

The Sandy Post

Editorial & Opinion

Chris Hale, general manager Scott Newton, editor

Gas tax increase needed in Oregon

A proposed increase of 2 cents per gallon for gasoline should be considered as a way to reduce millions of dollars of backlogged highway projects statewide and improve local roads as well.

House Bill 2266 recently underwent hearings before the Oregon House Transportation Committee, and another hearing is set for Feb. 26. According to information provided by the Oregon Department of Transportation, a 1 cent increase would provide about \$21 million to fund interchanges, overpasses, pavement widening and other projects.

The idea was not proposed by ODOT, however, but by a task force headed by Rep. Robin Lindquist, D-Gladstone.

There are, without a doubt, many projects to be found waiting in the Highway Division's Six-Year Highway Improvement Plan. The widening of Highway 26 in the Mt. Hood corridor is one of them.

Without arguing the merits of that plan, it is obvious by the number of projects proposed by cities, counties and the public during the 1983 program update that more funds are needed. A gasoline tax is paid by the user, and is therefore equitable. It can also be argued that a modern road system is a form of economic development.

It has been proposed that half of the 2-cent increase go to local governments, with 60 percent given to the counties and 40 percent to the cities. We like that idea. The roads and streets in Clackamas County and Sandy are in need of repair. It is not necessarily anyone's fault, it is just that the piper hasn't been paid.

House Bill 2266 has a long way to go before it becomes law, but Oregonians should tighten their belts and consider it inevitable.

We realize that gasoline taxes are already high. A 2-cent increase would make the total 12 cents per gallon in Oregon. The mere mention of increased fuel taxes is enough to make some people's blood boil.

But the money being raised is not going far enough statewide. Locally, the longer we wait to fix the streets the more expensive it will be.

Commentary

Time is right for new water policy

by STEVE STARKOVICH
Senate Majority Leader

The increased public awareness of problems in Oregon water policy has created a golden opportunity for us to do some things that have needed doing for a long time. As senate majority leader and co-chair of the Joint Water Policy Committee of the Oregon Legislature, I'm devoting a large part of my time and energy this session to working for intelligent and fair water policy reform. I'm determined not to let this opportunity slip by.

It is firmly established in state law that the water in our streams and under the ground belongs to the people of the state. There is no such thing as "private" water. Users are permitted access to the water resource (a water "right" is actually a permit to use) based on their pledge that the water will be put to "beneficial use" and not wasted.

The "first in time, first in right" water appropriation doctrine, which gives priority to older water rights, dates from a time when there were fewer demands on our limited water resources. At its inception, the doctrine was a simple and effective way to sort out competing claims for water. But it has never been the intent of state law that "beneficial uses" — or the amounts of water allocated to those uses — should be rigidly fixed for all time. Nor is it the intent of the law that large blocks of our water resource should be locked away for the exclusive use of a privileged few.

This intent notwithstanding, there are obviously problems with Oregon water policy. Streams and ground-water supplies are overdrawn in many parts of the state. There is not enough water left in some streams to support the wildlife that used to rely on those streams, and not enough water left to keep those streams running clear and unpolluted. Inappropriate grazing, over-zealous flood control channelization, and improper logging have caused extensive damage to many streams, decreasing water flow and increasing erosion. The State Water Resources Department and local watermasters don't have enough personnel to keep track of how much water is being used, by whom, and for what purpose. We know there is waste in water use, but we don't yet know how much or why, and no economic incentives to encourage conservation currently exist. Perhaps our most difficult challenge is to create a fair process for periodically re-evaluating how

our public waters are used and by whom.

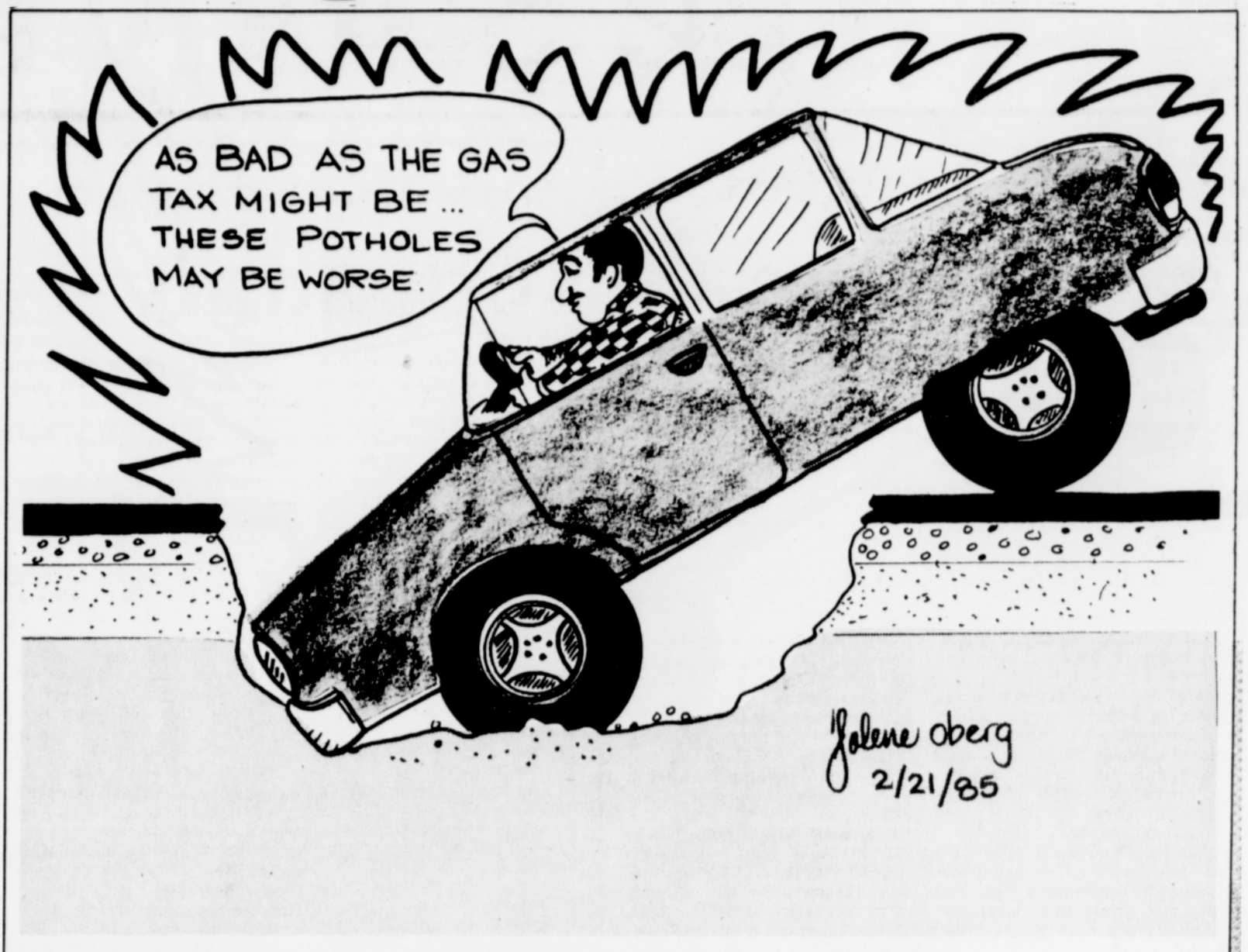
Fortunately, there are solutions to these problems, though things can't be straightened out quickly, nor without some cost to us all. We must move forward one step at a time, and we must not trample the present livelihoods and future hopes of innocent people.

The first step was to recognize that in-stream uses of water (for fish and wildlife, pollution abatement, and recreation) are beneficial uses — not only because they have economic values, but also because they have intrinsic values. We have taken this first step. Another important step was to recognize that we do have problems with both the quality and quantity of our water resource. We've taken this step, too. We've also taken steps to improve (and adequately fund) our water use information and management capability. Finally, we recognize that the basis for any water policy reform must be the protection of existing water rights.

Other steps are being taken even as I write this. We are experimenting with a process of water basin plan updating that may eventually provide a vehicle for re-evaluating our priorities for distributing water to various beneficial uses. We are exploring an approach to water conservation that will set standards for waste reduction, provide economic incentives for those who choose to conserve, and provide legal and fiscal disincentives for non-cooperation. We are searching for ways to fund higher levels of stream-bank rehabilitation. And we are exploring ways to establish minimum stream flows as "public" water rights without imposing unfair penalties on agriculturalists. This last point is important. No one segment of our society is solely responsible for the imperfection in Oregon water policy, and no one segment should bear the brunt of our reforms.

I don't believe our water resources problems will be solved quickly, simply, or without some expense. But the problem is well identified now, promising solutions have been proposed, and there is determination in the Legislature to keep water policy reform moving forward.

If you have questions or opinions about water policy, or about anything else that may (or should) come before the Legislature, please contact me at my office in the Capitol Building in Salem. The tollfree number is 1-800-982-1211.



Commentary

Committees do work of Legislature

by REP. BOB SHIPRACK

As many of you know the work of the Oregon Legislature is done primarily in committee. We are known throughout the nation as having one of the strongest committee systems of any legislature across the United States.

On the first day of the legislative session Speaker Katz referred over 250 bills to the various committees, allowing the work of the session to begin without delay.

Most of the committees have gone through preliminary briefings over the course of the last few weeks — for instance the House Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources last week received a briefing from the Department of Agriculture on the progress they have made in controlling the gypsy moth.

This is a very serious threat to the state and our district and I intend to monitor the progress that the Department of Agriculture is making in keeping the moth in Lane County and hopefully eradicating this tree-eating pest once and for all.

The Agriculture and Natural Resources Committee also took up the issue of reforestation with three bills proposed by the state Department of Forestry and one bill introduced by the Interim Task Force on Reforestation and Hardwoods Utilization, which are on the committee table for discussion. State Forestry proposals include increasing the reforestation tax credit to 50 percent, instead of 10 percent, of costs and increasing the qualifying acreage from 500 to 2,000.

On a related issue, last week in the Trade and Economic Development Committee they heard testimony from Champion International. Their testimony followed the devastating announcement from Champion that they closed their Oregon plants, throwing some 1,500 people out of work.

Although great strides have been made to diversify Oregon's economy

over the last two years, we have not paid enough attention to our natural resource economy.

I have already outlined some of the measures involving reforestation that we are going to take a look at. Some of the other items that will be considered this session include a measure that would set up a commission to help market Oregon's hardwoods, HB 2121. Last week we passed House Joint Resolution 2, which calls on the president of the Senate and the speaker of the House to appoint two senators and two representatives to serve on Pacific State Legislative Fishery Task Force. The Task Force will act as a clearinghouse for opinion from all various interests involved in the Pacific fishing industry.

These are first steps in trying to rehabilitate our timber and fishing industries. But I believe rehabilitation of our natural resource-based industries will be right beside development of our hi-tech industries when we begin taking a look at proposed economic development legislation. My hope is that the actions we take this session will help prevent future mill closures and help stabilize Oregon's timber-based economies.

Finally, I just wanted to take this opportunity to let you know what we are doing in the House Committee that I chair — the Labor Committee. This week we will begin taking testimony on several pieces of legislation that would increase workers' compensation benefits if he

or she were disfigured or dismembered. The legislation would also affect surviving spouses of persons killed on the job. The committee is studying many bills to streamline the system and cut costs without lowering benefits. If you have any concerns over workers' compensation, unemployment insurance or related subjects, let me know.

Next week I'll write about the progress of the Energy and Environmental Committee as they begin to study utility and phone rate legislation, and will provide an analysis of the sales tax.

As always, if I can be of any service to you do not hesitate to call me at 1-800-982-1211.

Letter to the editor

Board actions stump patron

At the Feb. 11 high school board meeting our superintendent announced plans to attend a seminar in Salem called PRACTICUM. I understand the superintendent will attend most, if not all, of this week-long seminar. The purpose of this seminar is to enlighten school superintendents on how the Legislature works. Wouldn't it be nice if all employers gave one week off at full pay so we could become more knowledgeable about the Oregon political process?

Meanwhile, back at the school house problems continue to surface. On Jan. 14th the superintendent announced that 25 percent of the students who register as freshmen never graduate. Wouldn't it be more appropriate to find a solution to the drop-out problem?

Also last fall the position of principal was eliminated with a reported savings of \$50,000, yet SUHS financial reports still list an office of the principal at \$77,624 a year and charge approximately \$6,000 a month to this account. Why not spend extra time updating the accounting system?

Another area of concern to me is the turnover in personnel. At the last three board meetings reported resignations ranged from one to two each month. Based on the present staff of 140 and the seemingly continuous stream of resignations, the turnover rate is 10 percent or more. From my experience as a businessman, a high turnover rate is the result of unhappy employees or selecting the wrong people in the first place. Whatever the reason for turnover there is a cost for training new employees and/or disruption of program momentum and morale.

I favor seminars that improve skills so the individual can improve job performance. However, I do not support an unrelated activity, especially when there are unsolved

problems on the job.

John H. King
Sandy

Editor's note: The audited figure for the principal's office for the 1983-84 year was \$219,397. The present budget for the principal's office is \$77,624. The money is earmarked for supplies, maintenance contracts on business machines and for the salaries and benefits of five people. They include a cashier, switchboard operator, secretary and field counselor (who supervises the grounds and works to solve detention problems). Salaries for two field counselors are included in the present budget, but only one person is employed at that position. According to Superintendent Roberta Hutton, that position will probably not be filled and the resulting savings will be included in next year's cash carry-over.

Commentary

Residents asked to promote tourism

by GOV. VIC ATIYEH

At one time or another, nearly everyone in sales has learned the four elements of the marketing mix: product, price, place and promotion.

Oregon is successfully using these to increase the number of visitors to our state, to encourage them to stay longer, and to attract new dollars to our economy.

We have the product — unmatched natural gifts such as Crater Lake, our Pacific coastline, the Columbia Gorge and the Willows plus international attractions such as the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Pendleton Round-Up.

We have the price — that is, vaca-

tioners can relax while spending as much or as little money as they choose.

We have the place, or location — adjacent to California, the most populous state in the Union, and conveniently situated for Pacific Rim travelers.

Now, we also have a rare opportunity for promotion.

I wish to invite every Oregonian to join me in an unprecedented effort to market our state to pleasure and business travelers.

Tourism is a significant industry that brings \$1.5 billion annually into Oregon's economy and employs an estimated 58,000 people.

Tourism dollars touch virtually

every Oregonian, even if they are not directly engaged in the tourism business. Insurance agents write policies for motels and service stations. Accountants counsel hotels and restaurants. And so forth.

Not long ago, we conducted a survey of San Francisco and Los Angeles-area residents. Sadly, we found that 42 percent of those interviewed believed Oregonians would prefer that Californians not visit.

We must overcome this perception. That is the goal of our new tourism theme: "Oregon: You're More Than Welcome."

We are undertaking a comprehensive campaign that will include, for

example, advertising directly to prospective travelers, producing an Oregon manual for travel agents, publishing bilingual travel literature and initiating media stories about tourism in Oregon.

Ultimately, though, Oregonians themselves will determine whether tourists feel welcome. Our reception of tourists will determine how long they stay, whether they encourage their friends to visit, and how frequently they return.

The friendly grocery clerk at Enterprise can be as important in welcoming visitors as the hospitable bed-and-breakfast host in Ashland or the attentive waiter in Redmond.