

As Kunkle Case Continues

Education Groups Blasted

By CLIFF SANDERLIN
Of the Emerald

Eugene public classrooms are back to normal, now that the Ronald Kunkle controversy has been quieted. But the dust has definitely not settled.

• A University educational researcher and political science professor has attacked both the Oregon and the Eugene Education Associations for their handling of the Kunkle case.

• A \$500,000 slander suit has been filed against KERG Radio personality Thomas Mann. Mann is accused of generating animosity against Kunkle, causing local citizens to intimidate the district into firing the fifth-grade Santa Clara teacher.

REINSTATEMENT CONSIDERATION DUE

• Kunkle's case for reinstatement will likely be considered this month by the State Board of Education. The board will decide soon whether it will allow oral testimony from Kunkle's attorney, Charles O. Porter. A brief has been filed by Porter, and a counter-brief from the State Board is anticipated, although the board is under no obligation to file one.

Porter told the Emerald he hopes to debate the lack of appeal procedures available to Oregon teachers, so that teachers in Kunkle's position will not be forced to go through the courts. Teachers who have taught less than three years in a district have no right of appeal, and tenured teachers have only limited rights.

The OEA and EEA have come under fire from Harmon Zeigler, of the Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration.

Zeigler has blasted the two associations, particularly the OEA, for a "whitewash job" in supporting the action of the Eugene School Board. The board fired Kunkle December 18 for "inefficiency and insubordination" and then upheld its original decision in a January 15-16 hearing.

"We were not really surprised when the OEA supported the school board decision," Zeigler told the Emerald. "We had a good indication of what was coming before the investigating committee had finished."

For example, Zeigler said, the EEA president publicly criticized Kunkle while the OEA was preparing its investigation, "which is not a sign of objectivity."

"Also," Zeigler said, "the president of the OEA wrote to the school board praising them for firing Kunkle. The letter was mailed before the investigation had been completed."

Zeigler criticized the composition of the investigating team: "Out of a five-man team," he said, "there was only one public school teacher. The rest were administrators, except for one, who was a college instructor."

Zeigler, who was co-chairman of the Eugene Citizens for Better Education when Kunkle was fired, said Kunkle felt it would be fruitless to involve the EEA or OEA because of their histories of supporting the administration point of view.

As a rule, education associations are asked to investigate problems of personnel and report their finding to the public. Kunkle was attacked for not asking the Eugene group to investigate. Later, however, he asked the OEA for an investigation.

"We doubted that the OEA would support Kunkle," Zeigler said, "but we did hope the investigating committee would point up the blundering of the school administration."

Though Superintendent Millard Pond denied there was any administration blundering, Zeigler said, the Santa Clara principal admitted during the January hearing that a number of administrative errors had been committed.

PRINCIPAL DENIES STATEMENT

The principal testified during the courtroom-like hearings that he had not instructed the teachers that they should salute the flag each day, that he had not recorded parental complaints about Kunkle, and that he had not given Kunkle a definite deadline for submitting a proposal for restructuring his classroom procedures, Zeigler said.

In addition, Zeigler points out, no one visited Kunkle's classroom between the time he was told to change his approach and the time he was actually fired—a span of seven school days.

"Yet the investigating committee didn't acknowledge any of the principal's testimony in its final report," Zeigler said.

"The school board, like the principal, realized that the administration had been wrong," Zeigler said. "That's why the January 16 vote for reconsideration was so close (4-3)"

"That's why the school board has since adopted, word-for-word, a proposal by the Citizens for Better Education for handling complaints and controversy, which would encourage parents to take up criticism directly with the teacher and to put their criticism in writing, giving sources of information and specific details," Zeigler said.

"We couldn't even get the support of the EEA on our policy statement about handling controversial issues," Zeigler said. "Why would a teachers' association refuse to support a policy statement designed to strengthen the hand of teachers under com-

munity attack? They wouldn't do it because they, like the OEA, identify with the administration."

"All through the case," Zeigler said, "the Eugene School Board has been more innovative and receptive to suggestions from members of the community than the administration or the education associations."

"If it weren't for the school board I don't know where the case would be now," he said. "It's a good thing that the school board in this city can act as a defense against the educational establishment."

He pointed out that the Eugene board, on the whole, is more sophisticated than the "average school board around the state and country, although two of its members believe it's their duty to vote with the administration—no matter what—even on the policy statement about handling controversy in the classroom."

"The typical male teacher goes into teaching for one purpose—to become an administrator," he said. "To become an administrator, you've got to keep your nose clean, your mouth shut and march according to the tune played by the administration."

"Kunkle didn't want to be an administrator," Zeigler said. "He wanted to be a teacher—that's unusual in itself—and he wanted to turn kids on."

"EMBARRASSING" THE WORRY

"When we talked with the EEA about the case," he said, "they were worrying about embarrassing the principal. They weren't at all concerned with embarrassing Kunkle."

"The OEA is dominated not only by the administration point of view, but by small town teachers," he said. "They work together nicely, and any teacher who violates the status quo is anathema, not only to the superintendent and principal, but to the other teachers."

"This document of the Kunkle case," Zeigler said, "is what might be called the last testament of a dying organization."

While Oregon becomes more urban and while more young urban males are becoming teachers, Zeigler says, the OEA continues to stick with its rural population. "The OEA's being passed by."

"The OEA's always talking about professionalism. What is a professional? A person who has the autonomy to control his own behavior—a lawyer, for example. A teacher does not have autonomy, even in his own classroom. The OEA is not supporting professional activity," Zeigler said. "They are supporting employee activity."

New Show Probes Campus, Eugene

"Community Focus '68," a program originated weekly on the University's student-operated television station PL-3, will really reach into the community tonight.

According to station spokesmen, the show, which begins at 7:15, will be viewed by discussion groups in about 20 Eugene churches who are beginning a series of weekly meetings on the Kerner report on civil disorders.

A segment on Black Power will be included especially for these groups. The taped segment features a panel moderated by John Howard, assistant professor of sociology. Paul Pinegar, student minister intern at Westminster Foundation, will lead the discussion in the studio.

Other topics set for Monday's show include a status report on the Lane county auditorium and a discussion of gerontology, the study of aging.

Ed Ragazzino, drama instructor at South Eugene High, and Lee Bishop, president of the Lane County Auditorium association, will discuss the proposed auditorium and summer community theatre.

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