

The Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES
VIEWPOINT

OTHERS SAY:

Increased basic school support questioned

By Senator Ken Jernstedt

Although there has not been a lot said "publicly" around the capitol concerning the subject of basic school support, I can detect a considerable amount of support among legislators for increasing the percentage the legislature sends to the school districts of the state. This is, beyond question, a form of property tax relief. But some of us are wondering if it is property tax relief that the people understand.

The last session increased the state's share of local school support to 40 per cent of operating costs. This means that property taxes pay for the other 60 per cent of school funding. The greater the amount of state support, the less the possibility that property taxes need to be increased. However, the rapid growth of school costs have made a number of legislators believe that the 40 per cent level is not enough, and that the state's contribution to basic school support should be increased in percentage.

The money is available, but we must act soon. If we fail to retain at least the 40 per cent level, our other efforts at property tax relief will be diluted.

So far the only major proposal presented to us on the question of property tax relief is contained in House Joint Resolution three and House Bill 2188, parts of the package presented by Governor Atiyeh which is the so-called cleaned-up version of Measure 6 which was defeated by the voter last November.

HJR 3 would be submitted to the people and if approved would become part of the Oregon Constitution. Among other things, it would mean that homeowners would pay no more than 1-1/2 per cent of their property assessment in taxes. Mobile homes are included, but not rental property or second homes.

HB 2188 spells out how the Atiyeh tax plan translates from theory into practice. It would not become a part of the Constitution and its provisions could be changed by simple majority vote in the Legislature.

The Atiyeh program is in the House Revenue Committee, which is trying to identify ways in which it can be improved. No formal alternative has surfaced yet, although a number of legislators have criticized the Atiyeh plan and have offered programs of their own.

The Governor has asked the House to move with speed on the question to make it possible for a vote of the people on April 3, which is the date of school budget elections. To make this deadline the Legislature must complete its work on this package by February 28, which is fast approaching.

There's no question but that we must act on property tax relief and do so this session. The sooner we act, the shorter the session most likely will be.



LETTERS FROM READERS:

Writer backs NMF hospital study

Editor:

I am writing this letter in regards to the front page story about the Pioneer Memorial Hospital. The board has asked the Morrow County Court permission to hire a health care planning consultant. The dictionary says a consultant is one who suggests, advises or gives out information.

Through the Morrow County Court, three different groups submitted applications to do a study on the hospital. The Northwest Medical Foundation was chosen to do so.

To obtain their information, some 1,500 questionnaires were mailed out and 49 community leaders were interviewed. The response, I feel, was very poor. Only 136 had-been patients, 138 residents, and 18 hospital employees sent in their questionnaires.

From this information, a study was prepared. The study consists of 103 pages and further documents pertaining to our hospital. The study was then released to those who were interviewed at a meeting was held with the NWMF on Jan. 18. A question and answer session was held at this time and the board members at this time had no questions detrimental to the study.

The NWMF was then asked to return to Portland and condense the study and return to present it to you. This was agreed to, and a tentative date was agreed on.

I feel that the public wants to keep this hospital in our community. At this meeting it was stressed by Mr. Blair that a doctor would be placed at Boardman and one at Condon. A practitioner at Fossil and a doctor-surgeon, internist and a nurse-anesthetist would be placed in Heppner.

One thing must be understood. What the hospital board is asking for is a person who is paid for only giving advice. I feel we would be paying someone for something we already know. Even if he hired doctors to come in, we would have no guarantee as to how long they would stay.

When we talk of the NWMF, we are talking of an organization that has at its disposal the people that they are telling us we need and need badly.

At the last hospital board meeting, we were told that we are \$75,000 in the red for six month's operation. Through gifts of \$33,000, a prettier picture was painted, leaving us only \$42,000 in debt. We are paying out approximately \$39,000 and a rentable house to two people in the administration. By adding this all together, a foreseeable \$117,000 indebtedness could exist by the end of the year.

I would rather see your money and mine, as taxes, be put forth to a better use, such as the NWMF, and I would feel we would be receiving something for our dollars invested.

No doubt if we are to save our hospital, a subsidy must still be continued. The amount and length of time becomes a question at this time.

A unit such as we now have cannot have the ups and downs that it has had and survive. Doctors coming and doctors going. Indebtedness which, if it happened to you or I, would cause us to declare bankruptcy.

The NWMF feels it would have to re-educate the surrounding counties and the people of Morrow County into use of the hospital. They feel they can do so.

Consultants may hire people to come here, but no guarantee is made on the amount of time they may stay.

We do not know how long the doctors with NWMF would stay, but we know they have at their disposal personnel to replace them and we wouldn't have to go searching for doctors again.

The foundation at large can fall back on itself for personnel, financial aid and planning.

I would rather see an organization with experience and expertise come in, and with our subsidizing, which is now of no return, be allowed to run PMH, if an agreement can be made with the Morrow County Court and the people.

Attend the public meeting and take part in saving our hospital.

Merl Cantin

Advisory Committee member on schools

Editor:

One of the obligations of School Advisory Committee members is visiting the schools. As a member of the Heppner Advisory Committee, I recently spent parts of three days at our grade and high schools.

From my observations I am pleased to report that in general, our local educational system is in excellent condition. For the most part, our teachers are doing a fine job. Our buildings and their fantastic array of educational equipment are a real credit to the taxpayers. There are a few problems in need of attention which I will take to the Advisory Committee at the next meeting, February 13th.

I would encourage any interested citizen to visit their school.

Stephen K. Peck

Concerned Parents purpose explained

Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to explain the purpose and goals of the Concerned Parents Group. In the absence of a PTA or similar organization, we felt that the Morrow County School System and parents needed a direct line of communication.

The first objective of the organization was to find out what the major concerns of parents in the community were and then educate ourselves to the nature and seriousness of these concerns.

In this "discovery" period, we found that some of the areas discussed were much bigger problems than we had imagined. At the same time, we found many positive, good things were happening in the schools.

Most of the problems faced in our school system are not unique to Morrow County. They exist all over the country. This fact has not convinced us that this is the way it has to be. By working with, supporting and providing input to our educators, we hope that education can be provided at the highest quality possible.

Paul Sumner
Chairman, Concerned Parents Group

Picture Credit

Speaking out on patriotic themes were lone High School students taking part in a nationwide "Voice of Democracy" program, sponsored locally by VFW and VFW Auxiliary post 4184. The IHS students tape recorded their self-composed messages for judging. The message of local winner, Janet McElligott, was recently aired on Pendleton's Radio KUMA. Her speech took fourth place honors in district competition. Shown here, front row from left, are lone Principal Chuck Starr, VFW program co-ordinator Jim Launer, Janet McElligott and participants Chris Cheney, Brenda Patton and Carol Chening. At back are participant John Piening and teacher Tom Forsythe, who was in charge of the IHS end of the program.

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Sifting through the TIMES



A total of 42 inches of snow had fallen on Heppner during a three-week period of unseasonably severe weather during this period 50 years ago.

The snowfall was so heavy, it caved in the roof of a lambing shed at the Pat Connell place at Spring Hollow, killing nearly a dozen ewes.

Oscar Keithly appeared in Heppner in a horse-drawn sleigh, prompting the Gazette-Times to note that "one does not see many vehicles of this kind any more. But the deep snow is causing them to re-appear, as this is about the only sure means of transportation over unbroken roads."

It wasn't exactly ideal weather in which to be spending much time in the saddle, but John J. Kelly, in charge of the Mahoney and Kelly sheep operation, rose to the occasion, spending the week moving a band of woolies from the Wyland place beyond Hardman to Cecil.

The cold weather made indoor activities more attractive, resulting in a large turnout for Heppner High School's presentation of "The Charm School," a three-act comedy. Heppner High junior Henry Robertson was cast in the leading role.

B.G. Sigsbee's motion pictures of the recently concluded Alpine area rabbit drive were being shown nightly as a short subject feature at the Star Theater. Many local residents had the chance to see themselves on film for the first time. The footage of the rabbit drive, in which some 3,000 jackrabbits were bludgeoned into the Great Beyond, appeared just before the cartoon feature "Oscar the Rabbit," at the Star. Also playing was Myrna Loy in "The Crimson City."

Thirty years ago this week, final plans and architects' drawings of the proposed Pioneer Memorial Hospital were mailed to federal Health, Education and Welfare Department officials in San Francisco. County officials were hopeful that their planning effort would result in a federal grant that would allow them to make the hospital a reality.

During the same week in 1949, Morrow County civic and business leaders invited to attend a Pendleton Chamber of Commerce meeting were told by Army Corps of Engineer officials that the proposed Willow Creek Dam was included in development plans for the Columbia Basin region.

A wheat storage space shortage that was threatening already troubled area grain growers was eased somewhat 25 years ago this week.

Local wheat producers had experienced two years of good production and poor prices, resulting in a good portion of the county's wheat crop being stored in elevators and bins. Prices remained poor during the 1954 season, but additional storage space was nearly completely booked.

But the storage situation brightened when Morrow County Grain Growers manager Al Lamb learned that the U.S. Maritime Administration had agreed to allow 135 decommissioned or "mothballed" Navy cargo ships docked at Astoria to be used for grain storage purposes. Grain from the area could be barged to Astoria, and offloaded onto the unused vessels, while farmers waited for prices to take an upward turn.

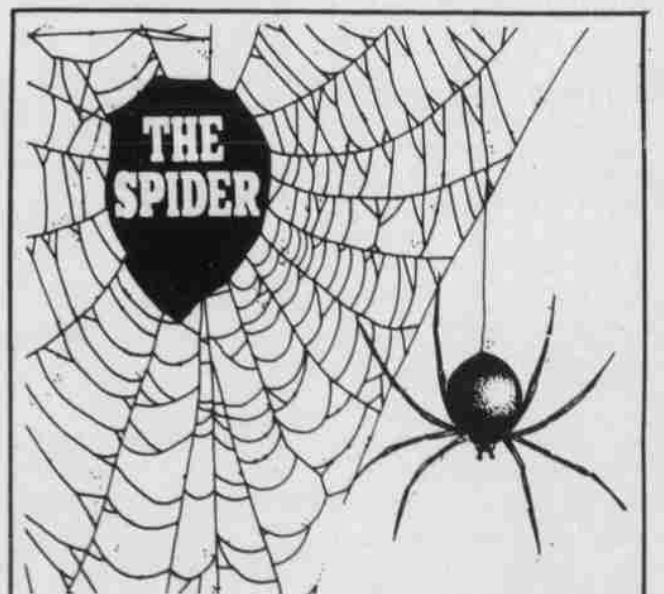
Unusually heavy snowfall along upper Willow Creek 10 years ago this week resulted in a natural phenomenon almost unheard of in this area: avalanches.

Dick Wilkinson, traveling about three miles upstream from his Willow Creek ranch home, observed one such avalanche start near the top of the rolling hills above the creek valley. According to a Gazette-Times account, the snowslide "gained momentum, and reached sizeable proportions as it hit the creek. Sweeping on across, it dammed the creek under an accumulation of snow and debris some five or six feet in depth. Within a short time, the stream cut back through it."

Driving back up the canyon later in the day, Wilkinson spotted four other minor avalanches that had been triggered by the weight of the snow accumulation.

The heavy snowfall caused a variety of other problems to the area. A Hager's Dairy truck, after making a delivery to Heppner High School, lost control going back down the hill into town, plunging into a ditch. Trucks jackknifed on the Heppner-Condon highway on at least two occasions, blocking both lanes of traffic until they could be towed away. Two state snowplows were unable to negotiate the snow blanketed highways, and had to be towed.

The weather was more spring-like five years ago this week, providing an airy mood for many Morrow Countians. Included in this group were Gerald Bunch, Steve Peck and Al Bunch, who used the good weather to take advantage of flying lessons. The three made their first solo flights during this week in 1974.



During Mark Twain's days as a newspaperman, he was editor of a small Missouri paper. One day he received a letter from a subscriber, stating that he had found a spider in his paper, and asked if this was an omen of good or bad luck. Twain replied: "Finding a spider in your paper is neither good nor bad luck. The spider was merely looking over our paper to see which merchant was not advertising so that he could go to that store, spin his web across the door, and lead a life of undisturbed peace ever afterward."

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will keep the spider away from your door

...have something to say?

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