

Leaders argue road bills

Friday Mar 19 1976

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BOISE — The Senate Republican and Democratic leadership exchanged heated words Thursday evening after recess in an effort to crack a legislative logjam.

The Republican leadership consisting of State Sens. James Ellsworth, Leadore; Phil Batt, Wilder; Dick Smith, Rexburg, and Walter Yarbrough, Grandview, insisted the House first pass the 1 cent diesel tax increase bill before it would act on two highway funding bills.

The Democratic leadership made up of State Sens. Cy C. Chase, St. Maries, Robert Saxvik, Burley, and Arthur Murphy, Mullan, wanted immediate action on the highway funding.

Much of the issue was resolved when the House voted Thursday afternoon 46-24 to approve the diesel tax increase.

Chase stomped across the aisle and told Ellsworth angrily, "Let's get that damn highway bill out of committee. All we're doing is fooling around and fooling around."

Ellsworth glared at Chase but said nothing.

The Republican leadership then called a meeting in Ellsworth's office to discuss the situation.

The Democrats called a caucus and just by coincidence

met in the office of Gov. Cecil D. Andrus where they viewed the television account of the Sen. Frank Church announcement for the presidency.

However, the upshot was the Democrats agreed to suspension of the rules so as to speed up the bills.

The Senate Transportation Committee under the chairmanship of State Sen. Reed Budge, R-Soda Springs, has two key bills. One calls for a sliding scale increase in car registration that would produce about \$3.8 million and another for limiting the law enforcement agency to one third of the highway funding which would raise \$1.7 million for highways.

The diesel tax would raise \$500 thousand, of which \$400 thousand would go for highways and \$100 thousand for counties

and highway districts.

Chase is opposed to the diesel fuel tax, contending most truckers don't want it. Other legislators dispute this, saying the truckers agree to pay for their share along with the already approved law for a 1 cent gas tax hike.

This is the issue that will decide whether the legislature adjourns sine die Friday or on Saturday. If it becomes extended it could even spill into next week but this is not probable.