



Emerald graphic

Utility rejects plan, but lawsuit persists

By SALLY HODGKINSON
Of the Emerald

Although the Springfield Utility Board has rejected the mothball plan for two Washington nuclear plants, a suit challenging the utility's involvement in the Washington Public Power Supply System still is active, the plaintiffs said Thursday.

In addition to rejecting the mothball contract offered by the WPPSS, the utility board also hired an attorney to fight the suit at its Wednesday night meeting.

The plaintiffs — three SUB ratepayers — charged that the board overstepped its authority when it signed the original WPPSS contract without voter approval and that the contract — and its financial burdens — is not valid.

"Springfield ratepayers should not have to bear the cost of a contract that is illegal," said plaintiff Leslie Ratley, a University journalism student and a member of the SUB budget committee. "If they (board members) fight us, the only people who lose are the ratepayers."

Five years ago, the SUB signed an open-ended contract with WPPSS that gives the utility a 1.47 percent share of the construction of two nuclear power plants. The utility is bound to its share of the project cost even if the plants are never completed.

"Who in their right mind

would sign a contract like that?" said plaintiff Peter DeFazio, an aide to Congressman Jim Weaver. DeFazio said the contract was "totally unnecessary," and WPPSS officials probably pressured the SUB into signing it.

Construction on the plants halted last summer when financing fell through.

To save the project, WPPSS officials offered a mothballing plan to the 88 Northwest utilities that own shares in the plants. So far, several utilities, with a combined share of about 20 percent, have refused to pay mothballing costs. A decision on the fate of project — nicknamed "Whoops" — is expected within two weeks.

"I don't think our suit will bring the project down. It's falling with its own weight," Ratley said. "I think WPPSS is down the drain."

The Springfield utility's rejection of the mothball plan is "a step in the right direction" that logically should lead to rejection of the original contract, Ratley said.

"We're not trying to get out of a debt," said DeFazio. "We never incurred a debt."

The utility's 1.47 percent share translates into a \$40 million headache, he added.

"I can't imagine why SUB wants to defend a bankrupt plan" by fighting the suit against the original contract, DeFazio said.

The SUB has 30 days to formally reply to the suit, which was filed in December.

Beer, wine tax proposal draws legislators' fire

SALEM (AP) — Gov. Vic Atiyeh's proposal to double state taxes on beer and wine came under fire today as House and Senate revenue committees opened hearings on Atiyeh's revenue-raising plans.

Sen. John Powell, D-Halsey, chairman of the Senate panel, said the tax boosts "will literally do nothing to solve our problem." He said the \$3.6 million raised for the state general fund "won't cover the bottom of the barrel" in dealing with a projected budget deficit of \$237 million.

Jon Yunker, head of the state Budget and Management Division, noted that the governor's plan also would earmark an additional amount of tax revenue, about \$4 million, for the state's share of costs of drug and alcohol treatment programs.

Cities and counties would get the remaining \$5.4 million estimated to be raised by the tax hikes.

The proposed increases would amount to about four cents on a six-pack of beer and 65 cents per gallon of wine.

Kulongoski eyes top post

SALEM (AP) — Sen. Ted Kulongoski, D-Junction City, said Thursday he will not seek re-election to the Oregon Legislature but is looking seriously at a race for governor.

Kulongoski said he will make up his mind about the governor's race either before the Jan. 18 legislative special session or right after.

"I have ruled out running for the Senate again," said Kulongoski, who began his state Senate term in 1979 after serving in the House from 1975-1979.

He made a bid for the U.S. Senate in 1980 but lost to incumbent Republican Bob Packwood.

"I think there's a very good probability that I will run for governor," the 41-year-old attorney told the Associated Press.

He said he thought he could have been chosen Senate president if he had sought re-election to the Legislature.

"But in a citizen legislature, the legislators are in the back seat of the car, and the governor drives it. I want to drive," Kulongoski said.

"The only way Oregon government functions effectively is with strong leadership from the governor's office," he said. "The state hasn't had a strong chief executive since Tom McCall. . . . I think the state has been in neutral under the Atiyeh administration the last four years."

Republican Gov. Vic Atiyeh already has filed for re-election. Multnomah County Executive Don Clark and Lane County Commissioner Jerry Rust are running for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination.

Kulongoski said he has been contacted by the Democratic National Committee about the gubernatorial race and has been receiving letters from



Emerald photo

Ted Kulongoski

Democrats around the state urging him to run. He said the letters appeared part of an orchestrated effort, but he did not know who was behind it.

Kulongoski said he is attracted to the governor's race by the opportunity to do something for the state's ailing economy.

"I would suggest that Oregon is going to have a tremendous opportunity with the advent of the new federalism of the Reagan Administration," said Kulongoski. "He is transferring substantial decision making power back to the states."

He said he believes Oregon can use those new opportunities to move the state out of the recession and to "put us in a position the later part of this decade to take us off the cyclical economy."

Kulongoski had said he was hesitant about running for governor if he was going to be as heavily outspent as he was in his race against Packwood.

"I've decided that regardless of the amount of money spent, if I have the ability to lead, no matter how much money Vic Atiyeh has, I'll win," he said.

Computer course offered

By MARIAN GREEN
Of the Emerald

Students frustrated by the University's overcrowded computer classes may find solace in the "hands on" courses offered by Radio Shack in Eugene.

And just two weeks ago, Radio Shack received accreditation from Oregon State University's community education division, says instructor Jerry Ross, a University graduate student in computer education.

Students who complete the three-part introductory sequence can earn two hours of vocational education credit. That credit can be transferred to the University, Ross says.

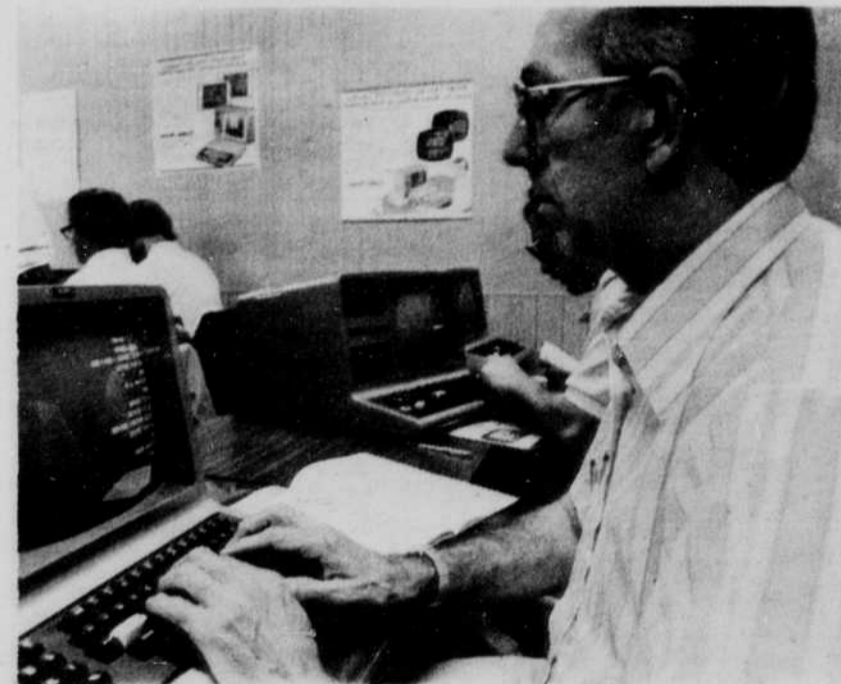
Students desiring credit, however, must pay OSU \$40 in addition to the \$99.85 fee for the complete course sequence, which is approximately 36 hours of experience, he says.

Ross says the price is right when students consider the advantages of Radio Shack's small classes. The classes have a ratio of about 20 students to 13 computer terminals, he says.

Students spend the bulk of the course time behind the terminals, Ross says.

"It's really a hands on experience."

Steve Hedetniemi, head of the University's computer and information science department,



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Students in the "hands on" computer course offered by Radio Shack spend the bulk of the course time behind the terminals.

is less optimistic about the sequence's value.

Hedetniemi says the CIS department considered giving credits for the Radio Shack courses but declined because the courses lacked clear objectives.

"It didn't look too solid," he says.

Hedetniemi notes that one reason Radio Shack may offer the courses is to promote their products.

Ross says the sequence, designed by Michigan State University Prof. Norman Bell, is ideal for complementing the more theoretical college courses because it is "practically oriented."

"It almost amounts to a tutorial," he says. "If someone is lost or is looking for a one-to-one situation, they can find it here."

The next sequence begins Jan. 21. For more information, call 687-0082.

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