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Conan's joke about North Dakota is welcome publicity

A skit by Conan O'Brien revealing that the source of North Dakota's budget surplus is actually robbed tourists has the state's tourism director laughing all the way to the bank.

By: **John Lamb**, INFORUM

A skit by Conan O'Brien revealing that the source of North Dakota's budget surplus is actually robbed tourists has the state's tourism director laughing all the way to the bank.

"Hey, that's exposure we can't afford to buy, y'know?" Sara Otte Coleman said on Tuesday.

She was referring to a skit O'Brien aired Friday night to explore why the Peace Garden State has a budget surplus.

O'Brien's "satellite link" was with an actor in work clothes claiming to be a rather slow "State Budget Manager Roddy McKelvey" standing in front of a green screen that depicted a wheat field supposedly in Walsh County.

When the "Tonight Show" host asked why the state had a budget surplus, the character only invited O'Brien to bring his money and rich friends to see the surplus in a barn.

When another actor in a bad wig and bib overalls appeared with a bag of wallets, O'Brien accused the dim-witted duo of killing tourists for their money. The McKelvey character again invites O'Brien, claiming the state's new slogan is, "North Dakota: Why don't you come see if we're murdering visitors," with the character popping up again to add, "Bring your money."

North Dakota does not have a state budget manager. Pam Sharp, director of the Office of Management and Budget, could not be reached.

While Otte Coleman missed the initial airing she said at least 20 people forwarded her the link Saturday.

She viewed the skit as a positive for getting the state's name out there, adding that in addition to a budget surplus, the state has golf courses, millionaires, open spaces, pheasants, fish and rodeos, "and all these other things that we can brag about having a surplus of."

She hopes it wasn't the last time North Dakota is featured on the show.

"We plan to take advantage of it, and we're going to pitch to have Conan come to North Dakota and search for the surplus," she said. "We'll put that pitch in a wallet of some sort and try to get his attention. It can't hurt to see if we can get some more publicity out of him."

Watch the clip:



Tags: conan obrien, tonight show, north dakota, budget surplus, budget, tv, life, news