

STATE CAPITAL NEWS

- Abandoned Hope
- Unhampered Visits
- More for Pensions

By A. L. LINDBECK

Salem.—With the legislative session now in its fifth week all hope has been abandoned of adjournment at the end of the 40-day pay period. In fact it was only among the novices of the session that this hope existed at the outset of the session. Speculation now centers on just how far beyond the 40-day period the session will extend with guesses ranging from one to three weeks—that is a session of 50 or 60 days.

Although more than 30 days have elapsed since the session opened little has been accomplished to date that will have any bearing upon the public welfare. In fact, as far as that is concerned, there is nothing in the legislative hopper that could not be dumped overboard without any serious loss to the state as a whole. In many respects this session has been the most colorless within the memory of the oldest attendant upon these biennial law-making assemblies here in Oregon.

The big ways and means committee started shoving its appropriation bills out on to the floor this week, well ahead of the record of previous sessions which have seen these measures held up until the closing week of the session. Except for two or three matters of policy which this committee has yet to determine it could very well complete its work this week. One of these problems involves the manner of financing the income tax division of the state tax commission. Heretofore this activity has been financed through appropriations out of the general fund. The governor's budget recommends that the \$300,000 needed by the division be captured out of receipts before these are turned into the general fund. This recommendation has a two-fold purpose. For one thing it would give the department more money than it could hope to get through an appropriation—money which the governor and the tax commission believe would be returned to the state many times over in increased collections of income taxes. In the second place this "manipulation" would release another \$300,000 of general fund money for other uses—to be doled out to other activities or to balance the budget as the case might be.

Much of the blame for the prolonged duration of the session must be accepted by the House organization. Most controversial issue before the session revolves about proposed amendments to the unemployment compensation act. Although most of these were in the hopper early in the session no attempt was made by the judiciary committee, which has these measures in charge, to whip them into shape for legislative action until the fourth week of the session. The House has also been most dilatory in its attack on the problem of congressional and legislative reapportionment. Practically every legislator is agreed that something must be done about these problems at this session. Early in the session Speaker Farrell announced that he proposed to name a special committee to handle this problem. Up to Saturday night, with four weeks gone by and with six bills dealing with reapportionment in the hopper, this highly important committee had not yet been named.

Motor vehicle operators will be taxed another 25 cents a year for their driver's license if the senate follows the lead of the House, which this week passed a measure providing for the license fee increase which would go toward reimbursing hospitals for the care of indigent victims of traffic accidents.

One of the first measures of the current session to receive the signature of Governor Sprague was senate bill No. 4 by Senator McKay repealing the non-resident motor vehicle registration law. Under its provisions tourists who visit this state will no longer be required to register their cars. The repeal was recommended by Secretary of State

Earl Snell who declared that it cost the state \$20,000 a year to administer the law which had outlived its usefulness.

The problem of more adequate pensions for the state's needy aged is receiving much attention at the hands of Oregon's lawmakers at this session.

Bills already introduced contain at least half a dozen proposals for raising additional funds for this purpose. Latest of these proposals involves a special tax to be paid by patrons of public service utilities—electric, telephone, water, gas, etc. Proponents of this plan would add eight percent to the monthly bills of the utility patrons, the revenue from this source—estimated at between \$1,700,000 and \$2,500,000 a year—to go into the old age pension fund. Another measure, sponsored by the Oregon Old Age Pension Federation would levy what amounts to a poll tax upon every resident of the state, based upon the individual's income but in no case to be less than \$6 a year. One of the first old age pension measures introduced calls for a corporation dividend tax of three per cent, and Representative Frank Lonergan is bucking a bill that calls for a two percent tax on gross revenues, all for the aid of the needy aged.

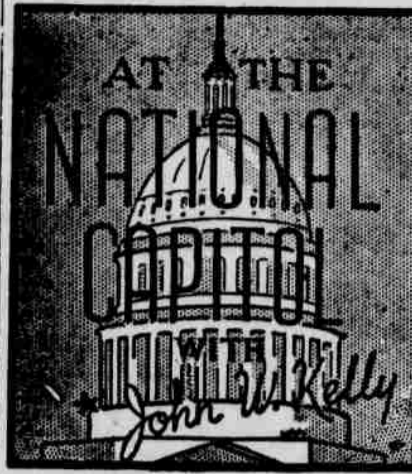
County judges and commissioners were in Salem this week to oppose a measure introduced by Senator Dorothy Lee of Multnomah calling for a change in the method of handling insane cases. The Lee bill would transfer responsibility for the custody of insane persons from the sheriff's office to that of the county health officer. It would also require that two physicians be called in to pass on sanity cases. The reform, it was pointed out, would work a great hardship on some of the more sparsely settled counties, especially those with only one physician which would necessitate the calling in of outside physicians at great expense to the taxpayers.

The Gibson-Jones bill providing for a consumers tax of 15 per cent to be levied against all patrons of electric utilities in Oregon is drawing a lot of fire from centers served by municipally-owned power and light plants which are now tax exempt. Under the Gibson-Jones bill electric utilities would be relieved of present advalorem taxes, the saving thus realized to be passed on to consumers in the form of rate reductions, which, in turn would be absorbed in the new consumer's tax. This tax would apply to patrons of municipally owned utilities as well as to those who are served by privately owned utilities.

Considerable interest attaches to attempts to tax trucks and busses for support of general governmental activities. Governor Sprague in his message to the legislature at the opening of the session called attention to the fact that busses and trucks now pay no general taxes, that all of the licenses and fees extracted from these commercial carriers go into the construction and maintenance of the highways which makes their operation possible. The governor suggested that the legislature should either move to capture the gross revenue tax now paid by these operators for the state's general fund, or to levy some new tax that could be used for general governmental purposes. The House and Senate committees on highways and highway revenue and assessment and taxation are giving serious consideration to the problem, but as yet have agreed on no program that appears to cover the situation.

Dean Walker, Polk county senator, enjoyed the experience this week of serving in the dual capacity of president of the state senate and governor of Oregon, an experience without precedent in Oregon. Walker, senate president, became governor when Governor Sprague went to Denver to attend a conference of western governors on state's rights over non-navigable streams, a field which the federal government now threatens to invade in the New Deal's search for more power.

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Washington, D. C., Feb. 13.—People of the Pacific northwest cannot understand the feeling in the east regarding the war and the various steps the United States is taking. The northwest has a different viewpoint and is not excited about the situation. What the northwest wants is its share of the national defense contracts.

A former member of the Washington legislature, a resident of Spokane, expressed astonishment at the atmosphere he has found in the national capital.

"What is it all about?" he inquired. "Here I have met substantial business men who are afraid the United States will be invaded by German troops within a couple of months. It looks to me like planned hysteria. Secretary of War Stimson goes before congressional committees and paints a picture of invasion. Secretary of Navy Knox does the same thing. The president was told a submarine was off our shore, but it proved to be a whale and the first statement of the president has never been recalled. Anyone who questions that the United States will be invaded is regarded as a fifth columnist or as a plain fool. Eastern newspapers do not attempt to soothe the public; the movies are filled with propaganda. When I return to Spokane and tell of my observations here and the hysteria no one will believe me."

"Out our way," he continued, "the people are less excited. There is a definite sentiment against the United States becoming involved in the war overseas. They are favorable, the majority, to giving reasonable aid to the British, but even if England should be invaded we do not expect the Germans to come over and attack us, at least not immediately, if at all. It is strange to me that eastern people are so gassed up with the war talk. I heard one New York judge tell the senate committee that if we go into the foreign war we will have a civil war at home, and he explained the feeling there is in the city among the different racial groups. Perhaps one reason the eastern people are frightened is the publicity the eastern papers give to statements emanating from Washington. Our western papers print very little about these, or none at all."

A Portland fireman has been for six weeks in a school in the capital receiving instructions on fire-fighting in the event of invasion. Among his teachers were New York firemen who were sent to London to learn how the British operate. The British are a brave people and are holding up well, he explains, but why shouldn't they? They are on a small island, they cannot leave it, and so they must suppress fires as best they can and "take it." The incendiaries dropped by the Germans may destroy as much as six miles square (more than half the area of Washington, D. C.) and when firemen are working on the conflagration enemy airplanes sweep through the streets shooting at the fire fighters with machine guns.

The president is now working on a list of public works to be used as a backlog when the defense program is over and a slack comes in employment again. In the list of projects are military highways, river and harbor improvement, buildings, schools, etc. The highway part of the program does not satisfy most of the members of congress, for they want action as soon as possible and not several years hence. Already men from Oregon and Washington are in the capital urging that something be done. The military highway issue promises to be a live

topic before the 77th congress adjourns.

The second draft of the Columbia Valley Authority bill has been completed and is being studied by Washington's Senator Bone, but will not be introduced for the time being. A copy was sent to Bone several days ago for his consideration. Meanwhile, western governors have held a meeting in Colorado and have agreed to oppose any "authority" west of the Rocky mountains. Personally, Secretary of the Interior Ickes wants the power concentrated in his office, but not in a commission of three men. This is one of the controversies in Oregon, Washington and Idaho.

War department changed its mind about awarding a contract for the air corps base at Pendleton later on and decided to dispose of it. The air corps wishes to have the work completed early in order to locate the various units there when planes are available. This will be the last of the air bases constructed under the present program. WPA will build the new airport at Coos Bay, which has been approved by the president. The amount for the job is estimated at \$350,000. The navy department intimates that Astoria will have an opportunity to build some small wooden boats. An authorization bill has been introduced by Senator Holman for \$500,000 for a laboratory to use electricity in testing formulas for ore deposits in the northwest.

Miss Helen Cunningham, who assisted at the Elkhorn for the last several months, has gone to Hermiston where she is employed in the Ben O'Conner restaurant.

NOTICE TO CREDITORS

Notice is hereby given that the undersigned were duly appointed by the County Court of the State of Oregon for Morrow County administrators of the estate of Percy Hughes, also known as A. P. Hughes, deceased, and all persons having claims against the estate of said deceased are hereby required to present the same to the undersigned administrators, duly verified as required by law, at the law office of Jos. J. Nys, at Hepner, Oregon, within six months from the date hereof.

Dated and first published this 6th day of February, 1941.

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