

Greasing the Squeaky Axle

AS representatives of the people legislators should be responsive to public opinion. Just how responsive may be a matter of debate. Should they support good legislation even though some voters do not want it, and should they oppose laws that have undesirable effects, regardless of public opinion?

A few weeks ago in a public meeting, a law enacted by the previous Oklahoma legislature was under discussion. Several legislators were present.

"This is a good law, I voted for it and supported it, but if I'd had an opponent, it shore woulda beat me," one legislator declared. He mentioned a legislator in another district who was defeated and he blamed the same law. The law could not have affected directly and unfavorably more than a small percentage of his constituency, while many undoubtedly would have benefited. It dealt with the proper grading of eggs sold at retail.

TO hear the legislator, one might conclude that the most vital thing was for him to be re-elected to the legislature. Whether he will reverse himself to work against a law that he said he considered good remains to be seen. The law must have had some support from others, or it might not have been passed in the first place. It is apparent that there are at least two views on the matter.

It is not easy to say just where the line should be drawn between the legislators' own judgment concerning good laws and the voters' demands for laws that serve their personal interests. It is a question that the new legislature and its members must face often in the weeks ahead. History indicates that lawmakers have been sometimes inclined to lean in one direction; sometimes in the other.

What it means to voters is that they must stay on the job after an election, just as much as before or perhaps more. Electing a good man isn't enough. He must have continued encouragement and support if he is to stand firmly for the laws that will be better for most of the people.

Join or Else

THE industrial development in Oklahoma is bringing many people face to face with a decision that has previously seemed far away. That is the question of whether to join a labor union or not. As residents of rural areas and small towns increasingly find jobs in the factories and plants they become a part of the state's labor force.

If the plant where they find employment happens to be a "closed shop" they have no choice except to join a union if they get the job. That may mean they must pay dues to an organization which assumes power to speak for them but in which the individual member may have little or no effective voice. They may not even want to join, but in Oklahoma it's join or else.

The reason is that Oklahoma has not adopted legislation that will protect the working man's right to decide for himself whether he will join a union. Many states have passed these "right-to-work laws," which allow the individual to decide. Some other states have voted them down, in effect saying that the government and labor unions should decide for the workmen.

The question of "right-to-work" laws has come up repeatedly in years past and is likely to be brought up again in the coming legislative session. Because few, if any, unions favor right-to-work laws, legislators are reluctant to act. Businessmen, farmers and working people must join together to make their voices heard in the legislative halls if they want to restore this fundamental right of free men to Oklahoma citizens.