

THE HEPPNER GAZETTE-TIMES

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MORROW COUNTY'S NEWSPAPER

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Doomed to Defeat?

As of the moment the stamp of doom would appear to be on the proposed sales tax which the legislature is working so hard to prepare for an election this spring.

Strong opposition is noticed in many quarters, among which are segments that one might expect would support such a measure.

The Portland school board, for instance, is against it because it is felt that the distribution formula that is intended to relieve the property tax burden for schools is unfair.

Farmer organizations—at least many of them—are opposed. Organized labor has indicated almost unanimous opposition. A considerable segment of business is against the tax.

Democratic leaders are vehement in their opposition. Add to these the many citizens in other walks of life who cannot be convinced that the sales tax is a fair tax, and the odds at this time seem almost overwhelmingly that it will be soundly defeated.

This presents a note of sad futility. There is no question that the legislature is earnestly trying to meet the tax dilemma with which it is confronted. It is dedicated to the proposition of bringing relief to property taxpayers.

The deliberations on this matter during the past several years have cost the state a large sum, and it is estimated that the special election will cost \$300,000 to \$400,000.

Maybe the "straws in the wind" are not reliable, but as a person reads them today, defeat is portended for the bill that the legislature now appears sure to approve for public consideration, despite a setback in the Senate this week.

To this point, little has been advanced to convince the citizen that the current plan is a real answer to the problem. No one has been able to show that the proposed bill will not add to the taxpayer's burden instead of lessening it, even though the tax takes a different form. Can the proponents disprove the opponents' assertion that an average Oregon homeowner would pay \$120 in sales tax to reduce his property tax by \$67?

The determined push by the legislature, through its Republican leadership, to put the sales tax before the people somehow seems like the lemmings who respond to some instinctive urging, and in masses, plunge into the sea in self-destruction.

The legislators who are so sincerely working for the sales tax are admirable persons who are worthy of high respect, and they face a problem of great magnitude. Their earnest desire to keep faith with the people may impel their zeal towards, as it seems at this time, an ill-fated proposal.

One might theorize that under the angry pressure with which they have been faced from property taxpayers, they may be partially blinded into incorrectly reading the signs.

When the voters defeated the 1 1/2% limitation, legislators correctly reasoned that this consigned them the responsibility for a measure that would bring relief. But it did not mean that the relief was to come from a sales tax, which independent-thinking Oregonians have almost traditionally found abhorrent, even though a majority of states in the union have such a tax.

The harassment of the legislators, too, may have resulted in them setting their sights for too much relief. Perhaps they are reaching for a higher goal than the people really want and need. Maybe it isn't necessary to "climb the mountain in one step" to achieve 50% relief, but perhaps a majority of citizens would be content if the sting were taken from the property tax and there were some safeguards that it would not continuously spiral.

Despite its shortcomings, the property tax still remains the one over which the taxpayer has the most control, and to the extent the property tax is lessened, his voice will be reduced.

John Mosser, who many regard as a brilliant tax authority, proposed an alternative to the sales tax that would impose a 2% net receipts tax and a 2% tax on wages and salaries, which would be paid by the employer, not the employee. Since this had some appearance of "leading the babes out of the wilderness," it brought joyous reaction in some quarters with the thought that this might be the "pot of gold at the end of the rainbow," so to speak.

Reaction of some employers, though, is that the tax on wages would be discriminatory and threatening to be oppressive. They cannot understand why they as employers, as one segment of our society, should be required to pay this tax for the relief of all, and the point is a very good one.

Particularly to be penalized under this proposal would be small businesses, such as those which exist in our smaller towns, that require large staffs of employees. Their salaries take a substantial part of such businesses' gross volume. In some retail establishments, such as grocery and drug stores, the profit margin is a small percentage of the gross.

Imposition of such a wage tax would cut this margin and perhaps result in an operational loss. The Mosser advocates declare that the property tax load will be relieved, and the business will profit thereby. But many businesses do not own their buildings. They rent them. Thus, they would be required to pay an additional tax.

It seems obvious, too, that businesses seeking locations in Oregon would think twice before they would establish themselves in a spot where they are required to pay 2% tax on salaries.

The net receipts tax deserves more study, for this would apply to all.

Still unanswered in the minds of many is why the income tax doesn't still present the best hope for alleviating the property tax. An increase in the tax rate, elimination of the federal deduction, and closing the gap on exemptions should bring considerable relief, although perhaps not to the extent that the sales tax proponents are seeking.

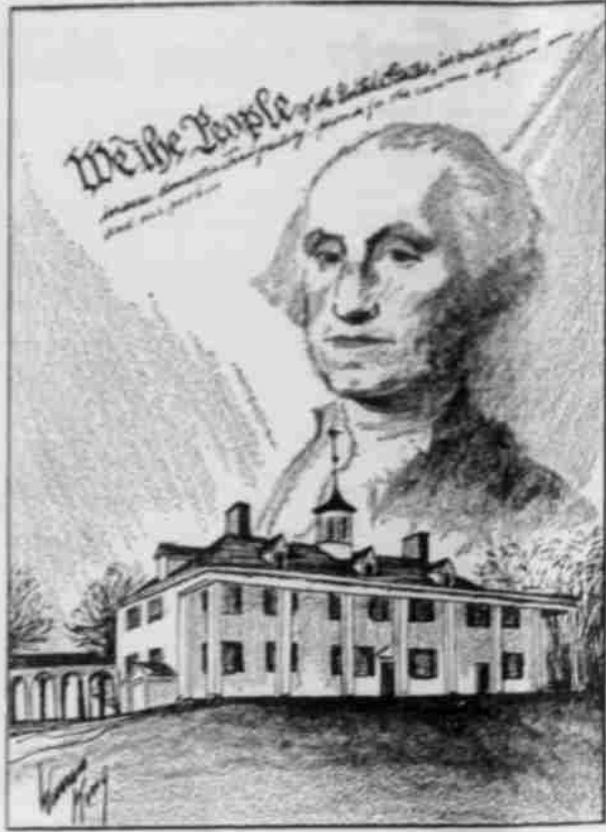
If the state's economy continues upward, as is expected, the increased incomes would bring more property tax relief from those best able to pay it.

Only when this possibility is refuted once and for all will many people consider voting yes on a sales tax.

In the meantime, if the sales tax is to have any chance of passage, its advocates are going to have to make it much clearer than is the case at present as to how this will be of real, true and equitable benefit to the people of this state.

The legislature, if it were not of such single-minded bent, could at least try the income tax alternatives without any disruption of the tax structure or the great expense of installing a new system. If it didn't meet the need, another course could be followed.

OUR HALLOWED HERITAGE



Chaff and Chatter

Wes Sherman

ON THE RARE occasions when power outages occur we best understand our dependency on electricity and most appreciate having it to serve us.

And last week, when Heppner Lumber Company was forced to shut down because of the shortage of wide door boxcars, we in Heppner most appreciated how important the Union Pacific branch line is to us.

It provides our economic bloodstream here. The railroad has served us well for many years, and like electricity, we are inclined to take it for granted, but we shouldn't.

This is the 100th anniversary of Union Pacific, and it is fitting that we mark the occasion with some proper appreciation.

THE CAR CRISIS here last week provided an opportunity to get a little insight on some of the problems that the railroad faces.

It was just a few hours after Bruce Malcom of Heppner Lumber announced that he had to shut down the mill and sent telegrams to the UP president, to Congressmen, and others appealing for aid, that T. E. Roberts, transportation inspector for UP, arrived. Apparently he received word of the situation while he was at Condon. He left so fast to get here that he forgot his street shoes and arrived clad in some rough work shoes.

It didn't take long for him to get across the message that Union Pacific is just as interested in the shipper who loads a car or two per day as it is in the one who may ship 100 cars per day.

Roberts made it clear to us that the railroad is very concerned about keeping the flow of cars coming here. It is no easy job at the moment, in the case of the wide door cars, because of the very short supply. A longshoreman's strike on the east coast has thousands of them tied up. Weather has kept many from returning to the west coast, too.

Probably Union Pacific would be fairly content if it could get its own cars back, but ironically, it is having a problem in doing so.

HAVE YOU EVER noticed, as you came up alongside a train while traveling a highway, how many different railroad companies are represented in a trainload of cars? Read the names on the cars, and you'll find some companies that you have never heard of before.

Then you begin to wonder how a wandering box car ever finds its way home. But Roberts tells us that an ICC regulation requires that a railroad move a car towards the line of the owner. Nevertheless, it must get very confusing and confounding to keep all the rolling stock sorted out and to keep an adequate supply of each type of car available.

In the current crisis, a lot of shippers who ordinarily want the wide door box cars have tried to get along by using some flat cars. However a good many buyers won't accept lumber shipped on these, according to Ed Brandenburg of Heppner Lumber.

The whole community, and not only the sawmill firm, is grateful for the fast action of Union Pacific in acting on this matter which is so important to our economy.

It is quite certain that the local mill won't be able to get as many wide door cars as it needs for a while, but Roberts made it clear that it will get its fair share, considering the needs of other shippers. Meanwhile the railroad is doing all it can to meet the emergency.

IT WAS a privilege to hear Edwin D. Canham, editor in chief of The Christian Science Monitor, one of the world's most respected publications, at the Oregon Press Conference in Eugene last week.

He said there is a need for three things in the field of journalism: 1. Better thinking, 2. Better writing, 3. Better technology.

"We live in the greatest age man has ever known and we aren't worthy of it," he said. "Those using the tool of the written word should use it to awaken humanity."

He struck a chord, too, when he said, "Everybody talks, too much. It is an age of gab."

IF YOU HAVE never heard the Eugene Gleeman and get an opportunity to, don't pass it by. They sang at the 43rd consecutive year at the Oregon Press Banquet Friday night under the direction of Estley Schick, and their music makes a person's spine tingle.

Director Schick states that since the group was organized, 573 different men have participated but two of the charter members are still active in the group. About 40 comprised the group singing at the banquet. They have sung 580 different songs during their history.

At this banquet, it is traditional for them to conclude with the number, "Down the Oregon Trail." That's really something! One can't describe their work. The only way to get the thrill of it is to hear them.

Knowing that time would not allow me to make weekly reports on the legislature, as I have in the past, I have determined to shoot for a monthly report in which I deal with what I hope will be interesting side-lights of the legislature that don't make headlines. Here is the first:

Secretary of State Clay Myers, after the nightmare of the bed-sheet ballot in the 1968 election, rightly brought to the attention of the legislature a series of proposals to shorten the ballot to make voting a shorter process and to eliminate "voter fatigue."

Any such proposals are bound to carry the seeds of conflict with the American democratic tradition that voting should be an unhurried, deliberate process, and that the more the vote on, the more truly democracy is served.

STATE CAPITOL

Speaker Smith States Opposition To Fluoridation

Oregon House Speaker Robert F. Smith said last week he is opposed to mandatory statewide fluoridation of Oregon's domestic water supply.

He said his opposition did not stem "in total or in part from any of the myths or old wives' tales surrounding this subject. I will not quarrel with the medical experts who conclude that proper amounts of fluoride possess certain medical benefits."

Smith said his opposition was based on the philosophy that "state government should do only what citizens or communities are unable to do for themselves."

He noted that nearly 260,000 Oregonians presently drink fluoridated water, having approved it through a vote of the people on a local level.

"This local option is available in every city, town and community in the state, so I see no compelling reason for prodding or poking by state government," Smith said.

He said that one of the strongest arguments in behalf of statewide fluoridation is that it would greatly reduce dental costs incurred by welfare recipients who are unable to bear the high costs of dental treatment.

"Therefore, I would support a proposal whereby fluoride would be made available at state expense at all state welfare agencies for any low income citizens desiring to fluoridate their drinking water," he said.

In addition, he said, he would support a measure to allow the State Health Board to set uniform standards for communities presently using fluoridation, and for those which may decide to do so in the future.

MEETING CALENDAR

- Monday, February 24—Chamber of Commerce, 12 noon, Wagon Wheel Cafe
- Volunteer Fire Dept., 7:30 p.m., Ruth Chapter, No. 52, OES, Masonic Hall, 8 p.m.
- Wednesday, February 25—Royal Arch Masons, Chapter 25, Masonic Hall, 8 p.m.
- Willow Lodge, IOOF Hall, 8 p.m.

Examiner Coming

A drivers license examiner will be on duty at the courthouse in Heppner on Tuesday, February 25, between the hours of 9:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m., according to information from the Department of Motor Vehicles of Oregon. This is for the convenience of persons wishing original licenses or permits to drive.



Mann to Man

By REP. IRVIN MANN, Jr.

mittee agreed with the dean of the House, Jake Bennett, who told us, "this is the only chance an average voter has to express his preference for a presidential candidate."

Still on a strictly tentative basis the committee has decided to deal with this problem by having no delegates run statewide and apportioning all delegates to one of the four congressional districts, on the basis of population. This should be a step toward ballot shortening. Again these solutions are high-

ly tentative and will undoubtedly undergo change.

Finally, the secretary suggested that a physical shortening of the ballot could be accomplished by allowing delegate candidates to be printed in double columns which cannot now be done. Many printing presses were not large enough to print the Democratic ballot in the 1968 primary because of the length of the single column of delegate candidates. The committee has not discussed this yet but it appears to me to be a reasonable suggestion.

The Rhyming Philosopher

AMBITION

TOO MANY FUTILE THOUGHTS ENCROACH UPON AN ACTIVE MIND;
I THINK OF FISHING, BAIT AND BOATS AND WORK GETS LEFT BEHIND.
I ALSO FALL FOR FEMALE LURE, OF GIRLS WHO SPARK AND PLAY—
A MALADY WITH NO KNOWN CURE, AND NO HELP ON THE WAY.
I GOT MYSELF INVOLVED IN DREAMS THESE MANY YEARS AGO
WHEN AS A WAYWARD LAD IT SEEMS I WANDERED TO AND FRO
BETWEEN PURSUING HOT AND HARD A LIFE OF CRIME AND VICE,
OR JOINING UP WITH SCOTLAND YARD AND PUTTING CROOKS ON ICE
I NEVER MADE THE COPPER'S RANKS NOR TROD THE GANGSTERS' TRAIL,
OR HELD UP VERY MANY BANKS — AT THINGS LIKE THESE I'D FAIL.
MY ONLY TALENTS HARD TO BEAT, WHICH NO MAN CAN DENY,
IS FROWLING UP AND DOWN THE STREET AND WATCH THE GIRLS GO BY!

HARRY W. FLETCHER

HARRY W. FLETCHER

BY KEN JERNSTEDT,

STATE SENATOR

18th District, Including

Morrow county

YOUR SENATOR REPORTS...

The legislative momentum shifted this week from the budget to the mundane as the legislators' attention moved from the more colorful bills of sex education, fluoridation and abortion to the realities of the major problem facing the session — property tax relief.

With the week barely underway, the House voted out a sales tax program for property tax relief, with a margin of 32-28. The bill was then forwarded to the Senate for the upper chamber's consideration.

The bill in its present form comes in four basic parts. They are broken down in the following manner:

HR 8 . . . This is the vehicle for the sales tax. It places the tax into the constitution at a fixed rate of 3% and specifies that the money will be used for school support, the philosophy being, if the tax is locked into the constitution the rate cannot be raised nor the use of the funds changed unless by a vote of the people.

House Bill 1127 . . . This is the machinery of the plan. It specifies in detail what is to be taxed and what is to be exempt. The present tax plan taxes all commodities except prescription drugs, water, gas fuel, animal life, feed, seed, and fertilizer, plants, publications, containers, property used or consumed in industrial use and 1/2 of all fuel for industry and agriculture. This plan varies from the tax proposal of last session in that it taxes food. However, to compensate, this proposal gives a rebate to all persons under a taxable income of \$6,000.

House Bill 1126 . . . This deals with how the money will be allocated to school districts, by giving the districts a new tax base equal to the operating budget of the previous year. It also limits school districts to twice a year and fixes the allowable growth in the budget to 5% without a vote of the people.

House Bill 1055 . . . Increases the corporate excise taxes from 6 to 7 per cent—a 16 2/3% increase.

According to the architects of the measure, it will raise some \$100 million a year. This, they say, will allow the state to carry 50% of the local school districts' financial burden rather than the present 23%. This additional money sent back to local school districts is expected to lower property taxes some 25%.

The Senate Taxation Committee in a surprise move Thursday evening, voted out of committee a plan much different than was expected by legislative observers. The plan, as it now goes to the floor of the Senate for consideration, differs from the House plan in two major areas: it achieves property tax relief by directing the money through the property tax relief fund, rather than through basic school support suggested by

Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ruggles traveled to Eugene last week where they attended a mid-winter insurance seminar meeting, sponsored by the Oregon Association of Insurance Agents. Following a short visit with Mrs. Ruggles' family in Portland after the meetings, the couple returned home Sunday evening.

the Senate's counterparts. It is difficult to write about these changes—as they come about so fast.

If the tax proposal should pass the Senate, and there are strong indications that it will, the bill will be referred back to the House for them to concur on the Senate amendments. Although there is a difference in opinion between Senate and House members, it is felt that these can be smoothed out quickly so that the people of Oregon may have a chance to vote on the packages in June.

State employees are in for a wage increase. Under the pay plan approved earlier this week, all state workers will get an across-the-board pay hike of 4% on April 1; a 6% increase on July 1, 1970.

Also, a new system of advancing state workers from wage scale to wage scale was approved. The system stretches out the length of time needed for a worker to move up on the pay ladder, and it increases the level of pay. This program was adopted to help attract career-minded people to state employment and to give wage incentives to workers on the top of their pay scale.

Please bear in mind that it is a little difficult to keep a weekly report up to date. By the time you read my column the picture could change entirely as far as any one measure is concerned.

Pioneer



Ponderings

By W. S. CAVERHILL

A Blizzard of Bills

Our coffee club, noting the agitation for election reform, abolition of conventions and lowering of the voting age, is concerned that nothing is being done to check the blizzard of bills that snow our legislature under each session. A possible thousand or twelve hundred of them will drift into the chambers and committee rooms before adjournment. That is an average of at least ten bills for each member of the entire assembly. Admitted, that most of our member's political experience is that of a city councilman, from that level we do not see that our social and economic structure has slipped up or down or sideways in the past two years, to an extent that calls for such an abundance of suggested remedies.

We have come a long way from the position of pioneer leader who said, "If government will keep the peace, we'll take care of the rest."



COMMUNITY BILLBOARD

Coming Events
HEPPNER BASKETBALL
Friday, Feb. 21, Pilot Rock, there

Saturday, Feb. 22, Madras, there

Saturday, March 1, Sherman, here
League games
Support the Mustangs!

GRADE SCHOOL
Friday, Feb. 21, Ione there, 2 p.m.

BAKED FOODS SALE
Friday, Feb. 21, from 10:00 a.m.
Sponsored by LDS Relief Society
Next door to Gardner's Men's Wear

4-H LEADERS CONFERENCE
Wednesday, Feb. 26, 10:00 a.m.
Home of Mrs. W. H. Wolff
Discussion of Club Programs with county extension agents

ELKS 72nd ANNUAL
Sat. Feb. 22
Registration at Ford Garage, 11:30 a.m.
Entertainment for women guests, St. Patrick's parish hall, 1:00 p.m.
Dinner, 6-8 p.m.; dance 9:30-1:30

TERRIFIC BARGAINS IN HEPPNER'S WASHINGTON BIRTHDAY SALES THIS WEEK-END

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