

daily oregon emerald

Vol. 82, No. 168

Eugene, Oregon 97403

Wednesday, June 3, 1981

EWEB raises electric rates

By JOHN MILLS
Of the Emerald

Eugene's residential electricity users can expect at least a \$7-per-month increase in their utility bills starting August 1, according to the rates manager for the Eugene Water and Electric Board.

At a Tuesday press conference, rates manager Garry Kunkel explained the results of the previous night's board meeting where the EWEB staff presented its findings for the rate increase.

The new rate will be the fourth in a series of rate increases over the past two and one-half years. The increase is needed because of EWEB's own 10-percent hike, caused mainly by a mild winter, plus a 50 to 88 percent increase in the price of power that EWEB buys from the Bonneville Power Administration, Kunkel said.

As late as March of this year, the BPA had been predicting a 53-percent rate increase. However, it recently pushed that figure to 88 percent in order to cover bonds for a financially troubled nuclear power plant being built by the Washington Public Power Supply System.

The BPA is "making an effort to reduce that below 65 percent," Kunkel said. The BPA may release a final figure by June 15, but until then, EWEB is assuming a 75-percent increase, he said.

EWEB buys 76 percent of its power from the BPA, buys 2 percent from other sources and generates the rest itself.

EWEB is more definite about its own 10-percent rate increase, which Kunkel blamed on temperatures over the first four months of 1981 that were more than 6 percent warmer than the year before. January

alone was 15 percent warmer causing a loss of \$1.1 million in electricity sales, he said.

Kunkel added that the construction slump locally means the number of new customers is dwindling from 1 percent now to a predicted zero percent next year.

Asked whether consumers are being penalized for conserving power, Kunkel said EWEB already had estimated lower electricity sales because of conservation. Exactly how much of the reduced demand is the result of a mild weather and how much is the result of conservation is "pretty darn difficult to estimate," he said.

"Conservation is still the cheapest way to go," he said, because the cost of buying or generating new power may go as high as 8 cents per kilowatt-hour from the present 2.25 cents.

The cost of the Northwest Power Bill — particularly the BPA's backing of nuclear plants being built by WPPSS — will mean a rate increase by the BPA every year. Kunkel said the BPA's efforts to step up repayment of its debt to the federal government also is contributing to the rate increases.

EWEB has dampened the impact of the new increase by selling \$1.1 million worth of power to California utilities and by reducing operating costs by \$1 million, Kunkel said.

In spite of the increases the average EWEB residential user paid only \$315 for electricity last year, \$17 more than 1979, Kunkel said. The national average user paid \$438, up \$56, and received less than half as much electricity as the EWEB user. EWEB customers use more electricity because about 65 percent of them use electricity for home heating, Kunkel said.

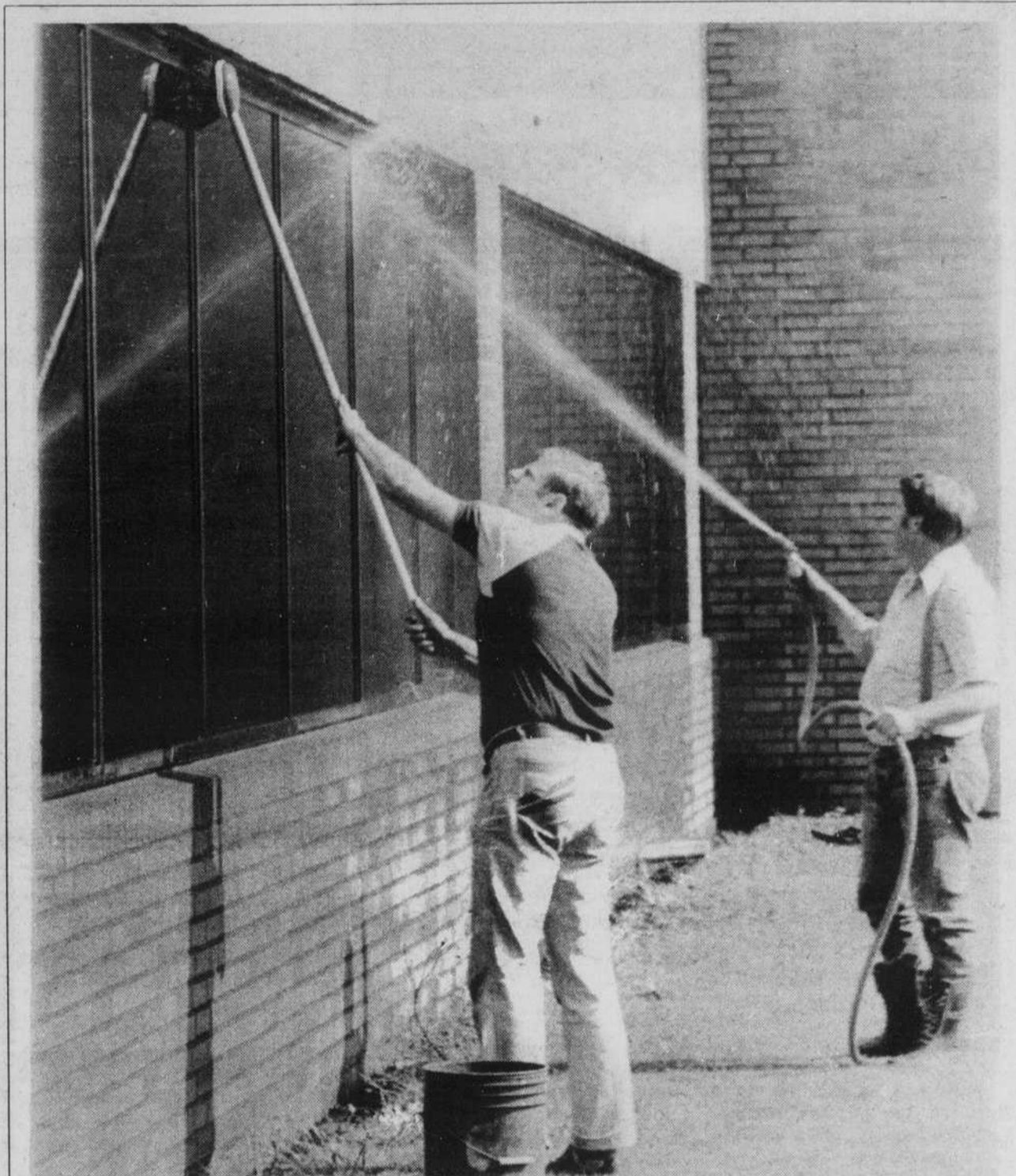


Photo by Erich Boekelheide

They do windows

Two University business officers put down the balance sheet and decided to "get the red out" of their office windows — along with the black, the brown and the indescribable.

Asked why he was taking time off from his work as National Direct Student Loan manager to wash Oregon Hall windows on a hot afternoon, Jim Heiss said it was because "no one

from the Emerald offered to do them."

Heiss was joined by Larry Tergeson, Accounting Supervisor.

In fairness to the Physical Plant, Heiss said the maintenance staff was planning to wash the windows in June anyway. But "they were very generous with the bucket and brushes," he said.

Interns experience ins and outs of Capitol

By ANN PORTAL
Of the Emerald

Rod Jones, a junior in political science, decided last term that he was burning out. So he took a term off to work as a "mechanic."

Along with 44 other University students, Jones is working as an intern in the state Capitol this term, helping the legislative machine run a little smoother.

Jones says internships should be mandatory for all University students.

"It's a whole new world when you get out of the University," Jones says. "I know a whole lot more — there's so much to learn every day."

In addition to getting away from the Eugene campus for a term, Jones receives credit hours for participating in the community service and public affairs school's legislative intern program.

But Jones isn't on vacation. His unpaid

day at the office of Sen. Bob Smith, R-Burns, usually starts at 7:30 a.m. and ends at 5:30 p.m., five or six days a week. But "it goes real fast," Jones says.

Phil Lemman, an intern for Sen. Ed Fadeley, D-Eugene, commutes three days a week from Eugene, leaving at 6:30 a.m. and returning at 7 p.m.

Lemman, a senior in journalism, agrees with Jones that the change of scene has been worth the traveling.

"There is life beyond beer gardens and textbooks," Lemman says.

Interns spend the day participating in a variety of tasks that include attending and testifying at committee meetings, preparing press releases and tracking bills with a computer.

But along with the exhilaration of being privy to the backshop strategies of Oregon politicians, the interns are treated to a heavy dose of the pressure that

fuels the process.

Lemman says he's amazed at the stress that builds up. District residents often call just to let off steam, and the intern acts as the legislator's ear, convincing constituents that somebody cares.

Jones says that dealing with the constituents from Sen. Smith's district has given him a new viewpoint on the issues — especially higher education funding.

Not all Oregonians consider higher education a top priority. For example, the small town of Burns in eastern Oregon — part of Smith's district — has had between 23 and 30 percent unemployment this year.

Many residents can't find work within 100 miles, Jones says. "If it comes down to higher tuition or food for district members, which are you going to support?"

As an intern for the Ways and Means Committee chairer, Lemman also must address the higher education issue.

Pointing to a stack of 50 letters from higher education supporters, Lemman says most alumni are sending their letters to Fadeley. Although student letters are helpful, letters from parents are the best, he says. And letters that argue specific points are more likely to reach Fadeley's desk, he adds.

Before the interns were turned loose in the Capitol's corridors, a CSPA representative briefed them, Jones says. And rule number one was a lesson in intern-legislator diplomacy: take the stairs — the elevators are for legislators.

Interns also learn some important lessons by themselves on how the Legislature works. Jones says he's discovered what keeps the machine running.

"You gotta have a sense of humor."