

# On the road with Atiyeh

On Monday the boss sent me down to Coos Bay with Gov. Vic Atiyeh.

This was nice. The governor is a very personable fellow. I can recommend him highly as a traveling companion.

A comfortable travel assignment, of course, isn't why the boss keeps me around.

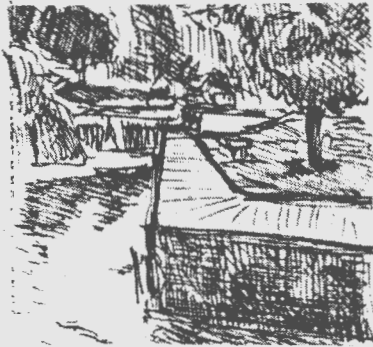
The boss can handle those kinds of assignments quite nicely himself. Characters like me, he hires for more difficult things.

The idea of Monday's trip was that the governor, who was giving an address to a convention of the Oregon AFL-CIO, might be in for a rough time with the labor folks because he'd vetoed just about every important bill they'd lobbied through the Legislature.

Also, the boss pointed out that flying down to Coos Bay with the governor would be good for me, a change in my scene from the doldrums of watching the Legislature pretend it's seeking property tax relief.

It sounded good, except to me. I know the boss also sends me off on these assignments for other reasons. He knows I don't like flying, especially in little planes. But I'm crafty too. I hide my fear so the boss can't get any satisfaction from hearing about it.

But back to the Coos Bay assignment itself. Before the governor's arrival at Coos Bay the situation had all the auguries for a lively political cuffing session. After all, a fourth of the 40 bills Atiyeh had vetoed were held dear by the AFL. The union leaders already had noted that the vetoes might be more than a little coincidental because the AFL en-



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dorsed Atiyeh's opponent, Democrat Ted Kulongoski, in their last election campaign.

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On the other hand, Atiyeh says he has no political plans for the future, and since he can't run for a third consecutive term as governor, what's to stop him from unloading on his labor audience? After all, most of the folks in the audience probably didn't lift a finger to get him elected.

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But this is Oregon. Politicians here, including labor politicians, are generally more polite than in some other places. And Vic Atiyeh is Vic Atiyeh, polite and mannerly whether he's talking to a labor group that by and large has never supported him or sharing a small airplane cabin with a political columnist who isn't always respectful of people in high office.

The 365 participants at the Coos Bay convention didn't drown the governor with applause but they didn't greet him with silence either. Traditionally, the delegates at these conventions show their respect for the governor by standing up when he walks in. They've done it for Atiyeh in the past.

When Atiyeh walked into the International Woodworkers' hall about 20 of the delegates stood and applauded. The rest stayed seated and didn't clap.

When Atiyeh spoke he deliberately stayed away from the sore subject of vetoes. A comment by the governor that if ever he was faced with right-to-work legislation he'd veto it drew a round of patty cake token applause. That wasn't too bad, considering the unlikelihood of his ever facing such legislation from a Legislature controlled by Democrats.

Following his appearance at the labor convention, the governor visited a nursing home for the aged, where he displayed a patience and charm with the patients that may well be the trademark of his governorship. He's a nice man.

Then it was on to a luncheon with a group his staff schedule showed as "labor friends." This luncheon could have been held in a phone booth but it would have been crowded. I counted a half-dozen labor folks there, most of them trade unionists from Multnomah County.

The Coos Bay visit ended with one of the governor's "media availabilities," a meeting with two Coos Bay reporters. The questions were the same ones the governor has already answered several times in Salem. But again he responded with the polite patience that is his style.

A colleague says I should mention all the legislators at the AFL-CIO convention drawing \$44 per diem for being in session, although in recess. I don't know what difference it makes, because the legislators at the convention would be eligible for their per diem if they simply stayed home.

But for the record, the legislators I saw at the convention, all Democrats, were Sen. Jack Ripper, who was at home because Coos Bay is in his district; Portland Reps. Shirley Gold, Dick Springer and Barbara Roberts, who is a candidate for secretary of state, accompanied by her husband, Sen. Frank Roberts; and Sen. Ruth McFarland, also of Portland, who is a candidate for congress in the 5th District.

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