

Citizens, legislators volley tax proposals

By Michele Matassa
Of the Emerald

Local elected officials, state legislators and the general public exchanged proposals, inquiries and criticisms Tuesday night in a tax reform hearing at Harris Hall.

Businessmen, farmers and landlords — among others — volleyed tax reform ideas for hours, providing a spectrum of options and opinions on the matter.

But with all the disagreement, the speakers agreed on one thing: Oregon property and income taxpayers deserve a break.

Rep. Carl Hosticka, D-Eugene, predicted this concern during an opening statement.

He called property tax relief the number-two issue facing the legislature, listing budget-balancing as the top priority.

He said the revenue committee wanted to respond to voter concerns expressed during the November vote on Measure 3, a property tax limitation proposal.

"Something needs to be done but we're not sure what. That's why we're here, to hear your ideas about how to structure Oregon's tax system," Hosticka said.

Seventy-five people signed up to testify in front of the House Revenue and School Finance Committee, in a rousing display of citizen interest in the issues of revenue and tax reform.

Lane County Commissioner Jerry Rust called property tax relief imperative, suggesting

the revenue committee not only put relief measures on the ballot but endorse them as well.

He suggested developing an alternative tax plan, not an additional one, and said the present tax structure should not be changed with regard to one's ability to pay.

Rust expressed an urgent need for revenue at the local government level.

"We do not have enough revenue... in Lane County to meet the state mandates that the legislators laid upon county governments," Rust said.

One county resident proposed a flat-rate income tax because it would raise more revenue than a cluster of indirect taxes such as cigarette taxes.

A small businessman underscored the relevance of property and income tax relief to economic diversification.

"If you want to rebuild the economy, rebuild it with what built it — small business."

Current tax rates are not only killing present businesses, they are scaring away new business, he said.

"Don't look to tax us more, but to eliminate some of the taxes. Eliminate some of the duplication in agencies," he suggested.

After 1½ hours of testimony, the score favored a sales tax, with six speakers supporting it and only one actively opposing it. Some speakers said they would rather see other revenue means, but aren't completely closed to the idea.

Chem prof will direct OHSU's new institute

A University chemistry professor will direct the newly approved Institute for Advanced Biomedical Research at the Oregon Health Sciences University in Portland, OHSU Pres. Leonard Laster announced Tuesday.

Edward Herbert, who has been with the University since 1963, was chosen from about 150 candidates, said Tom Cruse of the OHSU relations office.

Herbert, an associate member of the University's molecular biology institute, will continue his research here for another two years while the OHSU institute building is constructed, Cruse said.

The State Board of Higher Education approved the \$21-million research institute in March and construction is expected to begin this summer.

Construction will be funded by grants from the U.S. Health and Human Services Department, Cruse said.

Meanwhile, Herbert will begin immediately as a consultant during building construction and will interview faculty members for 10 to 15 research posts at the institute.

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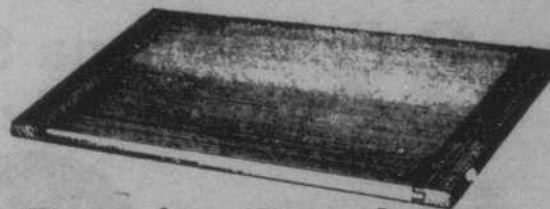
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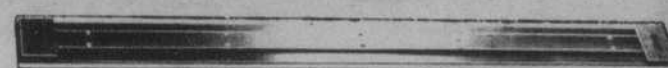
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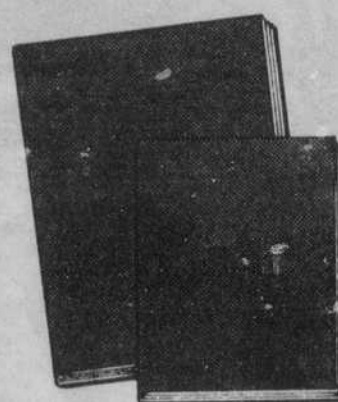
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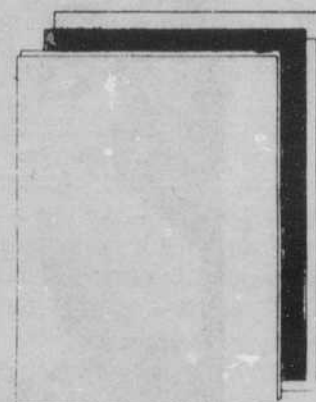
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