Editorial

HB 2620 controversy erupts over proposals

by Dennis Dobson

It is becoming apparent that House Bill 2620, ammending the manner in which royalty income from the Mist gas wells is disbursed, hasn't a snow ball's chance in Hades of getting passed during the current session of the legislature. After passing, in its currently ammended form, two House of Representative fiscal committees by unanimous votes and passing the House by an overwhelming majority of 48-1, instead of passing the Senate it is going to be nibbled to death by the confusion a new set of proposals being pushed by our erstwhile State Senator, Charles Hanlon, is likely to produce.

During the last several days Hanlon and his aides have been contacting among others, local media representatives, county commissioners, plain citizens and school district superintendents with still another "new" set of proposals. Already supporters of HB 2620 are crying 'Foul!' Briefly, Hanlon says, due to a legal error in the language of HB 2620 as it currently stands counties would lay themselves open to law suits from their various taxing districts if they attempted to disperse any funds under its provisions. As a result, Hanlon says, he proposes that the counties keep all of the funds generated by mineral resource exploitation and that up to a maximum of 20 percent of those funds be earmarked for dispersal to the impacted areas.

Those funds, he continues, would then be disbursed by the county to the impacted areas on a quarterly basis and overseen by the county auditor while the interest those funds gather once invested would be split up among the county's taxing districts under the provisions of the existing formula, in effect still rewarding governmental indebtedness and penalizing thrifty taxing districts and that these proceeds, both principal and interest, be paid out quarterly instead of yearly or bi-yearly and that these proposed amendments become effective for the 1981-82 fiscal year, currently under way. In effect, quarterly pay-out limits the amount of profit realized as interest by any of the taxing districts through investing the money.

At first glance these appear to constitute a fair settlement of an issue that has plagued the area for a year now. Unfortunately, it is likely just a smoke screen intended to hide an attempt to bring the whole question quietly to its knees.

According to Senator Hanlon's opposition, including two of HB 2620's most active advocates; County Commissioner Marian Sahagian and Mist Rural Fire Protection Board Chairman Art Laubach, Hanlon's proposal differs so little from the original proposal contained in HB 2620 as to be unrecognizably different. That original bill went down in resounding defeat, generating the current ammendment, primarily because local school districts, notably Scappoose and St. Helens, feared that county control of the money and any change in the disbursal formula would seriously hurt their fiscal positions. Those supporting HB 2620 are afraid that the confusion generated by this "muddying of the waters" will assure no action before an already harrassed legislature adjourns for this session. They also believe that in the event this proposal can be brought before the Senate Revenue Committee before adjournment, as Hanlon assures it can, unlikely as they are currently wrestling with the state budget, it will get killed when it is sent back to the House for a vote. Killed, they believe, by the same organizations and for the same reasons that it was stopped cold the last time these virtually identical amendments were proposed. "He's trying to sandbag this thing," Sahagian said. "What's more, I'm surprised he (Hanlon) is trying to pass this off as a new idea," she added.

As recently as last Friday Senator Hanlon was willing to go on record as saying that his opposition to HB 2620 was based soley upon the "overwhelming opposition" to it that he had encountered on the part of the elected representatives of the area, primarily, he said, from city councils and school districts throughout Columbia County. All the while, however, he was ignoring a stack of letters and numerous phone calls he has received from many groups and individuals within the county supporting HB 2620 as currently amended. Those going on record as supporting the bill include two local newspapers, the strong and constant

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announcements

THANKS

Thank you for the cards, letters and expressions of love in sympathy for Rita Shipley.

The Shipley Family

THANK YOU

The family of Ruby E. Elliott wish to thank all the neighbors and friends for the comfort and concern shown us in our recent loss.

Mr. and Mrs. Merlen L. Robertson
Mr. and Mrs. M.A. Dutch Bingham
Mr. and Mrs. Norman E. Bingham

1971 GRADUATES PLAN REUNION

The Vernonia High School graduating class of 1971 will hold it's 10 year class reunion August 22, 1981, at the home of Rick and Shelly Curl. It will be a potluck affair from 3 pm to 8 pm. The class will also be inviting classmates from previous years and teachers. For more information, contact Marilyn Landers at 429-4543.

FREEDOM DEADLINES CHANGE

All ads and stories for the July 30 issue only must be submitted no later than Friday, July 24 at 5 pm.

Classified ads will be accepted until noon on July 27.

Call 429-8111 to leave messages.

CHURCH NEWS

Dr. Leo M. Thornton, President of Western Evangelical Seminary, Portland, Oregon will speak at the Community Worship Service, which is held annually at the football field on Sunday, July 26 at 10 am. Dr. Thornton has been with the Seminary since 1958 and has served as Vice President and Executive Vice President. He was a Chaplain and Civil Affairs Officer (LTC) in the U.S. Army Reserves (retired November 1976) and has served three terms as an Oregon State Representative. On the national level he serves as President of the Christian Holiness Association and as a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Evangelicals.

The community service is sponsored by the Vernonia Ministerial Association comprised of six participating churches. Everyone is welcome.

Vernonia Freedom

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Deadline for display advertising: Friday for normal material and Monday for after-weekend copy.

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