

Heppner Gazette Times

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How Many Ride the Gravy Train?

Guest Editorial from Blue Mountain Eagle, John Day

The 2.7 per cent penalty rates since April 1, 1958, have applied to all Oregon employers in the unemployment compensation system—more than 26,000 altogether—are really beginning to hurt. This applies particularly to the 12,000 companies which (by reason of stable employment) previously had "earned" substantially lower rates (averaging 1.4 per cent of payrolls) under Oregon's merit rating law.

In dollars and cents, this means that Oregon employers who carry all of the unemployment compensation load—employees pay nothing—now are saddled with a \$32,000,000 tax levy each year. This is more than double the previous unemployment compensation tax and (by way of comparison) double the annual corporate income tax paid under the state's income tax system.

Unemployment insurance therefore has become one of the most pressing fiscal problems in the state—with rates doubled and tripled at the very time when Oregon was hard hit by the recession in business. Thus businessmen, tax experts and legislators are being forced for the first time to take a long look at Oregon's unemployment compensation system in an effort to determine why we are in this bind and what we can do about it.

First, naturally, is a fact which everyone recognizes: Unemployment reached record levels (around 12 per cent of the total labor force) during the winter of 1957-1958 and the following spring. This put an extraordinary strain on the unemployment insurance trust fund (which had dwindled since the record high of \$86,500,000 in 1948), bringing it down below the legal floor of \$31,500,000. This made mandatory the application of maximum rates on all covered payrolls.

The magnitude of the problem is illustrated by the fact that benefit payments for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1958, reached approximately \$43,000,000, bringing the trust fund down to less than \$24,000,000. Thus, it is conservative to say that we were in trouble. And we are still in trouble, despite an upturn in employment.

But this does not wholly explain why Oregon's unemployment trust fund is deeper in the red than other states which also have serious unemployment problems. You have to dig deeper to find the other reasons.

Generally speaking, Oregon has one of the most liberal unemployment compensation systems in the nation, ranking with Michigan, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts. It is one of only four states with a \$3,600 tax period, the others using \$3,000. Since maximum benefits were hiked in 1957 (from \$35 to \$40) and disqualification provisions were reduced in 1955 costs skyrocketed to \$7,000,000 a year.

But what hurts the most is the fact that rules of eligibility have been so liberalized by legislative amendment and administrative procedure that unemployment compensation in Oregon has approached the dole stage, rather than function-

ing as an insurance cushion against temporary unemployment.

Literally thousands of people with seasonal jobs (food processing especially) draw benefits year after year despite the fact that they are not actually in the labor market and have no intention of being so. And other thousands draw benefits by abusing the "voluntary quits" provisions of the law; they quit without legitimate cause and ride the unemployment compensation gravy train.

Two studies made last year by the Oregon Tax Research and the Portland chamber of commerce showed a woman cannery worker earning \$1,200 a year can draw \$400 in benefits year after year. It also brought to light the fact "voluntary quits" (many without good cause attributable to employers) collect from 12 to 23 per cent of all unemployment compensation benefits.

Less typical are loggers earning from \$5,000 up who draw benefits when weather shuts down their jobs.

Just what should be done about these problems? A few remedies are quite obvious: First, the "voluntary quits" provision of the law should be tightened to eliminate those people who voluntarily leave the labor market and have no intention of rejoining it. Unemployment compensation never was intended to replace earnings in full or to induce people to accept benefits rather than reemployment.

Secondly, the state should get away from benefit payments totally unrelated to need—those persons in the higher income brackets who make \$10,000 a year and up, for example. Another remedy is to get on the insurance basis which is implicit in any fair unemployment system, and get away from the welfare concept. The state should crack down on workers discharged for misconduct, those failing to apply for other suitable work or refusing to accept suitable work.

Another suggestion is to lengthen the payout period, as most states do; use the weeks worked factor, as does New York, rather than relying wholly on a quarterly earnings basis. In short, the state should get rid of the free loaders, and quit subsidizing wilful loafing.

All of these things could be done without injuring legitimate claimants of benefits, or reducing maximum benefits, and they certainly could and would save the state millions of dollars. If they are not done, Oregon employers will find themselves saddled with high penalty rates, the merit rating system will be virtually thrown out of the window, and there will be more and more free loaders or riders of the gravy train. Now is the time for the Oregon legislature to consider the matter and do something about the situation.

Although there are a number of bills before the legislature to "tighten up" benefits and thus help conserve the unemployment compensation fund for payment of justifiable claims, there appears little likelihood any of them will even come out of committee. The goal of leaders of both houses appears to be to get more tax money to continue to operate the unemployment program as a "welfare" project rather than conserve the funds.

Soil Bank Contracts Must be Observed; Wool Price 62c

"If in the Soil Bank, observe permitted acres. Is your farm under a conservation reserve contract in the Soil Bank this year? If so, be sure to comply with any acreage allotments on the farm and also observe your permitted acreage of Soil Bank base crops."

That's the reminder going out this week from the county agricultural Stabilization and Con-

servation office to all participants in the 1959 Soil Bank program.

Generally speaking, the permitted acreage on a Soil Bank farm is the amount of land on which grains, annual grass seeds and row crops may be produced. It consists of the historical acreage of such crops less the amount of land placed in the conservation reserve. A farmer who exceeds this permitted acreage or any acreage allotment on the farm may lose his annual rental payment and also be subject to civil penalty.

The ASC office points out that when all eligible cropland on a farm is in the Soil Bank, the permitted acreage is zero. The home garden area on such a farm may be used to produce crops for home use, for setting out forest trees for non-agricultural purposes; but production of a Soil Bank base crop on such acreage is a contract violation.

Chairman J E McBurney of the state ASC committee also reminded wool growers that the incentive price for wool during the 1959 marketing year, April 1, through March 30, 1960, is 62 cents a pound, the same as for the 1958 year.

The department of agriculture, McBurney said, makes no recommendation as to whether wool should be sold before or after March 31, when the current marketing year ends. This is a decision for the individual producer to make.

Under the payment method used in the wool program, the more a producer gets for his wool, the higher payment he receives. The payment rate is the percentage necessary to bring the national average farm price of wool up to the incentive level.

After the 1958 marketing year

THIRTY YEARS AGO

From the files of the Gazette-Times
April 18, 1929

Mr and Mrs Dorris Mitchell, Mrs Everett Hayes and Grandma Early arrived in Heppner Sunday evening from Joseph.

A new bakery, which will also include a confectionery and ice cream parlor, will open in Heppner soon. Messrs R D Wise, C E Wise and T E Leversen from Toppenish, Wash have leased from D E Gilman the corner room now occupied by County Agent Smith.

Edward McKay arrived from Portland on Monday and will be guest at the home of Dr and Mrs A H Johnston for some time.

Roadmaster McCaleb reports that work on the Willow creek road is now progressing.

Pupils of Ethel D Bower will appear in recital at the high school auditorium this evening. The following will appear on the program: Jeannette Turner, Doris Hiatt, Harriet Hager, Mary Belder, Anabel Turner, Carol Baldwin and Helen Falconer.

tein for pigs up to 20 pounds weight, 18% up to 125 pound weight and 16% to market weight at 200 pounds. The low level ration provided 14% protein rations up to 50 pounds, 12 to 125 pounds and 10 to market weight. The carcass of hogs in the high protein ration produced 49.8% lean cuts of meat; the carcasses from the lots receiving a low level protein yielded 47.4% lean cuts of meat.

Some time ago I commented on the soil tests that were being run on century farms during this centennial year by the college. A recent report points out that over 100 years of farming have not slowed down the productive ability of soils on the farms in the first 3 of 15 counties tested. In fact, many of the farms had a yield improvement which was credited to drainage, better equipment, weed control and fertilizers, especially nitrogen.

GIRL

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ends March 31, farmers have 30 applications made on sales after days to submit applications for March 31, 1959, payments will be made in the summer and fall of 1960.

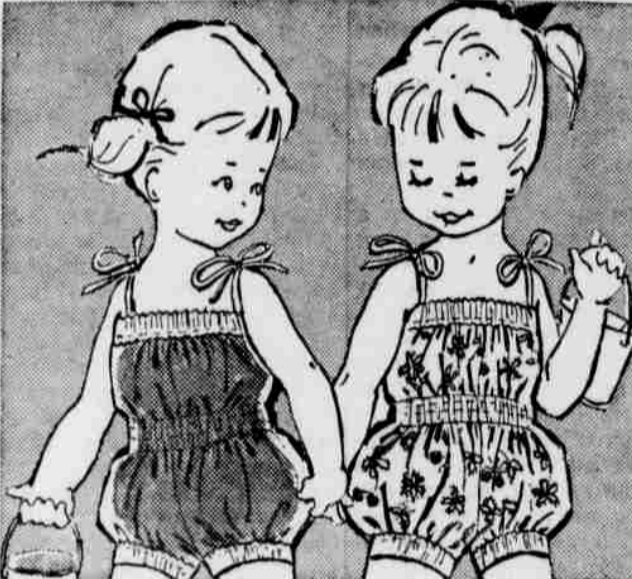


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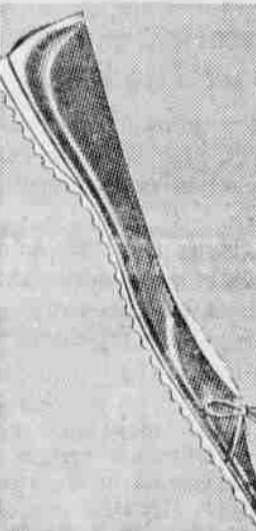


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From The County Agent's Office

By NELS ANDERSON

4-H saddle horse project members, their leaders and interested persons are making plans for a regional saddle horse field day to be held at Condon on Saturday, April 25. The day will be spent in saddle horse judging, horsemanship and showmanship demonstrations. Assisting with the program for the day will be Cal Monroe, state 4-H club agent; Dean Frischknecht, extension animal husbandman, both from Oregon State College; Ward Wells, a horse fancier from Oswego and extension agents in the six counties involved. The program will get under way at 9:30 A M at the Gilliam county fairgrounds. In case of a cold day inside accommodations are available; if it is warm the outside arena will be used. Club members, their parents will bring their sack lunches and the Gilliam county saddle horse clubs are furnishing punch and coffee. At least two of the saddle horse clubs from Morrow county are planning to participate in this field day.

A few of our ranchers have turned their beef bulls in the herd although there are a good many who have not yet done so. There are more ranchers each year testing their beef bulls for fertility, a practice which is on the increase throughout the entire state. We know of a number of this in Morrow county last year and there is a lot of interest being shown this spring. In this fertility test, a sample of semen is collected from the bull and examined under a microscope. All of our veterinarians have necessary techniques for the testing and as far as I know have the necessary equipment. Reports from veterinarians in Oregon as well as work done in Colorado, Texas and California indicate that about 10% of the bulls now being used don't have the ability to settle a cow. For a large group of bulls being used, this may not be too serious a matter. But on a two or three bull operation, this could be quite serious, and with a one bull operation it could be very serious. We have known where this has happened in herds where not a single calf was raised that year. Contact your veterinarian for advice and assistance.

Word has just been received

from Oregon State College that they are planning this year beef and swine field days to be held May 18 and 19. These were scheduled at the request of livestock producers and are specifying the subjects that these producers would like to have discussed. This will give Oregon State College an opportunity to present outstanding work that has been conducted during the year and will give producers an opportunity to be brought up to date on what the college is doing. There will be a special ladies program as well as organized luncheons that will be held each day and an evening buffet dinner with suitable entertainment and featured speaker. A similar field event is being planned for this fall for sheep. For those who might be interested mark down the dates of May 18 and 19 and plan to attend.

Morrow county hog producers will be interested in a recent article in the National Hog Farmer which points out that a higher protein level in the feed can produce a meatier hog. With the demand for meatier hogs at this time, this fact can be used to good advantage. It hasn't been much used because of protein prices and small premiums for meaty hogs. Iowa researchers tested two different levels of protein in the ration to find their relation to percent of lean cuts in the carcasses of animals fed on the different rations. The high protein ration provided 20% pro-

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