

Pet evictions continue

Editor's Note: The following commentary was submitted by the Pet Committee of the Amazon Cooperating Tenants, an organization of married students living in the Amazon married student housing project.

Last summer when the State Board of Higher Education denied the University of Oregon's request for a rent increase in Amazon, the University was humiliated in defeat. Amazon Cooperating Tenants (ACT) had documented case after case of misrepresentations, altered and shuffled expense and income figures, misunderstanding on the part of Housing Office officials of the operation of Housing Office accounting procedures, out and out refusals on the part of some University officials to deal with ACT, and a benign neglect on the part of higher administrators. After making the University look foolish (the admission of at least two state board members), ACT fully expected University officials to do what their jobs require—to deal in good faith with a student group. In past weeks, ACT has met with the same kind of response from the University it experienced previously. The story of ACT's request for a moratorium on pet evictions is a case in point.

Not long after fall quarter got underway, Amazon's manager began handing out eviction notices to certain residents with cats.

On Sept. 28 three ACT members met with Vice-President for Student Services Gerald Bogen to inform him that ACT was working on a pet policy to submit to the University and ACT felt it was unfair to threaten residents with eviction while the policy might be changed shortly. Consequently, ACT requested that Bogen call a moratorium on pet evictions while negotiations on the policy were underway. In his usual smooth and deceptively amiable manner, Bogen said he thought something could be

worked out and that he thought a pet policy could be agreed upon.

However, Bogen said he wanted the matter first referred to University Housing Director H.P. Barnhart. It was agreed that Greg Hartman would informally call Barnhart the next day to find out his decision, and Bogen said, "I'll have Barnhart formally communicate to representatives (3)."

In his conversation with Hartman, Barnhart refused to grant a moratorium but declined to discuss the real issue. A few days later he mailed Hartman and several University administrators a distorted transcription of Hartman's private conversation, selecting only certain points to report, misquoting and taking many of Hartman's statements out of context; it seemed to ACT that Barnhart had deliberately attempted to make Hartman look irrational and stupid, but surely anyone acquainted with both parties would not be fooled.

ACT's three negotiators waited for the formal reply from Barnhart promised by Bogen. By Oct. 31 (over a month later) no reply was received; on that day several ACT members met with University officials to present a document defining good faith negotiations and ACT's relationship with the University. President Clark refused to attend the meeting.

It was pointed out that Barnhart had never carried out the instructions Bogen said he would give. ACT thought Bogen would then direct Barnhart to write his reply. The following day, Nov. 1, ACT presented its proposed pet policy and supporting documents to Married Student Housing Director John Thorpe.

About two weeks later, Amazon's manager made more eviction threats.

Since a formal reply still hadn't come from Barnhart, about a dozen members of ACT met with Bogen Nov. 20 and read aloud a letter citing the recent eviction

threats, and once again requesting that he call a moratorium. In the presence of the ACT members Bogen altered the wording of the first sentence to make its intent more clear and something which he said seemed "reasonable" to him.

ACT was optimistic since a person usually does not reword a request to make it reasonable and agreeable if he intends to deny it. Bogen told ACT representative Carol Reich to call him the following morning to learn his decision. At 5:30 p.m. Bogen called the Hartman residence to ask for information on ACT's proposed pet policy and indicated that he had to have it by 10 a.m. the following day so he could discuss it at a meeting with Thorpe and Barnhart. Marie Hartman explained to Bogen that ACT did not expect a decision on its proposed policy to be made the following day, just a decision on a moratorium.

Bogen said he wanted the information nonetheless. Hartman was surprised at Bogen's nerve in giving such short notice; one wonders what kind of response the University would give if ACT made a similar request. (At the Nov. 20 meeting Bogen said the negotiations document ACT gave the University for comment on Oct. 31 had "no status," his way of saying he hadn't had time to work on it.) ACT member Joe Owens spent 4 hours that evening preparing the information in a three-page letter.

Marie Hartman called Bogen at 2 p.m. to learn his decision. He appeared nervous and after explaining in detail his morning's activities said he was refusing to grant a moratorium. Hartman then asked if that meant the University planned to go through with evictions.

Bogen appeared surprised and said Thorpe hadn't told him about that. It was pointed out that ACT's letter to him which had been read aloud at the meeting

the day before referred to those eviction threats, he then replied, "Well, uh, I dunno... I, uh, guess that's, uh, a possibility."

ACT was appalled at the apparent lack of consideration its request had been given; it appeared that in a meeting between Bogen and Housing Office officials supposedly discussing a moratorium on evictions the issue of evictions had not even been raised!

Hartman requested that a written reply outlining Bogen's reasons for denying a moratorium be sent to ACT. Bogen said, "You don't have to ask me to do that—I was planning to do it anyway." But ACT had learned in past dealings with the University that everything must be placed in writing so on the following Monday morning, a letter was handed to Bogen requesting the written reply.

On Tuesday ACT received a letter from Bogen in which he refused to send the response he had already promised, that "the responsibility... rests with the University Housing Office." ACT expressed its displeasure in a letter given to Bogen the following day. Earlier in the year Bogen chided ACT members for allegedly not consulting him before communicating with the State Board. It now appeared that Bogen's position had changed and he no longer wanted to be bothered by ACT.

Greg Hartman dropped by Bogen's office Friday afternoon and was handed Bogen's reply. "Your point is well taken," it began, and continued, "I was persuaded that the reasons outlined in Mr. Barnhart's summary of a conversation with Greg Hartman were valid." It was not clear whether Bogen was persuaded by Barnhart's non-existent formal reply to the moratorium or by his distorted transcription of a private conversation which ACT did not

accept. ACT reviewed Barnhart's purported transcript, and found only two "reasons" for the denial of the moratorium.

The first read, "... we do have a pet policy at present and I could not accept a moratorium on enforcing that policy, that if a new pet policy were adopted at some future time that the new policy would then be in effect." Barnhart continued, "I rationalized (sic) not supporting a moratorium on the grounds that all people who were living in Amazon knew before they arrived that no pets were permitted, and that I suspected (sic) that numbers of those people had pets and were forced to leave them in their permanent address or give them to friends or dispose of them in some other way..."

Bogen was persuaded by Barnhart's "rationalization" and "suspicions," even after telling ACT he thought its moratorium request was reasonable?

For a week and a half ACT has been attempting to make an appointment with Clark to continue the discussion. An appointment was set up for Tuesday, Dec. 5, then cancelled by Clark's office, which suggested that it be changed to Thursday, but then the Thursday openings mysteriously closed. ACT now has a meeting scheduled with Clark Friday. ACT hopes he will have the courage to reverse a Barnhart decision.

In the meantime Thorpe has not answered two ACT letters regarding the proposed pet policy.

In the meantime eviction threats continue—one family received a formal eviction notice from the Housing Office last Friday.

ACT recognizes that the University thus far has refused to take ACT seriously because it figures ACT is run by a handful of radicals who will eventually return to their studies, jobs, or graduate. It appears now that the University has recognized another alternative to avoid dealing with ACT—eviction!!!

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