

Salem Scene

by Jack Zimmerman

MOUNTING COSTS OF WELFARE SAID TO BE EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS

Early weeks of this dollar-short 56th Legislative Assembly have been punctuated by a variety of suggestions—each purporting to "solve" the fiscal crisis.

From his seat as co-chairman of Joint Ways and Means Committee, Sen. Berkeley (Bud) Lent (D-Portland) is biding his time.

Lent, along with House counterpart, Rep. Stafford Hansell (R-Hermiston), and the 12-member committee have final say when it comes to financing state government during the coming biennium.

Ways and Means isn't noted for acting with dispatch. In fact, its deliberations in behalf of a balanced budget pretty well dictate the session's length and the amount of legislation passed.

Sen. Lent isn't holding things up. He isn't using his power to delay the Assembly. On the contrary, he's known among lawmakers as one of the most energetic. But he's thorough. He's seasoned. He wants facts. And he wants actions of Ways and Means to reflect what could be called the "evolution of civilization."

A lawyer who studies higher mathematics for recreation Bud Lent possesses one of the Legislature's most well-ordered minds. When it comes to spending state money, he wants a precise set of priorities.

His present thinking goes this way: "When it comes to finance, we have two primary responsibilities — government and culture."

Governance is the day-to-day operation of state government: courts, agencies, etc. Culture involves responsibility for the evolution of our civilized society.

Financing governance is re-

latively simple. But when money is scarce, the cultural aspect becomes exceedingly complex. Sen. Lent is looking for cultural priorities. When they're established the money will be allocated. The budget will balance. And the lawmaking process will shortly thereafter cease until January 1973.

Lent places the "cultural responsibilities" facing Ways and Means in three basic categories: 1. Free primary and secondary education. 2. Higher education at low student cost. 3. Food, clothing and shelter for those unable to fend for themselves—welfare.

At 49, Bud Lent served three terms in the House before ascending to the Senate in 1967. A Democrat with strong labor ties, he readily identifies with his party's liberal element. And though a staunch supporter of welfare, he hasn't assumed that cultural responsibility top priority—yet.

He's waiting for conclusion of an Executive Department \$5,000 welfare study. The comprehensive probe of Oregon public assistance will reveal "eligibility" of current recipients.

Similar studies have been conducted in other states. Some find only 2% of welfare recipients unqualified for assistance. Nevada found 2% had no business receiving aid.

"If our study shows only 2% or 3% ineligible it would be more to remove them than practical," said Lent.

"But if it shows 10% ineligible, removal of these people from the welfare rolls could mean a \$450,000 monthly savings to Oregon and a like amount to the Federal Government. Together, that's a saving of maybe \$19 million in the next biennium.

"And if the results are like Nevada's . . . ?"

The study won't provide the hard-cut priority mandate he wants. But it likely will influence his present thinking.

"People of Oregon can't help themselves," he said. "Many welfare's strongest critics have the rolls are shot through with a bunch of cheaters. I don't believe that's the way to go."

"If the study shows a high percentage of illegals, I might have to rearrange my thinking," he went on. "If it doesn't, something else is going to have to rearrange his."

Bud Lent sees the cultural solution like this: Primitive society abandoned its sick and old. When nomads settled and began working the land, families assumed responsibility for those formerly forsaken. In more recent times private charity helped shoulder the burden.

Social reforms of the 1930s saw government join in the care of those unable—for one reason or another, to care for themselves. And government assistance has increased ever since.

Lent wants Oregon to be honest in its apparent desire to assist the helpless.

"If we mean what it looks like we mean, let's do the job right," he declares. "Let's provide adequate diet, clothing and housing—not just subsistence."

"If we don't, then the program should fall by the wayside."

His logic is controlled by the fact there isn't enough money to go around for all three—free primary and secondary education, subsidized higher education and adequate welfare.

Americans, Lent believes,

have already established basic education as their most firm public responsibility. Right now he believes subsidized higher education does not have the same commitment; is more of a luxury.

That would give welfare a higher priority.

The mind of Sen. Lent is still open. It will never close completely. There's an evolutionary process involved. But it will focus sharply when results of the Executive Department's public assistance investigation are announced.

lights still have the can.

Thursday a paper airplane contest was held at noon in the gym. Dale Grant, Tom Rush, Gordon Plotts, Ken Morgan, David Wanzer, and Jerry Grant were the six finalists.

Friday, Pep club and Honor Society held meetings. With only 10 minutes to have a meeting, both groups discussed money making ideas. After the short club meetings a long pep assembly was held. "Tame the Cougars" was the theme of the assembly. It was discovered later that Colton's team name was not the Cougars but the Vikings. The assembly was still a success.

Nine students performed a skit about going on a Colton Cougar hunt. After the cheerleaders, dressed as cowboys and Indians, (and one Cougar) led the student body through a cheer. Another humorous skit was performed by the pep club girls about what a Senior basketball player goes through to play basketball. The six finalists from the paper airplane contest competed, with Dale Grant's gliding plane gliding nearly the entire length of the

Santiam Ripples

By Rebecca Savage

The Santiam Highlights sponsored a Spirit Week II from February 22 through February 26. Fliers were distributed each day to announce the scheduled events. Tuesday an assembly was held in the gym at lunch time. Ten wacky prizes were given away and everyone received a "Go Get 'um" basketball sticker. Wednesday a poster contest was announced with a groovy zodiac trash can for a prize. No one made a poster so the HI-

gym. The Varsity cheerleaders and Yell Kings wound things up by presenting all the coaches and basketball players with a beautiful cake.

3—The Mill City Enterprise, Thursday, March 4, 1971

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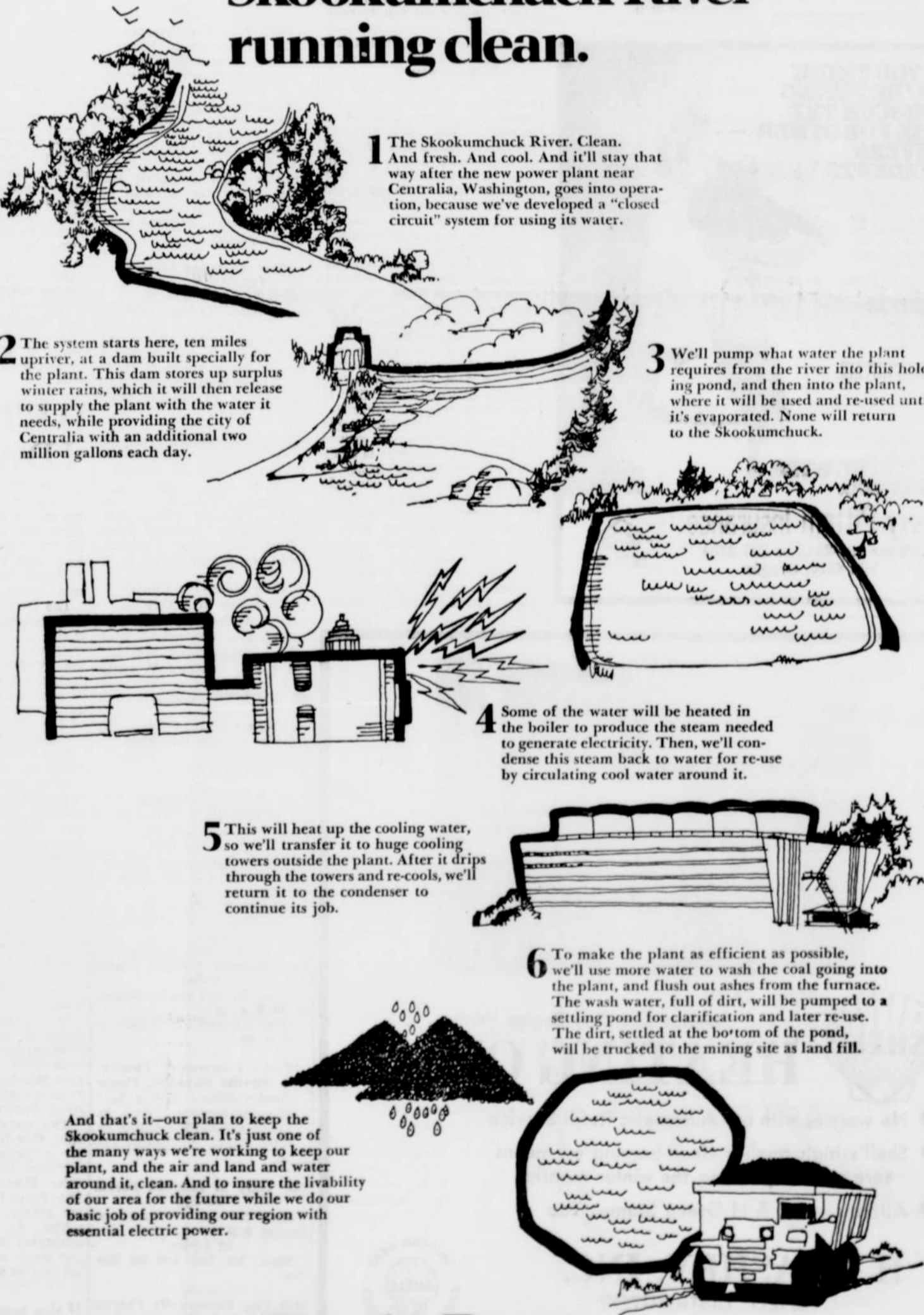
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