

THE HEPPNER GAZETTE-TIMES

Heppner, Oregon 97836

MORROW COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER

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Sales Tax Not the Answer

If the 1967 legislature moves in the direction indicated on the basis of the recommendation of the state tax study committee—to propose a sales tax to the people—the results will be disappointing all the way around.

People of this state have never gone for a sales tax, and although proponents believe that conditions have changed to the point that the public would do almost anything reasonable to alleviate the burden on property, we don't believe that they will approve a sales tax even now.

The tax study committee's recommendation, we understand, was by vote of 6 to 4—the Republicans in favor and the Democrats against. Governor-elect Tom McCall indicates that he is not in favor of submitting the sales tax to the people at a special election, preferring to explore the realm of the income tax first. McCall favors a broader-based income tax. This seems to us to be the best route.

When it appeared that the 1 1/2% property tax limitation measure would be on the general election ballot, legislators realized that the situation was acute and that the people were crying for action. When the measure was stricken from the ballot on a technicality, the legislators still realized that they were faced with a mandate to do something to relieve the property tax burden in the 1967 session of the legislature, and this still holds true. Something must be done. If it isn't something good and workable, and if it doesn't produce results, the state's voters will undoubtedly have another initiative presented in the nature of the 1 1/2% limitation, although it may be a somewhat different version.

Oregon is among the few states in the nation which do not have a sales tax, but this is not an argument for imposing one. Our state is more attractive without one.

The greatest arguments against a sales tax is that it is not based on a person's ability to pay. A man who has a large family and works for small wages, for instance, must buy considerably more consumer goods than a well-to-do couple without dependents. Tentative proposal as we understand the plan backed by Speaker F. E. Montgomery of the House is that food and drugs would be included, making it even worse on the low income consumer.

There are many more reasons to oppose the tax: As analyzed on a telecast by Forrest Amsden of KGW-TV News the other night, a man owning a \$15,000 home, given as an example, would pay more in sales tax than he would get in relief on property taxes, even if the sales tax were all earmarked for property tax offset. One reason is that utilities would also benefit by the property tax reductions, benefitting them by millions, and John Q. Homeowner, and John Q. Farmer would be punting up for them through the sales tax.

The sales tax is costly to administer. It would require setting up new machinery, and, we presume, hiring of auditors and personnel. Machinery for the income tax. It should be remembered, is already in operation and would require little more expense if the income tax base were broadened.

No matter how you look at it, the sales tax is a nuisance. It involves more records and more bookkeeping for all business, and this is especially tough on small businesses, which can hardly keep up with federal and state bookkeeping requirements on social security, unemployment compensation, workmen's compensation, withholding taxes, and others. To impose this on some businesses would be almost the last straw. The sales tax, too, is a chore for the consumer who has to face the irritation of carrying a pocketful of pennies to pay for it. This is emphasized every time a person takes a trip to our neighboring state to the north.

Ranchers and farmers will be hit by a sales tax, too. The degree to which they suffer depends on how the bill is written. They are among those most desperately needing property tax relief. But what good does it do to relieve them in one pocket when the state takes it out of another pocket?

Once the gate is opened on a sales tax, even though it may be only two per cent at first, the pressure is almost sure to make it climb to a higher percentage for other purposes.

Neither Irvin Mann, representative from our 28th district, nor Martin Buchanan, who lost to him in the general election and who is a member of the state tax study committee, are in favor of a sales tax. Buchanan was among those who were in the 4-man minority on the report.

Rep. Mann points out that he believes the legislators are "gun shy" on another income tax proposal because of the resounding defeat of the state tax program in the fall of 1963. But it may be recalled that this program was designed to go towards an alleged deficit in state funds. If provisions for a broader based income tax were designed so that the additional, above what is now being paid, would go solely against property tax, it just might win enough friends to carry.

There is a considerable difference. In the fall of 1963 voters had the feeling that the state was winking a club on them and saying, in effect, "Either vote for the program, or we'll cut out this or that service." Whether right or wrong, voters weren't in a mood to vote yes under this imagined compulsion.

The handwriting, so clearly marked by those who signed the 1 1/2% property limitation petitions, is still on the wall. If the legislature pins its hopes on a sales tax, the situation will only be aggravated. The plan towards a broader income tax should be tried first with its provisions carefully designed to provide relief on property taxes and without any attempt to tie strings to it for some other purpose.

Oregon may have one of the highest state income taxes in the nation but it is only a drop in the bucket compared to federal income tax. It is the fairest tax, and while no tax is painless, the income tax doesn't have all the obvious disadvantages of a sales tax.

Under the income tax, relief to property owners would come from our people according to their ability to pay.

Rep. Mann is in favor of working out plans for a poll of the people to determine which way they wish to go. This would seem to be a good and reasonable suggestion if it can be worked out to give a valid cross-section of opinion. It would certainly have more merit than plunging into a special election on a "do or die" sales tax.

History Publication Needed

Oscar Peterson's efforts to stimulate interest and enthusiasm towards publication of a Morrow county history deserve serious attention of all who are fond of the county and appreciate what it means to them.

The true Morrow countian has a high loyalty for this county. He cherishes the way of life here, which is rather unique in a nation that is tending to concentrate its population in metropolitan areas. He likes to think of the past, reliving the things that have influenced the culture and development of the county—early settlement by hardy ranchers, the old time harvests, the huge flocks of sheep that once were characteristic, the Indian days, the 1903 Heppner flood, the early days at Hardman as an important stage coach stop, the problem of coping with the vast distances by horse and wagon, the cattle drives, the early homesteads, the rural schools that once were scattered to the remote corners of the county.

Despite the great interest in these things, little has been done towards publishing an accurate history to form a permanent record. Only bits and pieces are scattered around. One of the best efforts was the publication several years ago of "Yesterday of Morrow" as a cooperative project of the extension service and home extension units. This publication, which could only touch the highlights of the county's history, has been in great demand and copies are still being sold nearly every week.

Something more detailed is needed, and this is what Oscar Peterson is striving for.

Ora Yeager, now of Castle Rock, Wn., an old timer here, has written a history centered around Heppner, but the high cost of publishing it has been a stumbling block. He has devoted hundreds of hours writing the manuscript but has met with little success in his effort.

Peterson says that Giles French of Moro, who has just completed a third book of his own, "These Things We Note," has shown interest in editing and supervising publication of a history and estimates the cost at about \$5000. This may seem a high price to some, but those familiar with publishing costs know that it would be a real bargain if it can be done for that. History of another Eastern Oregon county was published at a cost twice that sum.

French, a native East Oregonian, is a natural for such a task. A talented writer with a gift for expression, he is intimately familiar with the history of this part of the state. He is an excellent and accurate editor. Because he has had several books of his own published, he knows how to go about it. Now retired, he has the time to work at it.

The plan is that French, with Yeager's permission, could use the existing manuscript as a basis for the book. But a great amount of work would need to be done in coordinating, researching, editing, adding material and perhaps getting and selecting pictures to make a complete and accurate publication.

Cost of publication is more than any single individual could be expected to pay. While there would be a keen demand for the book from those particularly interested in the county, it could not be expected to generate any widespread general circulation, and so cost could not be covered by book sales alone. Historical societies, libraries, and those out of the area with a penchant for history would supplement the local sale, however.

So, what is particularly needed is financial help. Folks who realize the importance of this project could offer to donate to it with the thought that their contributions would document the history of the county so that generations to come could appreciate the heritage they enjoy. The county's history is filled with drama and color. Stories of the past here are even more remarkable and powerful than fiction because they are true.

Old timers still remaining can reach back in their memories and enthral listeners with their tales of the early days, but few of these stories are being recorded. Every passing month sees more and more of the old timers slipping away, and it will not be long until their accounts are either lost or so distorted in passing down from mouth to mouth that they are no longer historically valid.

Peterson hopes to interest farm groups, civic organizations and others in supporting this project. Financially, it has to be considered a losing proposition, but the result would be something that could not be measured in money. It would be an invaluable work to the county and its people.

The hope is that this will strike a spark with those willing to help. If it does, give Peterson a call to express this interest and talk it over with him.

OTHER EDITORS SAY

The 'Junk Mail' Handicap

By CONNIE JOHNSON, EDITOR, BLUE MOUNTAIN EAGLE, JOHN DAY

News reports, a short time ago, told of a virtual breakdown in mail handling at the Chicago post office. Millions of pieces of mail accumulated creating a critical jam with resultant delays that led a troubleshooter from the Postmaster General to propose that large amounts of third-class mail be destroyed. Caught in the backlog were 5,600 sacks of parcel post.

Blame for the crisis was placed on a high rate of absenteeism, a high volume of pre-Christmas advertising matter and the difficulty of recruiting new employees. The basic problem, according to a report in U. S. News & World Report, "... appears to be a growing shortage of dedicated labor that once made good mail service possible in many places. Up to now, nobody has come up with a machine that can replace this kind of labor."

It seems that the Post Office is always getting criticism of one sort or another. We're not authorities on big city postal employees, but we can't find much to complain about with the postal department at the local level. There are exceptions, however, and we believe many of these problems are inherited by local postal employees from the overall government system.

One thing, we're certain that postal problems would be reduced tremendously if the postal department altered its policy on third class mail—the "junk mail" that usually winds up in wastebaskets before it is read by the boxholder.

Third class mail requires a large amount of the postal worker's daily production. It also enjoys a low postage rate. We believe if rates on this third class, or "junk mail", were made the same as first class mail, there would be far fewer foul-ups in post offices, and costs of operating the post office department would be reduced.

Instead of making scapegoats of post office employees, we'd rather point the finger of scorn at the third class mailing "privilege".

Couple Announces Birth of First Child

Congratulations are being received by Mr. and Mrs. Kit George on the birth of their first child, a son, born Saturday, December 3, at Fort Collins, Colo., where the father is attending Colorado State University. His birth weight was 7 lb. 6 oz., and has been named Robert Cameron.

Maternal grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Jack Van Winkle, Heppner; paternal grandparents are Mrs. Elaine George, Heppner, and Oscar George, Walla Walla, Wn. Great grandparents are Mr. and Mrs. Don Hannaman, Lapwai, Idaho, and Mrs. Cleo Van Winkle, Lexington. Maternal great-grandmother is Mrs. Julia Hannaman, Frosser, Wn.

Mrs. Van Winkle and Patricia will leave Friday by plane for Fort Collins to help with the care of the new infant. Home address of the new parents is No. 7C, Aggie Village, Colorado St., University, Fort Collins, Colo. 80521.

Chaff and Chatter

Wes Sherman

MORROW is a county of many moods. In the spring it is verdant and vibrant. In the summer it is teeming with activity and warmth. In the fall it is crisp and mellow, and in the winter it can become cold and brittle.

Sometimes it is temperamental and capricious, flaring up with a sudden or unexpected outburst. These still surprise the old timers, but they amaze and sometimes bewilder newcomers.

A sudden waterspout that gouges gulleys and wrecks buildings is one such manifestation of this temperament.

We experienced another example Sunday night which had us a bit concerned.

We went to the valley to visit relatives and passed Sunday afternoon and the 5:30 performance of Holiday on Ice in Portland. It was late when we reached Arlington and then headed over the McNab cutoff towards lone.

It had been a real pleasure to get back to tranquility of Eastern Oregon after slogging through the downpours that held through Hood River.

Suddenly, about halfway to lone from the Arlington-Condor highway, we came across a bunch of tumbledweed on the road. We skirted around it with the thought that there must have been a storm here, too.

A little farther along, we blinked our eyes when the road seemed to disappear in the reaches of our headlights. There was nothing ahead but a jungle of tumbledweed. The road wasn't even visible and the tumbledweed appeared to be up to three feet deep over the road, a sodden mass from apparent heavy rains.

We started through the jungle, but it got thicker and thicker. Finally the car could push aside no more of the weeds and stopped. We tried backing up and making a run for it, still unsure whether we were on the road or not, but the pile of weeds resisted. We got out and moved some, uncertain whether to try to proceed to turn back.

All we could see was tumbledweed ahead as far as the lights would shine. It was a bit strange digging tumbledweed off the road at midnight with nary a soul around but us.

We decided to go on and picked our way through it. Soon it was behind and there was no more evidence of a capricious outburst until we came upon the snow starting just out of Lexington, another example of a fickle temperament.

TUMBLE WEED, which has been immortalized in song, isn't always so fondly romanticized by the ranchers. The greenhorn thinks of it as harmless and novel, as it tumbles along in the wind. But the rancher knows that when it piles against fences in a good blow, the combination of the strong wall it presents and the force of the wind can take fences right out.

Even knowing this, we were unprepared to find such a blockade on the road which had been so free and clear when we went west just about 30 hours earlier. Maybe a fella ought to carry a pitchfork in his car as well as a shovel.

ONE of the requirements in passing an ordinance by the city council is that the ordinance be read in full at a council meeting. In most cases this isn't much of a chore, but it was different with the new zoning ordinance. This is 30 pages long.

For the past two months, the council dreading the time when this would have to be read. The planning commission had carefully worked out the ordinance with the engineers, and the council had gone over its provisions in detail.

So Monday night, the time finally arrived. Mayor Rosewall offered to take turns with Elaine George, recorder, in reading it, but Mrs. George said she was willing to get at it, even though she had a cold and sore throat.

She plunged in and waded

right through it with scarcely a cough or a stop to clear her throat. She averaged a type-written single-spaced page every 1 1/2 minutes for a total elapsed time of 45 minutes. That's a pretty good record.

The ordinance wasn't as bad listening as one might think, even though it didn't have a plot. Certainly it was not as bad entertainment as some of the TV programs one sees nowadays.

ORVILLE CUTSFORTH recently came up with a new problem ranchers are encountering as a result of littering. The litterbugs scatter beer and soda pop cans along the roads, and cows or calves occasionally step on the cans. This makes the ends clamp over the hoof, and the bovine is stuck with an unwanted shoe. Before the can is finally knocked off, the animal gets lame and may suffer permanent injury sometimes results.

"Ranchers would much rather be bothered with bottles than cans," Orville said.

All of which they should have to do neither, as the high school boy once phrased it.

Service Held Monday For Leota Brannon, Resident of Spray

Leota Jean Brannon, a resident for the last three years of Spray and a former Heppner resident, died November 30 at St. Anthony hospital in Pendleton after a lengthy illness. She was 40.

Leota Jean Allison was born May 17, 1826, in Montana; she was united in marriage April 22, 1962, in Lexington to Murdith Brannon of Spray.

In addition to the widower, she is survived by a brother, Leon Allison of Lawndale, Calif.; two sons, Dan Woolery and William Norman Woolery, both of Tacoma; a daughter, Norma Jean Dickman, Morrow, Ga.; and five grandchildren. Services were held Monday, December 5, at 1 p.m. at the Spray Assembly of God church with the Reverend Darrel Hoskins officiating. Interment was at Haystack Cemetery. Arrangements were under the direction of Sweeney Mortuary, Heppner.

Churches to Join In Sunday Program

Churches of the South Morrow County Ministerial association are invited by the Christian Church to attend a Sunday meeting at 7:30 p.m. to hear Frank Sutton, The Dalles, Northwest representative of the American Sunday School Union, and see a film that he will present, "This One for Jesus." Al Boschee, pastor of the host church, announces.

The meeting will be in the Christian church. This is on the occasion of the 106th anniversary of the American Sunday School Union, the pastor said. A free will offering will be taken.

SCHOOL LUNCH MENUS

Heppner Elementary School and Heppner High School
December 12 thru 16
December 12—Sloppy Joes, green beans, canned fruit, milk.
December 13—Macaroni and cheese, molded vegetable salad, peas, cake, milk, bread and butter.

December 14—Beans and ham, cornbread and honey, celery and carrot slices, purple plums, milk.
December 15—Baked potatoes, wieners and sauerkraut, bread and butter, peaches, milk.

December 16—Creamed tuna on toast, cabbage salad, cheese sticks, milk, dessert.

Mr. and Mrs. Bill Farra visited her brother-in-law and sister in New Plymouth, Idaho, over the week-end. The Farras are looking forward to a Christmas visit from their son, Jim, on leave from the U. S. Navy.

Fire Department Misses Coffemaker

Missing—one 30-cup automatic West Bend aluminum coffemaker from the Heppner Fire Department. And unhappy is the fireman without that hot cup of coffee on a cold, winter night of practice or fire fighting.

Anyone who might have information that would lead to return of the coffemaker is asked to get in touch with Fire Chief Charlie Ruggles, Forrie Burkenbine, or one of the volunteer firemen. It has been missing for several weeks, (and no one likes to see an unhappy volunteer fireman).

Average Ex-GI Pays Tax of \$337

The average ex-GI with an Oregon veterans' farm and home loan paid a property tax of \$337 this year, a 5.3 percent increase over the \$320 he paid last year and 9.4 percent above his 1964 payment of \$308.

This figure was reported by H. C. Saafield, director of the State Department of Veterans Affairs, which paid \$10,519,611 in 1966-67 taxes this month on the properties of 31,463 World War II and Korean veterans who have state loans. Last year's tax payment was \$9,410,005 on 29,407 properties.

This year's tax increase was higher than last year's. However, in some counties there was a decrease from last year.

In Morrow county, the tax on 54 properties this year was \$12,511.78. The average tax here was \$231.00, against last year's average of \$214.00 and as compared to the statewide average this year of \$337.

The borrower pays his taxes monthly to the state veterans' department along with his loan repayment. The department in turn pays the tax collector, and does it by November 15 to earn the veteran a three percent discount. The discount this year saved the veterans \$325,349.

COMMUNITY BILLBOARD

Coming Events

HEPPNER HIGH BASKETBALL
Heppner vs. DeSales, Friday, December 9, Heppner High Gym
Heppner vs. Condon, Saturday, Dec. 10, Condon High Gym.

CHRISTMAS SHOW AND SILVER TEA
By Ione Garden Club
Friday, Dec. 9, 2 p.m.-8 p.m.
Saturday, Dec. 10, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.
Gilliam & Bisbee Building of Public welcome. Lots of Christmas decorating ideas.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM
Tuesday, December 13
Elementary grades 1 - 5
"Christmas Windows"
Junior High Gymnasium, 7:30 p.m.
No admission. Public welcome.

HIGH SCHOOL OPEN HOUSE
Wednesday, Dec. 13, 7:00 p.m.
Heppner High PTA invites all parents to attend student's classes.

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