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A STATEMENT FROM THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

Future of Amtrak

(The following article by Neil Goldschmidt, Secretary of Transportation in the cabinet of President Jimmy Carter, was prepared in response to a letter from the Heppner Gazette-Times. He was asked to comment on the future of Amtrak—the National Railroad Passenger Corporation—and specifically about the "Pioneer," the train that operates between Salt Lake City and Seattle by way of southern Idaho, eastern Oregon and the Columbia Gorge.

(The Heppner Gazette-Times also asked Mr. Goldschmidt about the feasibility of providing bus service in such isolated, rural areas as southern Morrow County, where people now rely on the private automobile for transportation. Our suggestion was that postal star route service might be combined with a limited passenger-carrying capacity with the support of federal subsidies. The service might be in the pattern of "post buses" operated by many European countries.

(In response to this suggestion, Mr. Goldschmidt pointed to the example of the Bend-Lakeview State Lines in south-central Oregon, where a postal route has been combined with a passenger service. "Your suggestion...has merit," Mr. Goldschmidt said.

(The Secretary was appointed to his cabinet post last autumn from his previous position, that of Mayor of Portland.)

By Neil Goldschmidt

The Secretary of Transportation

Congress founded Amtrak in 1971 to relieve the private railroads (such as Union Pacific and Burlington Northern) of the responsibility and deficits of passenger trains. Frankly, many of the problems that plagued passenger train service prior to the formation of Amtrak—lax on-time performance, graceless employees, and equipment malfunctions—continue as problems today despite the fact that Amtrak's federal subsidy gets larger every year. At the same time, "Pioneer" passengers will confirm that Amtrak has been successful in some ways—the corporation has bought new equipment, installed a modern reservations system, and is generally making more of an effort to win passengers than the railroads formerly did.

Still, I am not satisfied. I don't think the people of eastern Oregon should be either, as taxpayers and as passengers. Amtrak's deficits continue to be unacceptably high and the quality of service continues to be unacceptably inconsistent. Congress shares our concern, and added several provisions to the Amtrak Reorganization Act of 1979 which demand better financial and service performance from Amtrak. It sets specific standards and criteria that trains are to meet.

Now, under the management of Amtrak President Alan Boyd, I sense a new spirit at Amtrak, dedicated to restricting the growth of the company's costs and serving the traveling public. I intend to encourage Amtrak's efforts in those areas, and prod it along if necessary.

To be honest, I doubt that we will see a revival of the passenger train to World War II levels of service. Given the size of our country, the exorbitant costs of railroad construction and operations, and trains' relatively high fuel consumption (compared with buses and perhaps the high mileage cars of the future), it is not clear whether passenger railroad service will ever carry a significant percentage of intercity passengers in most long-haul markets. However, I think we should make the trains as cost-effective and pleasant as possible. Congress' new standards are a welcome step in that direction, and clarify that we are serious about developing the most appropriate rail system for America's need.

As for the specifics of the "Pioneer" case, the train was retained in the Amtrak network under a provision of the Amtrak Reorganization Act of 1979 which required "regional balance" in the Amtrak system. The "Pioneer" will operate at least until Oct. 1, 1981, when it will be reevaluated in terms of Congress's ridership and financial criteria. At that time, Oregonians' use of the service and the amount of its deficit will be the decisive factors in whether the train continues.

Finally, I think your suggestion about the possibility of combining postal and passenger service in sparsely populated areas has merit. In fact, there are a number of such services operating in the country today. Bend-Lakeview Stage Lines' joint postal route-passenger service in south-central Oregon between Bend, Silver Lake, Christmas Valley, Summer Lake, Paisley and Lakeview is an example. Although the Department of Transportation does not get directly involved in planning for and establishing specific operations such as this, we do administer a broad rural transportation assistance program known as the UMTA Section 18 program, that could be a source of funds to subsidize transportation service in the Morrow County area. This year, Oregon will be allotted approximately one million dollars for Section 18 projects. The Oregon Department of Transportation administers these funds for the state and sets the priorities that determine the uses to which they are put.

Thank you for this opportunity to discuss Amtrak and transportation in rural areas. I hope that you and your readers will maintain an interest in the challenges confronting the Department of Transportation and that I will have the continuing benefit of your advice and support.

Salem Scene

Oregonians rediscovering the initiative

BY JACK ZIMMERMAN

A late, lamented professional lobbyist—at the height of consumer and environmental movements during the 1971 session of the Oregon Legislature—was moved to remark: "Democracy sure fouls up the legislative process."

The veteran lobbyist's quip was prompted by the inordinate flood of concerned citizens descending on the Capitol in behalf of special interests, armed for the most part with little more than emotional fervor. That session is known as the one during which the people "found" Salem and the Legislature that meets there regularly on odd-numbered years.

Were he with us today, that sage observer of the scene in Salem might make the same observation concerning the state's elections. That's because 1980 stands a good change of becoming the year the people rediscover the initiative process—the system that permits citizens to achieve legislation by the electorate.

Fifty-nine requests already have been made to the Secretary of State to circulate petitions to have measures appear on the Nov. 4 General Election ballot. A modern record, the number is significantly more than the 44 sought in 1978.

Historically, Oregonians embraced the initiative and referendum system in 1902—permitting direct legislation by the people.

Popularity of the initiative process immediately following inception is evident by the fact 35 measures were thus propelled to ballot status in 1912. Ten were approved by

voters, one of which gave women the right to vote—well in advance of national suffrage eight years later.

In 1914 there were 20 initiatives on the ballot and 16 in 1916. But from then on, agitation for direct legislation waned. Totals seldom exceed seven or eight.

Seven, for instance, appeared on the 1978 ballot—three of which were approved by voters.

Modified through the years, the process for achieving ballot status now requires petitioners to file a prospectus with the Secretary of State, including signatures of 25 registered voters. The request



Legislative Report from the State Capital EXCLUSIVE to Oregon's Weekly Newspapers from Associated Oregon Industries

is referred to the Attorney General for a ballot title which is subject to challenge and subsequent appellate court review for a period of 20 days. If these hurdles are cleared, petitioners submit necessary cover sheets and signature pages. Once approved, the signature collection begins.

If a proposal simply seeks to change existing law, petitioners must collect signatures of registered voters equal to six percent of votes cast for all candidates for Governor during the preceding regular gubernatorial election. And the signatures must be obtained four months before the election on which ballot status is sought.

If petitioners seek to change the State Constitution, the percentage jumps to eight. Signature totals for statutory initiatives currently are 54,669 and 72,891 for constitutional measures, required percentages of the 911,143 ballots cast for gubernatorial candidates in 1978.

How many of the measures now proposed will achieve ballot status is anyone's guess. Of the 59 already sought, five have been declined by the Attorney General and one petitioner died. Twenty-seven have been approved by the Secretary of State for circulation. Most of the balance have received titles and are either stalled by challenges or awaiting approval of cover sheets and signature lists.

Authorities expect at least one more initiative to be filed and although there is no statutory filing deadline, time is running out from a practical standpoint.

It takes about six weeks to obtain certification and the July 3 deadline for collecting signatures this year is rapidly approaching.

Who seeks direct legislation? There are a few regulars pushing for specific causes. One has proposed eight initiatives, another seeks six. Most are private citizens but five current legislators and one former lawmaker are among current petitioners. Gov. Victor Atiyeh's name appears on two and former Gov. Tom McCall's is on another.

Proposals cover any number of subjects but most seek approval of propositions that failed to win favor during the

last regular legislative session.

Several deal with property and income taxes. A number attack nuclear power, motor vehicle laws, the manner in which the state regulates alcoholic beverages and gambling statutes. Others range from easing laws involving marijuana, land use regulations and rape to prohibiting herbicide sprays, abortions and more than two terms for elected officials.

No one seriously questions the people's right to exercise this direct legislative prerogative. But quite a number join that now-departed lobbyist in expressing alarm at the current plethora of propositions.

Secretary of State Norma Paulus is one. She's worried about obtaining enough paper to print pro and con arguments in the Voter's Pamphlet—no small concern since there's almost no limit to the number of arguments she must accept. And newsprint is in such short supply, its makers aren't accepting new customers.

Others join our late lobbyist in worrying many petitioners will affix signatures without bothering to read the fine print.

Some proposals could wreak havoc with the state's economy. Others are incompatible with existing law and could require a special legislative session.

Greatest anxiety however, is caused by the emotional appeal of most measures. Little wonder there are those who fear results of lawmaking in the absence of reason.

Sifting through the TIMES

1930
Fifty years ago the county courts waived the penalty for delinquent taxes and charged interest at 6 percent in an effort to speed up past due payments.

The Elks Lodge was conducting its annual Washington's Birthday Ball. Music was going to be performed by Pat's Six Aces from The Dalles.

The school teachers play "Smile Rodney Smile" was put on and \$150 was cleared. The money was going to be used for buying library books for the school and other equipment that was not in the school budget. A crowd of more than 450 watched the evening presentation.

Businessmen in Heppner were purchasing American flags to put in front of their stores on patriotic occasions from J.C. Penny at a cost of \$4.85 installed.

The high school sub district basketball tournament was going to take place in Heppner with Heppner, Lexington, Lone, Fossil, Arlington, Boardman, Hermiston and possibly Condon participating. Tickets for the entire tournament of six games cost \$1.25.

The Heppner Lions Club endorsed putting fish ladders at all dams on Willow Creek and changing the channel at the mouth of the creek so fish could enter.

1955
Twenty five years ago Al Lamb, manager of the Morrow County Grain Growers, announced that a new 500,000 bushel flat storage grain elevator was going to be constructed near the Patterson Ferry Landing. The 70 by 440 foot steel building was going to cost \$100,000.

Heppner TV, Inc. collected \$3,300 in memberships at its first meeting. Membership rates were \$135 for hook-up and \$3.50 for a month service charge.

Dentist Fred L. Gronemyer of Heppner announced he was leaving his practice and opening one in Moses Lake, Wash. Dr. Bob Bliss, of

Portland, took his place. Mark Piper was presented the Eagle Scout award.

1975
The Future Farmers of America had its award banquet and winners were Bill Van Schoick, Clay West, Mike Orwick, Joe Kenny, Curtis Cusforth and Kellwaye Hageuewood.

The Morrow County School Board looked at the athletic situation at the schools and decided something had to be done to upgrade the girls program.

Mr. and Mrs. Frank Connor celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary.

Heppner lost to Weston-McEwen in a basketball game 103-61. The team came back to beat Stanfield and Wasco County.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

Energy Outlook for 1980's

Our energy consumption is so great that we've had to develop a new method of expressing the measurement of our energy appetite.

The unit is a quad, and a single quad represents a daily diet of 500,000 barrels of oil a day for a whole year. That's one quad. The Department of Energy tells us that we consumed about 80 quads of oil by the end of 1979 for that single year.

By 1990 the Fed estimates we'll use 101.5 quads a day, what with an increase in population, more automobiles, and a growing economy.

If you want to multiply those 101.5 by 500,000 barrels a day times 365 you'll see what we'll need for guzzling to meet the world's most voracious petroleum appetite.

Based on the federal guess for our needs during this decade the only elements that can change are numbers in population, automobiles and continuing growth in the economy. In effect, the Fed is advertising why we'll need more, not how to use less.

Early in the 70's the electric utilities advertised generously on ways to use more power until laws were passed forbidding such practice. Now, their emphases is on advertising conservation.

We believe the Department of Energy ought to take a page from that book, demonstrating to the rest of the Fed that using less may mean more to all of us in the long run.

—TV editorial, Channel 2 KATU, Portland

(How much oil would the nation save, we wonder, if the pasture of "dragging the gut" were eliminated? That's an expression, we are told, that refers to the recreation to be found in driving the length of Main Street, then making a U turn and proceeding back to the other end. It takes place not only in Heppner on a Saturday night but in countless other small towns across the land.)

"A power over a man's support is a power over his will." Alexander Hamilton

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

'Voters asked to confirm their registrations'

Editor:

During September and October of every odd-numbered year, county election officials are required by state law to mail a notice to all electors who have shown no voter activity for two years. These electors are asked to either confirm their voter registration information with the county clerk by returning a form or to re-register. Voter registration records are removed from the files within 20 days after the notice is mailed for any elector who has not contacted the county clerk.

As a result of this purge, there was a 16.6 percent drop in the number of electors registered to vote in Oregon. Currently, there are 1,227,715 electors in our state as compared to 1,472,536 electors registered to vote in September, 1979.

I am concerned that many Oregonians who received these notices just overlooked or disregarded them as bureaucratic nonsense. Since more people are motivated to go to the polls during a presidential primary year, I fear many who have been dropped from the rolls will go to vote, only to discover their names have been removed from the poll book. If that occurs, it could result in crowds of people in the courthouse trying to re-register and vote during the last hours of election day.

My purpose in contacting you is to request your assistance in publicizing this fact. Citizens who received a notice but ignored it should be asked to check with the county clerk.

I am enclosing a copy of the cancellation notice and a list indicating the percentage of decreases in each county. Any help you can give us with this problem will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,
Norma Paulus
Secretary of State,
136 State Capitol
Salem, Oregon 97310
(Morrow County's total registration is 3,354, representing a 5.91 percent decrease from the previous voter registration of 3,565. In neighboring counties, the figures are, for current voter registration, percentage of decrease, and previous registration: Gilliam, 1,182, 11.76 percent, 1,317; Wheeler, 876, 10.15 percent, 975; Umatilla, 22,555, 12.70 percent, 25,839.)

Small-business at Blue Mountain

Prospective small business owners will have an opportunity to learn what it takes to start and operate a successful business during a workshop offered by Blue Mountain Community College in cooperation with the U.S. Small Business Administration.

The workshop will be held in BMCC's Hermiston center on March 5 from 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m. Workshop coordinator is Katie Larson, non-traditional careers counselor at the college.

The workshop may be of

interest to women who are considering their own business. Mrs. Larson pointed out. The workshop, as designed by the Small Business Administration, is intended to help small business owners avoid the problems that lead to business failure.

Persons interested in the workshop may write to Blue Mountain at P.O. Box 100, Pendleton, Oregon 97801 for information. Mrs. Larson is available to answer questions in Hermiston at 567-1116 after 5 p.m.

Business Directory

Auto Parts
Heppner Auto Parts
234 N. Main Heppner 676-9123

Floor Covering
M & R FLOOR COVERING
The Rapco Foamers
Carpet, Linoleum, Ceramic Tile, Kitchen Cabinets, Rapco Insulation
422 Linden Way Heppner 676-9418

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