

The Heppner
GAZETTE-TIMES
VIEWPOINT

Local legislators cautious, but still favor nuclear power

By Kathleen Glanville
Eagle Newspapers
Salem Reporter

After the Three Mile Island, Pa., nuclear reactor accident, some political observers thought the issue of nuclear power in Oregon would nudge tax relief out of the limelight to become the major legislative battle of the session.

But that hasn't happened. A moratorium on the Pebble Springs nuclear power plant project sailed through the Senate last week with unanimous approval. The measure, Senate Bill 899, now goes to the House where it will be quickly moved to the floor for a vote.

The bill is a compromise worked out in the Senate Energy and Environment Committee by Sens. Jack Ripper, D-North Bend, and Ed Fadeley, D-Eugene, chairman of the committee.

The moratorium will delay state approval of the twin Pebble Springs reactors planned for North Central Oregon until the state Department of Energy completes two studies on the safety of the plant.

The first would look at the Three Mile Island accident to determine if any design changes or additional safety standards are needed for the reactors at Pebble Springs. The second study is aimed at the cost and availability of long-term disposal of nuclear wastes.

The bill specifically prohibits action on Pebble Springs until July 1, 1980, but many people say it will delay it much longer than that. Some foes of nuclear power are banking on the delay to kill the project because of increasing costs of construction and legal challenges. Sen. Mike Thorne, D-Pendleton, is a supporter of nuclear power, but he fears that may happen. "Given the current situation, it's going to be some time before that source of energy is available—if at all," he said. Thorne recently asked the Portland General Electric Co., which is the utility proposing Pebble Springs, to set aside its application for a nuclear power plant and to look for alternatives.

"I'm not at all upset about the safety of a nuclear plant," Thorne added. "I think there's a real concern about nuclear waste and that's going to have to take federal action."

"My main concern, whether the plant is nuclear, wind, solar or coal, we're in a serious energy situation. And unless we do something now we will pay later."

Thorne would like PGE to look into alternatives such as a coal-fired plant since he doubts a nuclear plant at Pebble Springs will ever gain approval.

But Sen. Ken Jernstedt, R-Hood River, sees roadblocks ahead for coal-fired plants also.

"They'll go ahead and put in another coal-fired plant and then people against more power will then start raising environmental questions about the coal fired plants," he said.

Jernstedt said coal-fired energy is almost twice as expensive as nuclear and added that nuclear energy is non-polluting.

"I think that we are absolutely not facing up to the fact we are rapidly approaching energy crisis in the United States," he said. "And I see nothing as a stop gap."

Jernstedt, whose district includes Gilliam County, the site of the proposed nuclear power plant, firmly supports nuclear power.

"The governor of the state of Washington looked me in the eye and said if you don't want it, we do. That really concerns me. I'm looking at that tax base which would move out of Oregon into Washington."

He said it would be a mistake to make Washington the power center of the northwest.

Rep. Bill Bellamy, R-Culver, also represents Gilliam County and he agrees with Jernstedt that Oregon would lose if Washington got the Pebble Springs plant. "As long as Washington continues to support and promote nuclear power, we can say no and we'll have none of the economic advantages and we won't have any protection environmentally."

Bellamy contends that if PGE moves to Washington, the nuclear plant will go in at Roosevelt, right across the Columbia River from Arlington.

"If Washington and Idaho said no to nuclear power, I'd be very reluctant to go with it. But as long as Washington says yes, Oregon loses," Bellamy said.

He added that he was not concerned about the safety aspect.

"I live in a world of reality," he said. "We can say no to nuclear power and suffer economically. Safety doesn't bother me. We can send people to the moon, we can design a safe nuclear power plant."

Bellamy supports the moratorium recently passed by the Senate.

"That doesn't mean a decision against Pebble Springs," he said. "It says wait a year. It's a good compromise."

Another view of the Oregon Legislature at work

NOTE: Observations and/or opinions expressed in the following do not necessarily reflect those of the author, his employers, the Legislature, this publication or its owners—or do they?

The 65th Legislative Assembly completed the first 100 of its continuous 365-day session in Salem this week and both houses marked the occasion by accepting a conference committee report on a bill that bans carbonated beverages.

The measure was sparked by scientific theory that an accumulation of gases released via carbonated drinks over the years is creating a bulge in the otherwise tenuous ionosphere. Proponents argued convincingly that unless pressure on the bulge is reduced promptly and permanently, dire consequences—not yet fully determined—could follow.

As in most continuous sessions of the Oregon Legislature, this meeting is largely involved with issues addressing school finance, highways, welfare, workers' compensation, payment of the unemployed and environmental concerns.

A major public education issue that erupted early in the session and seemingly defies resolution is a committee bill mandating all one-room schoolhouses be painted the same shade of red. Many districts are pleading poverty and claim their unpainted buildings are more in keeping with the environment.

The Department of Transportation and Department of Environmental Quality continue their clash over solid waste disposal. During a particularly heated debate, one long-time lawmaker observed filling chuckholes in concrete freeways



Salem Scene

By Jack Zimmerman

was simple compared with removing horse manure from the state's current unpaved thoroughfares.

And that led to an angry response from another oldtimer who said he preferred wagon ruts to chuckholes any day.

DEQ also has its hands full convincing Legislators that stricter enforcement of rules regulating the state's Recycling Commission is in order. DEQ wants tighter controls in the state's building code regarding construction with asphalt blocks mined from abandoned parking lots. And, of course, the other big mining issue involves almost unrestricted prospecting for artifacts in areas once designated as sanitary landfills.

As has been the case for many sessions—ever since 100 per cent public financing of election campaigns—the Democraticans hold firm majorities in both chambers. The one-party system apparently is here to stay and few incumbents have been unseated in years.

Those lawmakers who do leave office for health reasons—or complete lack of same—are usually replaced by a family member courtesy of the law enacted in 1981 giving a Legislator's surviving spouse full rights of ascendancy.

Senate Pres. Jason Boe and Speaker Hardy Myers extended the courtesy of floor privileges to Gov. Victor Atiyeh during a joint session of both houses for debate on the energy bill. A lively affair, the debate pitted Sen. Vern Cook against Rep. Chick Edwards involving repeal of the handbrake law—a measure restricting downhill speed on horsedrawn vehicles.

Common Sense forces are pressing for a new concept to clean up and make more

visible deliberations of the Assembly. A Common Sense spokesperson declared before a packed committee hearing that all thoughts by Lobbyists should be monitored and aired before the Accountability Commission or freedom of thought is likely to get completely out of hand.

A contingent from the powerful Teachers' Amalgamation told Senate Labor Committee its members were sick and tired of being paid in perishable produce—such as apples and potatoes—and prefers nonperishable recompense for that profession.

Several committee members appeared in agreement and rumor has it lawmakers are considering similar treatment for Legislators' pay. Some observers believe that if the movement grows sufficiently, Oregon may abandon the barter system and seek a return to the old method of exchange involving currency and coin of the realm.

Much concern is being expressed this session regarding vandalism at Trojan State Park on the Columbia River. Teenage gangs are reported to be stealing eggs from nesting whistling swans at the site of the former nuclear generating plant. Environmentalists are supporting the activity declaring theft of the eggs is merely an expression of the balance of nature and if the kids don't steal them, many families in economically depressed Columbia County face malnutrition and of course, the swans might simply take over.

A joint memorial quickly passed both houses early this session commending hardy pioneers trying to re-establish Portland—a former metropolis which vanished during the flood that followed

demolition of a series of hydro-electric dams on the Columbia. Proponents of the demolition project were eulogized by first one lawmaker and then another. Laments for the many human souls lost each spring during devastating floods throughout the Columbia River system were drowned out by aborigines exclaiming the region has more salmon than ever before.

All three members of Associated Oregon Industries appeared before the Labor Committee this week protesting the high cost of paying compensation for injuries sustained by the unemployed. The butcher, baker and candlestickmaker

were again rebuffed by a committee clerk presiding at the hearing, who explained with customary logic that someone had to take care of those who didn't want to care for themselves.

Inclement weather so far this session has kept meetings rather short. All evening hearings have been cancelled due to the current Japanese ban on exporting whale oil for lamps.

And woodburning stoves finally did in the venerable Department of Forestry. What the Sunset law could not accomplish, a complete lack of forests has.

In general, this session—in the manner of its predecessors—is completely preoccupied with maintaining what has become an unpredictable status quo for most Oregonians. Exceptions to this rule dictate that deviations, however slight, must be innovative and if possible the first of their kind in keeping with the Oregon tradition.

Sifting through the TIMES

Heppner marksman Laverne Van Marter was awarded the Latourell Cup 50 years ago this week, for his outstanding performance in the Oregonian's State Telegraphic Trapshooting Tournament.

Charles Latourell, president of the Heppner Rod and Gun Club, treated all the local trapshooting team members to a chicken dinner at the Elkhorn Restaurant, in presenting his award to Van Marter. Heppner placed fourth in the state in the preliminary round of competition, qualifying for a shoot-off championship match in Portland the following week. Van Marter broke 95.2 per cent of the 650 targets he shot at in the tourney. Latourell was no slouch with a shotgun, either, shooting 100 per cent on a round of 100 practice birds during the week of the awards dinner.

Making the trip to the trapshooting finals in Portland were Van Marter, Latourell, Albert Bowker, Dr. A.D. McMurdo and Charles Vaughn.

Rancher Harry French had just completed loading a shipment of 23 work horses into a rail car destined for Beaverton during the same week a half-century ago. French reported that Willamette Valley farmers were providing a good market for local draft horses.

The 1929 trout fishing season got off to a poor start during the same week, when rain and high water muddied most of the state's more popular streams.

Meanwhile, Frank Turner's sheep shearing crew was moving into full swing at the Ralph Corrigan place on Butter Creek.

Thirty years ago this week, volunteers finished pouring a new cement tennis court for use by Heppner schoolchildren, and a fire threatened to destroy the Heppner Lumber Co., before quick-acting firemen cut the blaze short.

The fire had broken out in a fuel bunker, and spread to a sawdust pile. High winds threatened to spread the blaze into the mill proper, but firemen managed to perform the right task at the right moment, snuffing out the fire before more serious damage could be done.

Meanwhile, over in Monument, residents were anxiously waiting for the Big-Four Lumber Company's sawmill whistle to blow for the first time. During this week in 1949, the first load of logs was brought to the decking yard of the new facility.

A Big-Four timber falling crew, working in upper Deer Creek on the Gerald Slocum place, was encountering some massive trees to feed the Monument mill. One such giant was cut into three lengths of 32 feet, and contained a total of 10,150 board feet of potential lumber. A second was cut into 17 short logs, and contained a total of 10,000 board feet.

During the same week in 1949, Harold "Doc" Sherer was appointed foreman of the county road crew by the Morrow County Court.

Heppner Lumber Co. was back in the news 25 years ago this week, when a strike was called after management and union officials announced they were "hopelessly deadlocked" over contract negotiations. Among other issues, the workers were seeking a 12.5 cent per hour across-the-board pay hike.

Marine Capt. LeMoin Cox, son of Elbert Cox of Heppner, was awarded two sharpshooting medals during this week in 1954, following national shooting matches at Camp Perry, Ohio.

A group of four juveniles broke into Wright's Country Store at Ruggs 10 years ago this week, making off with 20 cases of beer, a quantity of cigarettes, shotgun shells and other items. One of the four confessed to his role in the caper to Judge Paul Jones.

Jones was also in the news during this week in 1969, when he was elected grand high priest of the Grand Chapter, Royal Arch Masons of Oregon during a convention in Astoria.

Five years ago this week, Donna Wilson and Jan Eckstrom were named valedictorian and salutatorian of Ione High School's class of 1974.



Picture Credit

Gas, gas everywhere...but not a drop at Vern's 76 in Heppner. For the second consecutive month now Vern Wilson has run out of gas near mid-month and can't get anymore because state and federal regulations limit a dealer to 95 per cent of what he used last year during the same month. Union 76 told Wilson they have plenty of gas and would like to sell it to him but they can't unless he gets an OK from either the state or federal government. Wilson has made application to both but hasn't heard anything positive from either. In the meantime Vern has a special on car washes and says he has plenty of time to do lube jobs. Maybe the government agencies could use a little grease, Vern.

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