

Bus Business In Oregon Facing Severe Crisis As Officials Seek Way Out

By PAUL W. HARVEY JR. SALEM (AP) — The bus business in Oregon, like almost everywhere else in the United States, faces a severe crisis, and Public Utilities Commissioner Charles H. Heltzel has had the answer.

"If I did have an answer, I could make a million dollars in no time at all," he says.

The bus companies which haul passengers between cities are making small profits or losing money. Loss of those hauling within city and suburban areas are in the red. Since World War II, the bus business has fallen off, while costs of materials and labor have skyrocketed, Heltzel said.

The automobile can be blamed for most of the trouble. In Oregon, passenger car registrations jumped 30 per cent in 1953, the largest increase in the country.

Heltzel said the answer isn't increased fares. Higher fares, he says, just will reduce the number of passengers, with the bus companies ending up with even less money.

His emergency power last week, cutting a fare increase to Tualatin Valley Stages of Portland, led to the difficulty faced by bus companies. That order saved the company from having to raise fares, as its expenses were 17 per cent greater than its revenue. Most of the other Oregon bus companies are doing badly, too.

Oregon Motor Stages had revenues of \$905,738 in 1952, and its profit was only \$35,964. Then business got worse, and it sold out to Pacific Greyhound.

Mount Hood Stages made only \$56 in the first 10 months of that year, and Estacada-Molalla Stages lost \$7,528 in the same period. Yamman Stage Lines made \$4,986 in 1952. But the owner, who drives and repairs his own buses, didn't get any salary.

The profit of Portland Stages was \$3,435.

In those cases where there are profits, those profits are so small, considering the big investment, survival is almost impossible, Heltzel said.

Portland Traction Co., in the first months last year in its operations inside Portland, made a profit of \$100,128, or about one-third of the 1952 profit.

At the same company lost \$146,000 in the same period on its interurban operations. That means a loss, and the company is asking Heltzel for permission to cut in the interurban operations.

Nationally, the bus companies on the Pacific Coast, during the second quarter of last year, had net revenues of 3 per cent, compared with 12 per cent surplus of revenues last year earlier.

However, Pacific Greyhound didn't do too badly in 1952, with a profit of \$1,000,000.

revenues 9 per cent greater than expenses.

But Oregon's other major intercity carrier, Continental Trailways, had a net loss.

The railroads sing the same song. Nationwide, they lost 642 million dollars on passenger operations last year. Some railroad executives predict it won't be too many years before railroads give up the passenger business.

Some answers to the bus problem have been proposed, but Heltzel doesn't think much of any of them.

One is for the state, counties and cities to pay the losses. Heltzel doesn't like subsidies.

Another is for public ownership of the bus lines. Heltzel doesn't like this one, either, because he doesn't think it would solve the problem. They still would be losing money.

Some transit industry officials believe that before long, traffic in cities will get so snarled up that driving an automobile will be too difficult. Then the automobile drivers would start riding the buses.

Some of these bus executives have proposed that downtown traffic be banned during congested hours, except for buses. That, they feel, would help the city bus lines.

During World War II, when gasoline was rationed, the bus companies did a big business, and made lush profits.

"The smart bus operator," Heltzel says, "would have sold out in 1947, and some of them did."

"But the bus companies today are in a sorry plight."

Powell River Sees Slump

VANCOUVER, B.C. (AP) — The assistant general manager of the Powell River Lumber Co. says the province's lumber industry is heading into a recession and should start preparations to meet it.

G. C. Smith, a veteran lumberman, told the annual convention of the British Columbia Truck Loggers' Assn. here Wednesday that residential construction is faced with a slump.

He advocated cutting costs as a means of more efficient production to meet foreign competition and said it would be unwise for the government to attempt to prime the industry's business pump by large-scale subsidized housing.

Pump-priming, he said, would only add to any inflated condition which may exist and result in an even worse decline when it comes. He said such a decline was "probable" within four years.

Briton Still Says Red China Okay

BALTIMORE (AP) — Sir Gladwyn Jebb, British delegate to the United Nations, said last night he thinks Red China eventually would be admitted to the U.N. under these conditions:

1. If hostilities do not resume in Korea.
2. If it can be shown that Red China is not preparing to take part in further aggressions.
3. If she appears willing to settle her differences with the outside world in a peaceful manner.

Jebb made the remarks in a Johns Hopkins University speech which he described as his last major one on the U.N. before leaving in March to become British ambassador to France.

Farm Plan Labeled As Political

WASHINGTON (AP)—Sen. Ellender (D-La.) said today President Eisenhower's proposed new farm program is "tainted with politics."

The proposal would result in lower price supports for cotton, wheat, corn and other products, Ellender said in an interview, but would continue present high supports for tobacco, promise them for wool through a new direct subsidy, and make no change for dairy products.

"It looks like someone figured out votes in planning this program," Ellender added.

Eisenhower told his news conference yesterday he is certain the program is the right one, although he added its political feasibility is yet to be determined.

The President also said he does not regard himself as too smart politically but is confident that a shift from rigid to flexible farm price supports will help farmers and the nation's prosperity.

With a congressional battle mounting over the new farm proposals, Ellender predicted the Senate Agriculture Committee will line up 10-5 against it. He is the

senior Democrat on the group.

Any such division might make it difficult for the President's congressional leaders to get action at this session. Chairman Hope (R-Kan.) and other members of the House Agriculture Committee have shown little enthusiasm for the proposals.

Chairman Aiken (R-Vt.) of the Senate committee declined direct comment on Ellender's forecast except to say he expects members to "keep an open mind" until they learn the facts. The committee opens hearings Monday.

Most of the Democrats and several Republicans on the farm committee have announced they favor extending the present rigid 90 per cent price supports on cotton, corn

wheat, tobacco, peanuts and rice that expire with this year's crops.

Eisenhower proposed a flexible system of price supports ranging from 90 to 75 per cent of parity, a price declared by law to give farmers a fair return. Government price pegs would be lowered in times of surplus and raised during shortages, to stimulate production. The amount price supports could be lowered in any one year would be limited.

Sen. Young (R-Nd.), in a separate interview, said he agreed with Ellender that a majority of the Senate committee now opposes flexible supports. But Young said he regards Eisenhower as "very capable politically and I think the last election proved that."

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Missing State Guard Alive

SALEM (AP) — The missing state guard, Victor Harry Williams, 40, apparently is not dead after all, state police said here Tuesday night.

Sgt. Ray Howard of the state police said Williams' father in Turlock had received a withholding tax statement that credited Williams with working at an Aurora, Ill.,atorium after he disappeared April 3.

Earlier this week a Portland woman said she had learned Williams was shot by two men April 3, and his body dropped down an abandoned well near Rickreall. Police searched, but found no body in there. Police did not identify the woman who told them this.

Howard said Williams' father befriended his son had mailed the withholding tax statement to him at Turlock preparatory to coming back Oregon.

The day after Williams disappeared, part of his uniform was found beside the highway near Rickreall. His car was found abandoned in Portland later.

Cave-In Traps Miner In Utah

TRACERTON, Utah (AP)—Rescue workers worked late last night attempting to reach a miner trapped with tons of rock by a mine cave-in.

Trapped is Willie Trupillo, about 40, who was caught in the cave-in Saturday afternoon at the Geneva coal mine near this Utah town.

It was not learned what caused the cave-in.

TOO GOOD

SAN ANTONIO, Tex. (AP) — Animals in the San Antonio Zoo never get so good. That must be the reason of wildlife outside the zoo.

Director Fred Stark says.

Stark revealed yesterday in a report to the San Antonio Zoological Society that during 1953 he had a total of 85 wild animals escape to break into the zoo.

Included were 44 skunks, 37 raccoons, 2 raccoons and 1 ring-necked pheasant.

LAYOFF

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—The Pennsylvania Turnpike Authority has announced \$600,000 in heavy repair work will be cut at the end of this week because of "a continuing drop in business, which has left the road no alternative."

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