

Secret decision warranted input

A public utility not only should serve the public, it should be run by the public. However, this is not the case in light of last week's secretive process of firing Jean Reeder, the Eugene Water and Electric Board general manager.

EWEB board members Dennis Solin, Randy Thwing and Rob Willis fired Reeder at last Monday's meeting, without allowing comment from the staff, the public, or Reeder herself. Their order was that she clear out her office by eight the next morning, and at the meeting they gave no reason for firing her.

Reeder's expertise at her job is indisputable. Her career as the board's top manager spanned five years, and EWEB's electric rates are among the lowest in the nation. System reliability (a national reputation) and customer satisfaction (80 percent) are high.

EWEB has been a leader in areas such as new energy resources, conservation and child care programs. Reeder can be credited for EWEB's status. She also is the nation's first woman chief executive officer of a full-service public utility.

However, some problems overshadowed EWEB's innovations. The three board members say Reeder's management style caused conflicts, and they had lost confidence in her ability to handle responsibilities of the job.

It seems perhaps that the three board members disagreed with Reeder's long-term planning. Just before she was fired, Reeder called for an additional rate increase of 1.7 percent, in addition to the 7.7 percent already proposed, to keep the utility's finances afloat.

Why was Reeder fired? Reasons ranging from financial worries to sexism to anti-environmentalism have been suggested. Whatever their reasons, Solin, Thwing and Willis are elected supervisors of a public agency, and as such they have the authority to dismiss a manager. For pretty much any reason they want.

However, it would be expected that such an extreme action as a firing would follow an open and public process before any decisions were carried out.

Oregon's public meetings law requires that most business conducted by local government boards to be done at meetings that are open to the public.

In this case, it didn't. Reeder's dismissal followed a gradually simmering conflict between her and the two of the board members. She was in a position of being disliked by people who had power over her job.

Private phone calls and secret deals made up the bulk of this decision-making process. The public was never involved with or informed of the slow buildup leading to the firing. The public was not allowed to comment after the unexpected announcement. And the public appears to have been denied representation in what should have been a process involving all.

What the public can do from here, though, is ensure that a similar fiasco never happens again. The terms of Solin, Thwing and Willis expire at the end of this year, but petitions are being circulated to recall the three from office.

The three EWEB board members have demonstrated that they have no interest in public involvement and response to their mandates. The public can now respond on the petition sheet and at the ballot box, to let the three men know that we have no interest in their unfair and secretive business practices.



Letters

Dorms

In a meeting held at Carson Hall last week, Andy Clark implied that his opponents in last spring's elections were opposed to putting voting booths in the dorms because they thought that "dorm residents weren't as educated on the issues."

The truth is, those who spoke against having election booths in the dorms did so out of fairness. Why should any special interest group on campus get preferential treatment? As things stand now, voting booths are equally distributed around campus, so that any student could easily vote near a classroom.

If the dorms get their own voting booths, why doesn't the Greek system get theirs? Or how about putting them in front of quads? In fact, I'd like one outside my apartment.

And where will the money come from to pay for the construction of these new booths and the people to monitor them? As it is, student fees pay almost \$8,000 for the six or seven booths we have. Adding booths will only increase that expense.

I totally support Clark's hopes to turn out more voters this spring, but voting booths in the dorms is not the answer. The key to getting-out-the-vote is personal contact with people, and if Clark wants the students to "mobilize and vote," he should use active strategies like tabling and phone banks to turn out the vote.

Dalene Lovie
Student

Real conflict

Having never fully understood the rationale behind the "Save a logger, eat an owl" slogan, I ventured out to the 52nd Annual Logging Conference last Saturday.

The fairgrounds were packed with heavy logging machinery of all types, some, like the trees they cut, reaching hundreds of feet to the sky. As I watched a video demonstrating a machine dubbed the "lorax" clamp, cut, de-limb and load at the rate of 180 trees per hour, I wondered what chance Oregon's forests

have against such efficient destruction.

What chance does humanity have when we have to destroy the things we love to live? There was something sadly fatalistic and self-destructive in watching these loggers hypnotized under timber industry rhetoric. At that point, I had wished my jaded thoughts could have been blared over the loudspeaker, just to confirm that I wasn't missing any hidden truth.

My concentration was interrupted by an angry logger saying "Goddamn environmentalists are forcing us all out of work," as he stood in the shadow of the machine that will ultimately cause the extinction of Oregon's logging communities as well as its ancient forest ecosystem.

My questions had been answered, and as I left the convention, I pasted an "Earth first" sticker on the bumper of a logging truck. Let there be no misconceptions. The real conflict throughout Oregon has never been jobs vs. the environment, but jobs vs. greed and automation.

Darin Stringer
Political studies

Opportunities

Upon nearing the end of my long and perhaps less than industrious college career, I have had the courage to enroll myself in a Woman's Studies class this term. This class is four lower division credits, and an opportunity not to be missed.

In my past, I was neither outwardly nor actively impressed. In fact, as a woman, I recognized myself as one of the oppressed. Yet, I discover, by being a passive and silent woman, I was doing little to help change attitudes about my race.

In as few and succinct words as possible, I would like to dispel a few of the many myths that exist about the Women's studies classes. First, it is not a class for lesbians only; second, it is not a class for friends of lesbians only; and third, it is not a men-bashing opportunity.

It is a class solely dedicated to breaking down myths perpetuated by a patriarchal society. It is a class dedicated to opening your mind and learn-

ing to accept different attitudes. Most importantly, it is dedicated to recognizing that woman are oppressed, that we need to change social structures, and that we can empower each other.

This class will make you angry, especially at society. This rage can turn into energy, energy used to push society toward a better understanding of change, difference and equality. Please consider taking a Woman's Studies class. It is an opportunity to improve yourself and those around you.

Stephanie Nelson
Art history

Minty fresh

This letter is regarding the *Oregon Voice* dispersing free condoms in its February issue. Realizing that the appeal of the staid and boring latex condom had diminished due to its — how shall I say it — unsavory appearance, someone came up with the world shattering idea to add ribs for pleasure, a tip for semen storage, and bright colors for those "lights on" experiences.

This time around, the ultimate addendum has been achieved. Thanks to modern science, this new charity birth/AIDS control has been — I don't want to say flavored — but definitely scented with *mint!* Better living through chemistry. My hat goes off to everyone involved in this bold stroke forward.

P.S. Will these condoms satisfy the definition for vegetable in our school lunch programs?

Gary Malcolm
Student

Power

Hey folks, let's take some personal responsibility for the things that happen in our lives. We are the only ones who can make the changes. Let's stop blaming all of our problems on others.

So, let's quit whining and sniveling. Let's get up off our butts on our own power. Let's do something positive for a change.

Stuart Pennington
Student

Letters Policy

The *Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The *Emerald* reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style.