

Issue of control reemerges at KLCC

The decision pissed off everyone. The new acting KLCC station manager, Jim Dunne, had decided the night before to cancel the Feb. 23 broadcast of the Eugene News Collective's weekly program, News From a Socialist Perspective, and now, just before air time, a few of the station employees were working on a statement they planned to have read over the air.

After twice rewriting the message, they were satisfied, and at 5:30 p.m. staff employee Iris Dudman recorded it on tape. Then a few moments before the 5:45 broadcast time, Don Hein, the station's Public Affairs Director, handed the tape to staffer Jeff Ogburn, who rushed it to the broadcast booth.

"Due to a change in station quality standards," Dudman's voice quietly read, "The Eugene News Collective will not be heard this evening."

Almost immediately the phones began to ring.irate listeners demanded to know who was responsible, what were these new "quality standards," and just "what the hell was going on." Hein looked at the smiling faces around him and, smiling himself, reached for one of the wildly ringing phones.

Hein remembers that night with a certain amount of satisfaction. As the Public Affairs Director he had felt slighted that the decision to cancel had been transmitted to him second-hand through the station's Program Director, Sam Hochberg.

"Jim Dunne made the decision after hearing the program tape Wednesday night," Hein said, "and then he left town. I wasn't even told why it was off. I was told it was because of new standards and I thought that was arbitrary and capricious. So we wrote the statement in the hope that it would spur people to react and voice their complaints."

And it worked. Within a half hour, Hein said, nearly 20 people called to complain. Before the night was over, 28 calls in all were taken by the staff. And to top things off, at 8 p.m. the station aired a three-minute spot by the Eugene News Collective calling for Dunne's resignation.

This is only one in a long line of controversies that have earmarked what has been, in effect, a two-year struggle for control of KLCC programming. In fall 1976 KLCC was a small 440 watt FM station broadcasting from Lane Community College, which owned the license. Under the guidance of then Programming Director Tom Lichty, KLCC had developed from being simply a training ground for students into a legitimate alternative radio station, featuring a format of jazz music with a heavy emphasis on community information and public access.

Then in October the station staff held a fund-raising "Buckawatt" marathon to raise money for equipment to accommodate a proposed power increase to 10,000 watts.

According to Lyndia Storey-Wilt, then the station's development director, this move was made with some trepidation.

"We were afraid of becoming too well-known," Storey-Wilt says, "because we were afraid of losing our autonomy. But we went ahead anyway."

Basically the staff was worried that LCC administrators would take advantage of the station's growing popularity to begin making changes in a direction back toward student training.

Storey-Wilt's fears quickly became realized on Oct. 29, when the LCC administrators, acting through the school's Mass Communications Department, which controlled the station, sent termination notices to five employees, an action that KLCC supporters quickly termed the "Friday afternoon massacre."

The plan of the administration was to reorganize the station, hiring staff members who possessed degrees (which none of the five had), or seven years training and working experience, so that they could both run the station and teach students (Storey-Wilt, who did have a degree, was the only staff member retained). Michael Hopkinson, then acting director of the LCC Mass Communications Department, admitted that part

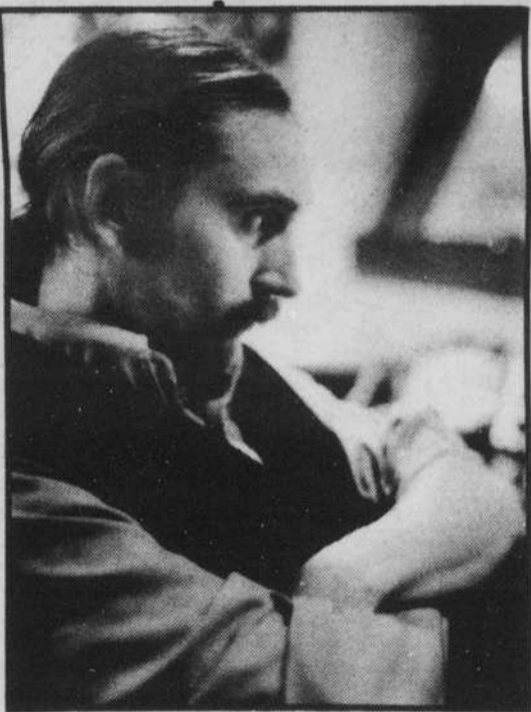
of the reason for the change was so that the college could exert more "direct authority" over the station.

The prospect that this reorganization would adversely affect the community service functions of KLCC caused a group of the station's listeners and former staff members to form the KLCC "Listener Support Network." The group attended several LCC school board meetings to lobby for a continuance of the established format, and ultimately succeeded in pouncing out a compromise which resulted in the removal of the station from the Mass Communications Department. It became, in effect, an independent body answerable only to the LCC Dean of Instruction, Gerald Rasmussen.

Another important part of the compromise was the formation of the KLCC Advisory Board, which was to work with the station manager in determining station policy.

By Dec. 31, all of the terminated staffers were gone, and until April the station was run by Storey-Wilt and approximately 40 volunteer workers. By April, KLCC was back at full strength, and had a new station manager, Tim McCartney, who had been hired sight unseen from a student-run radio station at Western Illinois University.

Then Storey-Wilt wrote a letter to the U.S. Department of Labor complaining that the procedures used in hiring the new staff members were biased and unfair. Two of her complaints were that the LCC administrators had depended upon telephone instead of personal interviews in much of their selection process, and that they had asked



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questions that had no bearing on a person's qualification to run a radio station ("Would you smoke dope with your students?")

Storey-Wilt's charges were denied by the college, and Storey-Wilt herself came under attack by Dr. Darrell Beck of LCC's Mass Communications Department in a March 3, 1977, *Willamette Valley Observer* article for her statements that he said were "woven of trivia ripped out of context, irrelevancies and distortions."

The fight raged on. McCartney, after sitting on the unattractive hot seat between the college administrators and the volunteer staff led by Storey-Wilt, finally resigned on Feb. 6, 1978, charging the station's volunteers with being unwilling to compromise with the administration. Storey-Wilt countered this by claiming that the situation by that time had become so confusing that, in reality, "the volunteers didn't know what they were supposed to be compromising on."

Shortly after this, Rasmussen unexpectedly hired Dunne, who by this time had become the chairman of LCC's Mass Communications department, to serve as "interim station manager" until a permanent replacement could be found. Rasmussen's reason for hiring Dunne was, he said, because Dunne was the "best qualified person for the job," although Storey-Wilt, who also applied for the position, felt the job should have been hers. (Rasmussen admits at the time that at least part of his decision not to hire Storey-Wilt was due to her view that KLCC should remain community-oriented in spite of the administration's desire to make the station more educationally-oriented.)

The KLCC staff members felt it was the ultimate irony that after months of struggle to break away from the Mass Communications Department, they now found themselves being managed by that department's chairman. And if they had any fears that Dunne would begin making changes in the way they ran the station they didn't have long to wait.

Dunne very quickly decided to cancel the ENC's Feb. 23 broadcast because, he said, it didn't follow Associated Press and United Press International broadcast guidelines. At the same time he proposed a "quality control" system that called both for the submission of scripts 48 hours in advance, and for all written copy to correspond to the AP and UPI style.

Dunne's chief complaint was that the ENC's program was produced by untrained broadcasters who, he said, didn't clearly separate straight news from personal opinion. But some staff members, Storey-Wilt in particular, think that this is only an excuse to cover up what they feel was mistaken judgement.

"Those reasons are ones he decided in retrospect," Storey-Wilt says. "He's new in this area and I don't think he understood how many people listen to the station."

But since then, Dunne, who had recently moved to Eugene from Washington, has not canceled any other broadcasts and, he says, he has developed an amenable working relationship with the ENC.

"The situation has been worked out," Dunne says. "I never objected to the content, only the manner of presentation. The Eugene News Collective now does the show live and there is a clear separation of opinion and fact, which was not the case before. Since then they have sought my advice and we've had a number of meetings to clear things up. They're happy to get my advice."

Steve Lambert of the ENC agrees that working with Dunne has helped the Collective's writing. "We're all used to the print media," Lambert says, "and writing for broadcast is completely different. At first he wanted us to do things that we found impossible to do, like submit our scripts in advance. But we proposed a few compromises which he accepted, and since then we've worked things out."

Storey-Wilt also charges that Dunne began making changes immediately without seeking out advice from the staff who, she feels, had a better understanding of the station's listening audience.

"I expected him as a new manager to come in and look around and decide what changes to make," she says. "Instead, he simply started making changes."

Dunne, on the other hand, admits that his actions were colored by the fact that he was new to the position, but he denies that this fact caused him to misunderstand the situation.

"At the time I had just taken over the job," he says, "and I didn't have time to talk things over with the staff. Since then we have 10 hours a week in meetings. I think it's a matter of what was then and now. We now share information on a very regular basis."

Storey-Wilt admits that the working relationship between Dunne and the rest of the staff has improved, but she carefully qualifies the reasons for this.

"My feeling is that when he discovered how much flak he was getting from the community, he gave in," she says. "Since

then he's been very cooperative."

But while the working relationship between Dunne, the staff and the ENC has improved, other problems have developed.

Shortly after the ENC uproar, Storey-Wilt was removed as the station's Development Director and reclassified as Women's Programming Director. Whereas in her former position Storey-Wilt was involved in grant writing, fund raising and various other public relations activities, she is now in charge only of directing the various women's shows which, she feels, is an "effective reduction of her duties."



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Women's Programming Director

At the same time Rasmussen was being criticized by the KLCC Advisory Board for hiring Dunne without first consulting them. Formed during the Spring 1977 transition that saw the station become independent from the Mass Communications Department, the seven-member board, consisting of persons appointed by the LCC Board of Education, was initially supposed to be consulted on all decisions concerning KLCC. Several board members felt their function included the hiring of the station manager.

And even though the board unanimously agreed during a March 8 work session that Rasmussen was within his rights to hire Dunne, some members complained that the new manager was not working closely enough with them before making decisions such as the ENC cancellation.

Yet the board took no official action toward condemning Dunne. On the contrary, the consensus was that as long as he consulted with the membership concerning the running of the station "so far as it was possible," they would be satisfied.

And that, in a nutshell, is how the situation remains today. Amazingly enough, despite the petty politicking of both factions, the working atmosphere is relatively amiable. The most incredible aspect of this entire headline-making debacle is that the respective positions of both the staff and the administration are really very similar when it comes to how each views the future of the station.

Storey-Wilt has reacted to her self-proclaimed demotion by becoming even more adamant in expressing her opinions. Yet by no means can her position be called unreasonable.

"We want to see a good balance between doing community radio and helping the college, the license holder, out," she says. "On a national level radio that broadcasts educational material has never been popular."

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