

Veteran pot activist gets prison

■ Bill Hewitt, who ran for Oregon governor in 1978, goes to jail for the first time, with a five-year sentence

OREGONIAN
NOV. 26, 1987

By TOMOKO HOSAKA

of The Oregonian staff

A Portland man who once ran for governor in a crusade against Oregon's marijuana laws received a five-year prison sentence in federal court Tuesday on 12 counts of manufacturing and distributing the drug.

A longtime advocate of marijuana, Bill Hewitt, 65, has ignored repeated arrests and warnings from law enforcement officials over the past 20 years to stop growing marijuana plants. He received 741 votes in the 1978 Republican primary. Vic Atiyeh prevailed with 114,852 votes.

Although Hewitt used to believe he was fighting for a just cause, he

told Judge Helen Frye he no longer feels his actions were correct.

"My protest has cost both my family and myself everything. . . . I guess I thought I could do anything. Now I know I can't," he said at his sentencing hearing Tuesday.

Hewitt said he feels no desire to grow or use marijuana again and has no intention of trying to change the law.

Hewitt's attorney, James Halley, asked the judge to consider several factors, including age, before sentencing his client. A long prison term would mean Hewitt could spend his last years incarcerated, Halley said. Halley also said Hewitt is not violent and poses no threat to society.

U.S. Attorney Kathleen Bickers argued that Hewitt is a serious criminal with numerous convictions. His lifestyle, she said, has negatively affected many people.

Despite five drug convictions in state court, Hewitt has never served prison time. That played a "significant factor" in her decision, Frye said.

"Justice wasn't served" before, Frye said.

After Hewitt's trial in May ended in a mistrial, prosecution and defense attorneys worked out a plea bargain that decreased the severity of the charges against Hewitt.

Because his client originally was facing a sentence of up to 15 years, Hewitt's attorney said the outcome was good.

Hewitt's 22-year-old son, Mark, said the sentencing marked an end to their family's long ordeal.

"I'm happy that there's closure," Mark Hewitt said. "I'm not happy that he's going to jail, but he did it because he believed in something. It's hard to go against that. I'm very proud of him for fighting for what he believed in."

"Others", four including Hewitt, 2.9%