

THIS CURIOUS WORLD By William Ferguson
T.M. Reg. U.S. Pat. Off.



Capitol News

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LINCOLN — There appears strong sentiment in the Legislature to provide more road revenue for the State Highway Department.

Learnings so far have been toward an increased gasoline tax, and possibly higher license fees for trucks.

Says State Engineer L. N. Ress: "We must insist on legislative action this year." This is needed, the engineer said, so Nebraska can meet federal aid matching allocation.

Ress said if Nebraska wanted to take advantage of all available federal aid, it would have to award \$927,000 worth of contracts every week of the year. This would compare with the weekly average of the past two years of \$500,000.

The matter of roads in general will get sharp attention during this session. A bill has been introduced that would require a state maintained road to any city or village located within five miles of a state highway.

Sen. Frank Nelson of O'Neill introduced this bill, which would apply to any town having a post office, a school and at least one church.

This has been interpreted as a move to get back on the highway system maintained by the state, some 900 miles removed by the 1955 Legislature.

The appearance of the federal highway administrator, John A. Volpe, before the Legislature, added impetus to the matter of more money to match federal aid.

Nebraska, Volpe said, will have to raise additional road revenue to match all available federal aid funds.

Said the administrator: "This probably could be accomplished by a one cent increase in the present six cent gas tax, or by a re-assignment of the present tax revenues now allocated to local governments, or by some combination of both."

But, Volpe hastened to add, "I do not intend to tell the Nebraska Legislature what taxes it should impose to raise the highway improvement funds which will be needed."

"The subject does not invite ready-made answers."

Only seven states, he said, have more mileage of rural roads than Nebraska.

"You have a real problem," he commented.

Volpe said Nebraska must raise an additional \$5 million to \$6 million yearly to take proper advantage of available federal funds.

He called for long-range highway planning. This thinking is the same as that of some state senators who feel that any increase in road revenue should be coupled with a longer range program.

Now, Nebraska lays out road construction programs on a two-year basis.

There has been talk in the Legislature of not only a seven cent gasoline tax, but two cents above the regular rate for trucks only. Also being discussed is a higher fee for diesel fuel. Diesel fuel now is taxed at the same rate as gasoline.

Robertson Case
State Game Commission officials are casting anxious eyes at the Nebraska Legislature.

The reason is the commission wants more money to operate during the 1957-59 biennium. But the case of Don Robertson

commissioner from North Platte, has been hanging like a cloud over the senate.

Robertson was charged last May with shooting a quail from a public highway. Commission Director Mel Steen ordered a warden to drop the charge.

This touched off a controversy that has raged ever since. Some state senators have called for Robertson's resignation, but others questioned if even this might lift the cloud.

The matter, they said, has been one primarily of public relations and added that this cannot be cured by legislation. Robertson steadfastly maintains he did not shoot the quail from a public highway and that all the fuss was the result of grudges within the department.

He said he did not know of Steen's action beforehand. Steen has issued several statements defending his action and stating that the filing of the original charge was "persecution and now prosecution."

"In addition," he said, "there is grave doubt that proper legal grounds ever existed for filing this complaint. Under these circumstances, it is proposed that we crucify a fellow-citizen in the name of justice."

The director had one final word today: That he doesn't believe will swallow what they are being told that they cannot have legislation and progress they need because, at the very worst, Mel Steen made a mistake."

Polio
Final tabulations from the State Health Department on the incidence of Polio in Nebraska in 1956 are encouraging, officials said.

Al Rouse, director of the state polio division, said the number of polio cases in 1956 was reduced by 33 per cent from 1955 and 75 per cent from 1954.

Rouse reported 186 cases in 1956 as compared with 277 in 1955 and 721 in 1954. Kimball County got hit the hardest in 1956—reporting 31 cases, or an attack rate of 700 per 100,000 population. This normally is considered epidemic proportions by public health officials, he said.

Rouse said the rate of paralytic cases in 1956 was cut by 14 per cent from 1955. In 1956, he said, 38 per cent of the cases were in persons over 20 years old.

Bradley Quits

Sidney R. Bradley, assistant chief of the Nebraska Resources Division, has taken a position as executive director of the Des Moines, Iowa, industrial bureau.

Bradley has been with the Nebraska division since 1953, serving before that as executive assistant of the Nebraska State Medical Association.

The assistant director said he changed positions because of a higher salary.

The Des Moines group was formed by businessmen of the city to attract new industry.

Two Precautions Necessary Before Buying Hybrid Seed

LINCOLN — Hybrid sorghum growers should take two precautions before buying seed:

1. Know the man where you buy the seed.
2. Be sure the seed is a variety adapted to your area.

John Furrer, extension agronomist at the University of Nebraska college of agriculture, comments that peddlers often attempt to sell seed in Nebraska which is not adapted or is contaminated.

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