

VA cutbacks may force rep to vacate post

By KELI OSBORN
Of the Emerald

Recent cutbacks in the Veterans Administration budget may force the regional office in Portland to remove VA campus representatives from Oregon colleges and universities, regional director Donna Arndt says.

Members of the University Veterans Association contend Arndt announced that representatives would be withdrawn from campuses in February 1979, during a Sept. 12 meeting in Portland.

But Arndt denies such a decision has been made. "We called our employees in to alert them to our budget problems, and that it might be as early as February that they might be withdrawn," the regional director says.

The apparent misunderstanding over the status of University representative Dwight Eakin has sent local officials of both the University and veterans scrambling to determine the effect his loss might have locally.

"Every veteran on this campus sees Dwight at least once," says a University veteran, Bob Nace.

Eakin helps veterans with a variety of problems, ranging from delayed checks and work-study approval to telling them what benefits they have, according to a student-funded referral and advocacy program run by veterans.

"There's a big advantage in having the person on campus. He can see what a University is doing to create problems, and sometimes I have to work with the different offices on campus," Eakin says.

But, according to Arndt, the VA isn't required to place representatives on the campuses.

"Under Title 38 of the U.S. code, under which we abide, we are obligated to provide services to campuses," Arndt said. "But it doesn't say how."

The Portland office is isolated from campus problems, according to the UVA.

"I don't think Portland really realizes how many problems are solved on this campus," Nace says.

Loss of the VA campus representative might result in enrollment decline, Nace adds.

"They don't really know how many problems arise," he says. "Vets mean a lot of money to the University, and if they start having trouble they may drop out."

The UVA is convinced that the regional office will withdraw Eakin. Assistant Registrar Chris Munoz is not so sure.

"If they're going to remove the campus representatives, I'd want to know," Munoz says. "I wouldn't like it, but we could make the transition less painful."

Munoz says he sympathizes with the VA's budget problems. "If they have reduced resources and have to make cuts, they have no choice."

"But," he adds, "I don't even want to think about it. There's just no way we could provide the level of services to veterans that veterans' reps do."

Arndt challenges the notion, shared by Munoz and campus veterans, that services will be cut with the loss of Eakin. "I do not think service would be reduced. I do think it would be re-configured."

Eakin says the regional office may seek greater efficiency with a concentration of staff in the Portland office. However, he adds that his University work load is quite heavy.

"I didn't keep count Friday, but I saw at least 50 vets. And I got an incredible number of calls," he says.

If and when Eakin leaves campus, the UVA hopes to pick up some of his duties. "But we really don't have the resources," one spokesperson says.

University veteran John Lawrence adds, "We can only try to expand our program to absorb the impact."

University veterans and officials are not the only ones concerned about Eakin's future at the University campus.

U.S. 4th District Congressman Jim Weaver sent Arndt a letter last week asking for confirmation of the rumor of his departure.

"We estimate our work load in veterans' affairs will increase at least 30 percent," says Michael O'Higgins, a University veteran on Weaver's local staff.

Arndt is reluctant to predict the outcome of the whole controversy. "The government has to live with the money it gets," she says.

"You're handed something like this, you have to learn to live with it."

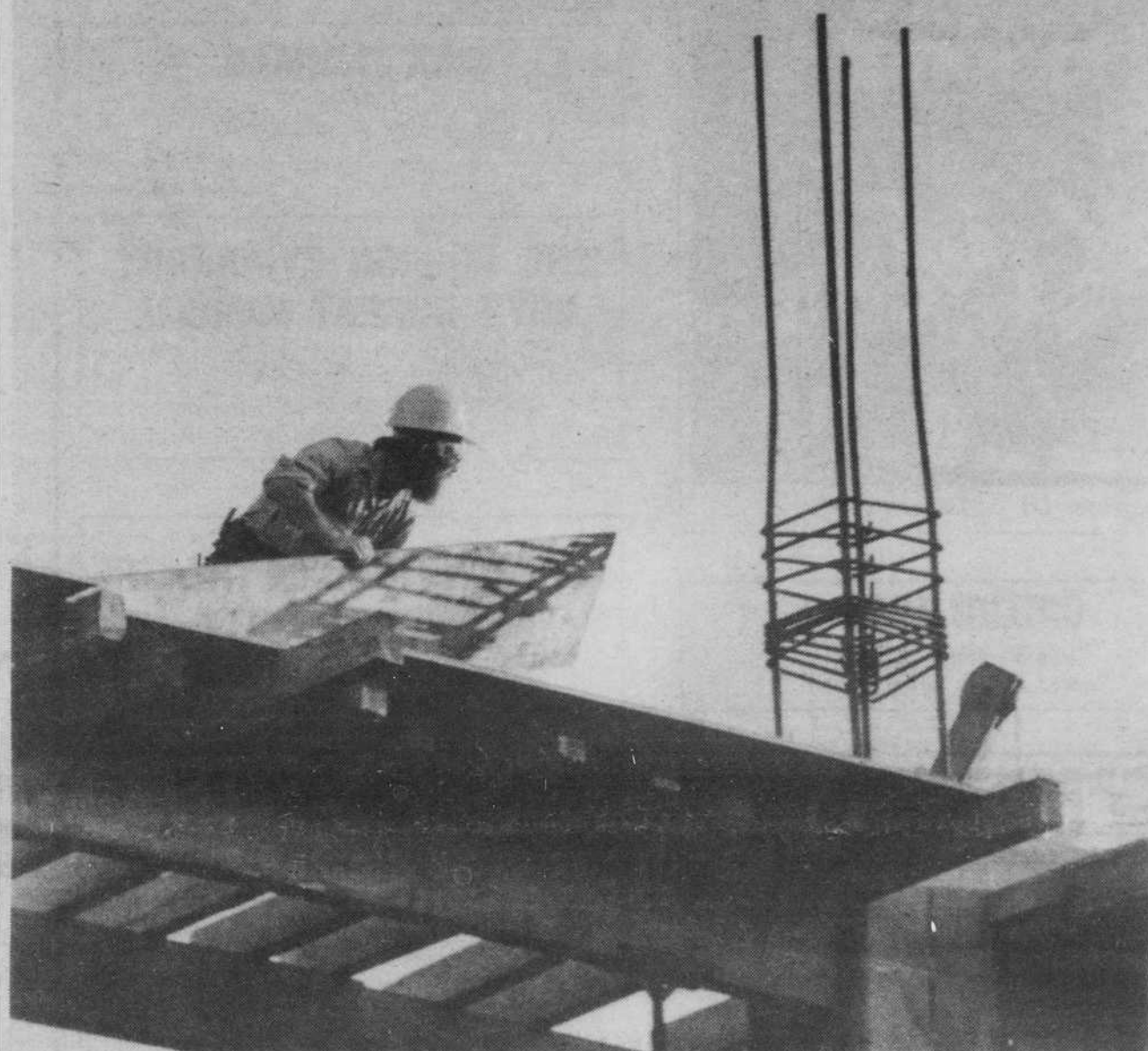
Local veterans think the solution to budget the cutbacks is to reduce the Portland staff and leave campus representatives where they are.

"Dwight knows all the hidden ins-and-outs," veteran Jeff Engel says.

The UVA is currently circulating petitions it will send to Max Cleland, director of the VA in Washington, D.C.

The petitions, which protest the alleged campus representative withdrawal plan, are available at the UVA office in Suite 3, EMU and at window 13 in Oregon Hall.

Early to rise . . .



Emerald photo

Construction workers get off to an early start on Sacred Heart General Hospital's six-story \$1.75 million parking garage on the southwest corner of 13th Avenue and Hilyard Street. What's it like to start work when most people are fast asleep? Worker Otis Rusk says, "You get used to it after 25 years . . . same routine every floor." And co-worker Leon Houle adds, "It makes for an early day." Now that's hard to dispute.

Cities back L-COG alliance

By MARK STEWART
Of the Emerald

County Commissioner Bob Wood told a group of state, federal

today

The Delta Tau Delta fraternity house missed on its bid to be designated a historical landmark Tuesday night when the Eugene Historical Review Board decided to postpone their decision. See Page 3.

The state Department of Forestry admits that existing rules governing aerial herbicide use aren't being followed. See Page 6 for details.

Fiddlin' and pickin' are catching on in Eugene. Today's Entertainment section examines the renewed interest in good old-fashioned string instruments and highlights a local string group — the Northern Broadcasters.

and elected officials from Lane County Wednesday night why he thinks the Lane Council of Government should be restructured and its funding discontinued by the county.

Testimony from the cities of Oakridge, Junction City, Cottage Grove, Coburg, Lowell and Springfield supported L-COG in its present state.

Wood brought up several areas in which he thinks L-COG has failed as the region's planning agency:

- The L-COG board is inexperienced in program areas that it is making decisions on and relies too heavily on staff for decisions;
- L-COG is not a visual, reputable planning office because it duplicates planning done by other jurisdictions, wasting personnel and money;
- L-COG does not adequately represent the population of its jurisdictions.

Wood said duplicate county planning by L-COG has cost the taxpayer \$1 million.

"We have to assess the duplication. We have to change to a local coordinating office or re-direct to the Council of Governments and plan to have the COG more realistically involved," Woods said.

Several L-COG board members said Wood's recommendation that the county pull out would be a severe hardship to the council, even causing it to fold.

Without L-COG, the county and other local governments stand to lose about \$650,000 in federal funds for various programs.

David Dougherty, staff director of the Region 10 federal regional council, said that the federal government requires a multi-jurisdictional body to coordinate federal grant moneys given to local governmental bodies.

However, he said "If one jurisdiction is in dissension (with funding the COG,) we would not allow that jurisdiction to hold the programs hostage." He added that the other jurisdictions would be told to either replace the "lost" local money or lose some of the federal funding.