stories and neglecting the dryer, but sometimes more important issues.

His criticism was echoed by Washington House Majority Leader Dennis Heck, D-Vancouver.

Heck said the top story in both the Oregon and Washington legislatures is also one of the dullest and the most difficult to understand and translate for the public. That story is how the two financially troubled states are going to deal with declining revenues in their budgets.

The Vancouver Democrat also said that reporters often receive no training before beginning a complicated statehouse beat, which he called unfair.

"Your job is to print the news and raise hell. Well, you can't raise hell if you don't know what the hell you're doing," Heck said.

Oregon Senate President Ed Fadeley, D-Eugene, said he sees little constructive reporting: "Only our warts and blemishes are portrayed to the people."

Those who write headlines and editorials in newspapers received some of the harshest fire from the lawmakers.

"Who writes the headlines?"

queried Oregon Senate Minority Leader Tony Meeker, D-Amity, adding that sometimes the headlines reflect little of the stories they introduce.

Heck confirmed that some of the best stories come over drinks with lawmakers. But he also warned that reporters can and do get manipulated by public officials, especially in such informal settings.

All the lawmakers said they knew of instances where reporters have been used, and Fadeley admitted he had manipulated reporters before.

Although they hesitated to give specific examples of manipulation, lawmakers said they sometimes play one reporter off another or use a reporter to leak something intended to damage another politician or his work.

Heck said reporters also can miss stories if they become overdependent on their watering-hole sources, and overlook legislators who don't spend time in the bars.

Klamath Falls air field gets 14 jets, technicians

KLAMATH FALLS (AP) — The U.S. Air Force plans to add 14 jet fighters and 264 full-time technicians to its Air National Guard training mission at Kingsley Field, the office of Rep. Denny Smith, R-Ore., learned Monday.

In a letter to the congressman, Col. Albert Barbero, chief of the Air Force's program liaison division, said the expansion at the Klamath Falls base is included in President Reagan's proposed 1984 budget. The proposed budget also includes \$9 million for construction at Kingsley Field, he said.

If approved by Congress, the expansion would mean an additional 14 F-4Cs at the base sometime after the federal fiscal year begins Oct. 1, said John Heubusch, a legislative assistant in Smith's office.

The Air Force will conduct an environmental impact analysis before any new construction begins, he said.

Heubusch said the F-4C jet fighters are being phased out by the Air Force and are now being used mostly for training, he said.

Although the expansion won't be definite until Congress passes the budget, Heubusch said there is a "very, very good possibility" the budget item will go through.

Teachers criticize vote by mail urge that program not expand

SALEM (AP) — Voting by mail came under fire Monday as Oregon's largest teachers' union and Democratic Party organizations urged legislators not to expand the pilot program.

John Danielson of the Oregon Education Association told the House Elections Committee that secrecy of the ballot is not ensured in mail elections.

Dick Celsi of Portland, acting state Democratic chairman, and a spokeswoman for Democratic women's clubs also said mail voting could erode the secret ballot concept in multi-member households.

Secretary of State Norma Paulus, who advocates more elections by mail, said the secrecy issue is a valid concern. But she said the same argument can be made against the law permitting voters to cast absentee ballots.

The Legislature would be "intellectually dishonest," she said, if it continues to allow absentee voting while preventing more use of mail voting on grounds that ballot secrecy might be jeopardized.

Three mail elections have

been held since the Legislature authorized the practice in 1981. The House panel is considering a measure, HB2050, that would permit voting by mail for candidates.

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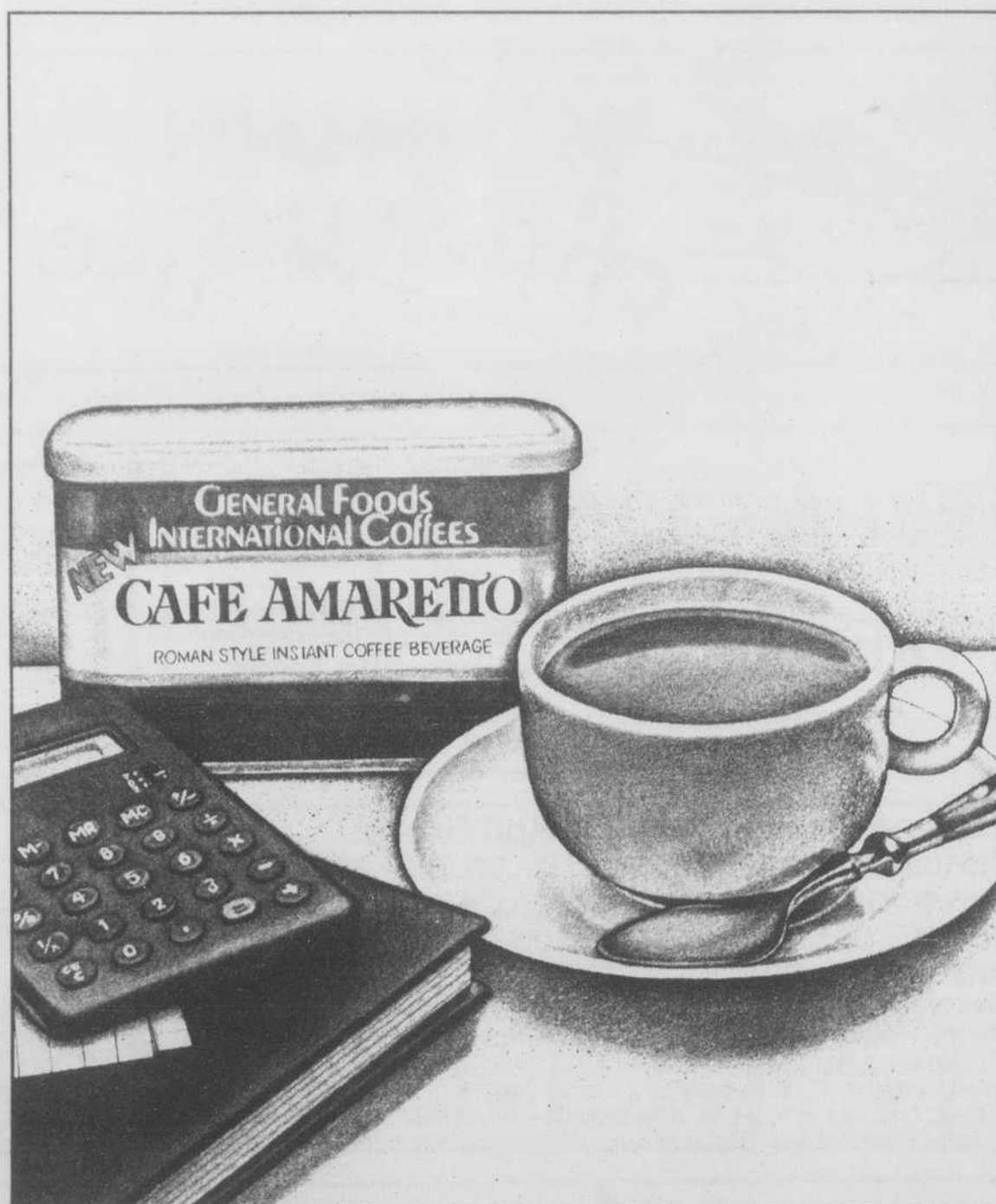
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