

State Capitol News

## 2 Price-Fixing Bills Axed

LINCOLN — The legislature plunges on toward adjournment with hopes still alive that work may be completed by June 6.

This meant about 16 bills would have to be cleared off general file this week. Then it will take at least another week to herd the measures through the two separate enrollments, select file, and final reading and passage. Be-

cause all this takes just so much time some senators were betting it would be June 9 or 10 before they can pack up and head home.

But slow as its progress sometimes seemed to tired senators, the legislature steadily plowed through a lot of controversial bills which had been held off because they'd run into trouble before.

Some problems were disposed

of simply by axing the measures. For instance, the legislature killed two price-fixing bills.

One would have guaranteed a 6 percent profit on cigarettes. The other would have cut out the listing of prices of eyeglasses and spectacles in newspaper advertisements.

The legislators also killed a

measure which would have allowed citizens to sue the state in cases where they were injured or their property damaged because of the negligence of the state or its employees.

So citizens with a claim against the state will have to file it and trust to the mercy of the legislature's miscellaneous appropriations committee that they'll collect anything.

A big blackboard at the front of the chamber showed a fast-dwindling number of bills on general file (initial consideration) but an even stronger portent that the end of the session is not too many days off was the growing restlessness among the lawmakers themselves—shorter tempers and less patience with long-winded oratory. The drive down the last stretch is likely to rival the hectic opening days' tussle with the property tax problem from the standpoint of controversy. The dynamite-laden diversion bill alone could touch off a Donnybrook fair.

Some of the tension was eased briefly last week when the darkening legislative mood was relieved somewhat by a first-class birthday party with cake and coffee. The honoree was Sen. Charles Tvrdik of Omaha, dean of the legislature from the point of seniority, and speaker of this session, who was observing his 50th birthday anniversary.

But some controversial bills survived.

One was the truck tolerance bill and its passage constituted the biggest triumph of the session for the truckers. It would allow them tolerances of 5 percent on the legal load limits on axles and overall weights before penalties apply.

A similar bill had been passed by the 1951 legislature, but vetoed, to the truckers' chagrin, by Gov. Val Peterson after the session ended.

Actually the bill advanced from general file by this legislature was a bit better for the truckers than its predecessors because certain interior limitations were removed.

Opponents attacked the measure as a grab by the truckers and said it would cost the public more in having to pay for thicker paving and heavier bridges.

But the bill's backers said it would allow truckers to carry a full load and not be penalized by inaccurate weighing scales. They spoke of the provisions the truckers caught by the safety patrol with more than the 5 percent tolerance would have to unload down to legal limit on the spot and said this made it a real crack-down measure.

County Bills—

Also voted along were bills relating to the counties.

A mill levy statute was changed to allow the general fund levy in counties under 9,000 in population to be 5 mills instead of 4 on the assessed valuations. For counties over 9,000 the new general fund levy ceiling will be 4 mills, instead of 3. Senator Tom Coffey of Alma, who proposed the change, said at least 11 hard-pressed counties needed the extra leeway for their main operating levy.

The senate also revived a measure which would allow county boards to set the salaries of all county officials except themselves and county judges. And it amended another measure to shear off the county assessor and county clerk from boards of equalization, starting next year.

The bill as voted out of committee would have applied only to Lancaster and Douglas counties.

Sent along its way to final passage was a measure setting up county boards of education. A reason frankly given for the county school board was that in giving it the duties of the county reorganization committee some progress might be gained toward cutting down the multitude of surplus school districts in Nebraska. Sen. Glenn Cramer of Albion said that all too often these committees had been elected for the express purpose of fighting reorganization.

Boiling—

The senators may have their eyes on the calendar but they are also uneasily looking over their shoulders at the tempests in some areas over the new tax laws.

The legislators spent an hour one morning convincing themselves that they had done the right thing in passing the laws—such as the new 50 percent assessments laws.

But some of them demanded that the state board of equalization declare that it planned to pull the low counties up into line with counties which are trying to equalize and get proper valuations. The board met and put out a statement that is what it intends to do this July.

Considering what is being done, the tempests were surprisingly

few. A storm was brewing over the raising of valuations in Falls City and two senators—Terry Carpenter of Scottsbluff and Joseph Martin of Grand Island—advised their counties to sit tight and let the state board act. But State Commissioner Norris Anderson said he was pleased with progress in most counties.

Gov. Robert Crosby reiterated again that raised valuations will only erase old inequalities and that since political subdivisions should not demand anymore money than last year, the levies should drop. That way the new laws should cost little or no taxes to anyone unless their valuations were too low in past years.

Beer Cans—

Sometimes the most important vote a senator casts is one he doesn't cast at all. If that sounds like double talk, consider for a moment what happened one day last week when Sen. Terry Carpenter of Scottsbluff attempted to win a suspension of the rules to allow the introduction of a bill to double the state tax on beer with the added income to be used to clean the streets and highways of beer cans and bottles.

The debate raged on for some time and often strayed far afield. Perhaps that was because Omaha's Sen. John Adams, easily the legislature's biggest time-waster, took part. When Adams' desk-neighbor, Sen. John Beaver of Beemer, doesn't explain what's happening, Adams is likely to ramble clear out into left field.

At any rate, when the vote finally came, 15 senators voted to allow introduction of the bill, seven voted against it—and this is the startling thing—21, one short of a majority—didn't vote at all.

These are the lawmakers who didn't have an opinion (a few weeks ago) on the proposed referendum, when they were asked to vote on whether to allow importation of 60 days after being imported into the state or which had the disease before being imported. Sen. O. H. Person of Wahoo introduced the bill about a month ago and it had no trouble in the legislature. In his veto message, Crosby said he based his objections on the fact that no public hearing had been held on the bill and had one been held, there might have been a difference in the measure's final form. Person accepted the veto without complaint and conceded he should have arranged for a public hearing. "I still think it's a good bill, though," he said.

Salaries—

One of the prime pieces of business before last week's sessions was to iron out kinks in the bill providing salary increases for county officials. The measure, LB 239, narrowly escaped the axe last week in a stormy parliamentary wrangle which saw the motion to kill defeated, 18 to 13, after a rash of vote-switching. The same day, the lawmakers voted to raise the salary of Sen. Tom Coffey of Alma, who was elected for a public hearing. "I still think it's a good bill, though," he said.

Gag—

Governor Crosby has clamped a gag on one of his best department heads, State Engineer L. N. Ress. From now on, the governor has ordered, all of Ress' communications to the legislature must clear through Crosby's office.

The hasty decision came after an outraged cry by Sen. Tom Coffey of Alma, a trucker who was pushing the bill to allow a tolerance in overloaded trucks on Nebraska highways. Coffey screamed "lobbying" after Sen. Hal Bridenbaugh of Dakota City

placed on the legislators' desks copies of a reply Ress had written to Bridenbaugh's request for information on the effects of the overweight bill on the state's highways.

Coffey headed straight for the governor's office and kicked up a fuss. "If the highway department would spend as much time building roads as they do lobbying maybe we'd have some roads in this state," he complained. Coffey's outrage didn't seem to help his bill very much because Sen. Carpenter managed to get an amendment tacked on which allows the five percent tolerance on each axle, not on the whole truck as the truckers asked. Actually, the Carpenter proposal is what the truckers have said they wanted but they appeared something less than enthusiastic about it.

But probably more important is the effect of Crosby's actions on other department heads and upon Ress.

Are any of them likely to express any kind of opinion with the ever-present fear that some legislator with an axe to grind might use it to lop off the department head's tongue?

O'NEILL LOCALS  
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Quinn and family will leave today

(Thursday) for their home in San Diego, Calif., after spending two weeks here visiting Mr. and Mrs. E. F. Quinn and in Winner, S. D., visiting Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Martin. Miss Patricia Conway spent May 16-17 in Lincoln with relatives.

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Square can with 8" Has seamless steel. Double spot. Holds cover, rounded corners. Has aluminum handle one gallon. Painted red for safety.



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5 ft. solid glass rod. Has aluminum handle with cork grip. One-piece construction.



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Adult 50c; children 12c; tax incl. Matinee Sat. 2:30. Children under 12 free when accompanied by parent.

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**2 Ladies' JACKETS** —

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