



Dick Bogle

Two bills aimed at attacking racial discrimination here and abroad were in house hearings at the Oregon legislature this past week.

The two proposals, House Bill 2479, which would make certain kinds of racial and religious harassment a felony and House Bill 2618, which would ban investment of state funds in countries with laws that discriminate on the basis of race were discussed in hearings before the House Aging and Minority Affairs Committee.

H.B. 2479 was proposed by Governor Atiyeh after he became concerned over the number of recent race and religious based incidents in Oregon in the past several months.

That bill provides that a person commits a felony, if he or she intimidates another because of race, color, religion, ancestry or national origin.

Already some are raising questions as to the constitutionality of the proposed law and the Governor has said he is willing to study amendments to deal with those questions.

Derrick Bell, Dean of the University of Oregon Law School, who is Black, says if passed he doesn't think the potential victims of racial intimidation have any basis to feel the law is adequate to protect their rights.

Bell puts his opinion in an historical perspective. He says the history of civil rights statutes in this country indicates it's quite difficult to get prosecutions of those persons charged with racial violence unless the case is horrendous.

Dean Bell believes prosecutors are usually concerned about getting the necessary proof and whether or not juries are going to convict and therefore a lot of cases don't get prosecuted at all.

He says, "unless it's a very serious case, the tendency of juries is to be very sympathetic to the defendant and very suspicious of whether there is really sufficient proof. So generally those statutes fall into disuse."

But Bell does see it as worthwhile for the Governor to propose such legislation. He feels that the current sense of conservatism means to a lot

of people that government is not going to oppose violence against minorities.

Bell says, "the introduction and strong support of the bill by Governor Atiyeh puts people on notice that government is not condoning the intimidation of minority groups."

TASK FORCE TO EXAMINE CRIME

Look for some changes in the federal approach to crime in the United States.

Attorney General William French Smith has ordered a special task force to determine whether the federal government should make a bolder attempt to ensure the domestic tranquility.

The Task Force will be headed by Griffin Bell, an Attorney General in the Carter Administration, and Illinois Republican Governor James Thompson. Other members will include persons from the academic side and state and local officials engaged in the fight against crime.

Smith has also said the task force will look at whether or not the FBI should assume a greater role in drug law enforcement. Just recently, FBI director William Webster has advocated such an expansion of his agency's role.

It seems to me there would be things the FBI could do to beef up the battle against heavy narcotics but it wouldn't be a role paralleling that of the Drug Enforcement Administration.

The two agencies attract two different types of agents. FBI men have always impressed me as being text book types while the drug agents seem more street wise.

Let's face it, both agencies are looking at some of the same criminal suspects at the higher end of organized crime so maybe some sort of liaison between the two would be beneficial.

But if the FBI was to somehow pre-empt the DEA in what it's now doing, then look out. There is nothing more ugly than law enforcement agencies battling each other over what each feels is its own turf.



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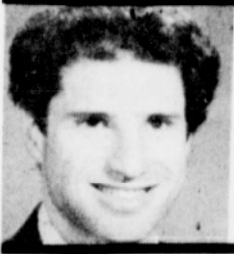
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The view from the Capitol

(Editor's Note: Each week, U.S. Rep. Ron Wyden (D. Ore) will report from Washington, D.C., on what's been going on in the nation's capitol, key votes, key issues, key concerns. This week he discusses the Administration's energy policy, co-sponsorship of a bill designed to help young people buy their first home, and his vote on a House Resolution regarding reestablishment of the Select Committee on Narcotics Abuse and Control.)

Q. Congressman Wyden, when President Reagan decontrolled oil prices on January 28th, he claimed acceleration of decontrol would spur greater production and conservation of oil. Do you agree?

A. Accelerated decontrol is nothing more or less than a backdoor energy tax. The Department of Energy has estimated that speedup of decontrol will result in a savings

of 50,000 to 100,000 barrels of oil per day. The resulting price increase of gas alone will cost consumers an additional \$10 billion or approximately \$600 per barrel of oil saved. The U.S. Treasury will collect about \$6.4 billion of that \$10 billion and oil companies will get the remaining \$3.6 billion. The only one who comes out short is the taxpayer -- who pays for it all at the pumps.

Q. With inflation and interest rates ever on the rise, it is becoming more and more difficult for young couples to purchase their first home. What, if anything can be done to help improve this situation?

A. There is no easy solution to the problem of soaring inflation and interest rates. Congress has, however, begun to look toward legislation which would make it more attractive to save for that first

home. This week I agreed to co-sponsor H.R.110, the Young Families Homeownership Opportunity Act, which allows individuals and married couples who have never owned their principal residence to deposit up to \$15,000 into an individual housing account, and to take a tax credit equal to 20 percent of their annual deposit up to a maximum lifetime credit of \$3,000. Any tax liability on the interest earned from the account would be deferred for several years. The beauty of such legislation is that not only would young couples be able to buy that first home -- but overall personal savings would increase and the severely depressed housing industry would get the much needed shot in the arm.

Q. Congressman Wyden, on February 25, you voted against reestablishment of the select Com-

mittee on Narcotics and Abuse and Control. What was your reason?

A. The problem of drug abuse and drug trafficking is a serious one -- particularly in the schools and with the young. I am committed to the need to crack down on such abuse. But paying for another congressional committee on top of the eight that are already addressing this issue, is not the way to do it -- particularly when the cost of running that committee for one year totals more than half-a-million dollars. If we are ever to balance the budget and do away with government waste, we've simply got to stop paying for programs that duplicate existing programs and services. Congress in particular should set an example by not funding committees that are a waste of money.

From the Board Room

By Gladys McCoy
Multnomah County Commissioner

If you believe your property tax is too high, but you say nothing about it, then nothing will be done. There are programs that can help.

All taxpayers have the right to appeal a decision if it is believed the property has been over-assessed.

Begin this procedure by then talking to the assessor; he may be able to make an adjustment on the spot by checking the assessment card for errors. A fair assessment can be made if a mistake is found.

If not satisfied, the next step is to appeal to the County Board of Equalization, a citizen's committee

consisting of a commissioner and two lay persons. Night meetings are set up to accommodate day workers. The deadline for "Homesteads" (a main residence in which you live and own) is February 15. All other properties' deadline is the Third Monday in May (May 18 for 1981). While the time is over for 1980 homestead exemptions, the process is the same each year.

If still not satisfied with the board's decision, the appeal can be taken to either the Small Claims Division of the Oregon Tax Court, which can not be further appealed, or to the Oregon Department of Revenue, and from there the Oregon Supreme Court. However, most often appeals to the Revenue Department are corrected at that level.

Besides this right to appeal an assessment decision, there are other programs that can reduce or delay taxes.

1. The Oregon Property Tax Relief Plan reduces the amount owed on a homestead, with the state paying up to \$800 directly to the county. Renters may also qualify for a refund of up to \$400. There is no income limit for eligibility in this program.

2. The Homeowner and Renter Refund Program (HARRP) was designed for low and middle income Oregonians earning up to \$17,000 annually. A refund of up to \$750 for homeowners, and \$375 for renters, will be sent to eligible persons in October. Applications are found in the state income tax packet mailed to each Oregon resident, or picked up from the Department of Revenue. HARRP may be filed even if no income taxes were filed that year. Applicants may qualify for both property tax relief and HARRP.

3. The Senior Citizen's Property Tax Deferral Program can delay taxes on a residence. The state will pay taxes of qualifying citizens to

the county, with the deferred taxes becoming a lien on the property.

The program requires the applicants living on the property to be at least 62 years of age by March 1 of the year filed; there be a recorded deed to the property; and less than \$1800 is earned from the property. The taxes must be paid, with six percent interest, when the applicant dies, sells the property, or earns more than \$1800 from the property.

Payments can be made to the revenue department to reduce the deferred taxes. Qualifying persons may still apply for HARRP and property tax relief. Applications are taken between January 1 and April 1.

4. The Veterans's Exemption Program provides a \$7500 property tax exemption for qualifying veterans and veterans's widows.

To qualify, a veteran must be certified with at least a 40 percent disability from the U.S. . Veterans Administration or a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and have had 90 consecutive days of wartime services. A widow's qualifications are that of her husband served 90 consecutive days of wartime service and she has never remarried. Her husband need not have been disabled. Each year an application must be filed between January 1 April 1.

For further tax information, call Tax Help, 229-5116, or the Department of Revenue, 229-5833.

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