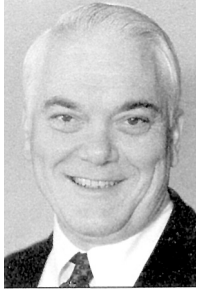


# Let me say this about that

## ...A coincidence?

(From Page 2)

"As of this writing, gasoline prices, averaging \$3.07 nationwide, are the highest in 20 years. Ironically, the price per barrel of crude oil has fallen to around \$60 per barrel.



**CHARLIE MERCER**

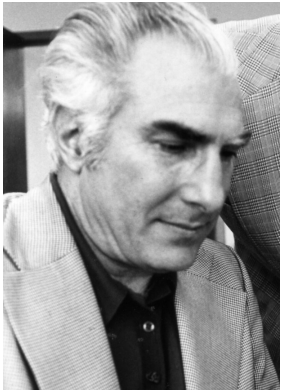
"**LESS THAN** a year ago, in August 2006, a mere 90 days before the big congressional elections, prices rose to around \$3 per gallon because, according to the industry, the per barrel price for crude oil was more than \$76 a barrel. Then, pump prices dropped dramatically to a little more than \$2 per gallon in the days just before the elections.

"So, if today's prices aren't driven by the cost of crude, then why are they so high? The industry says this time it's not a matter of the cost of crude, but the loss of supply because not enough oil is being refined for gasoline. A BP refinery in Indiana, for example, needs unexpected repairs, slowing its normal output of 400,000 barrels a day to a mere trickle. Another plant in McKee, Texas, that normally handles 170,000 barrels a day was shut down for a month. Another, in Texas City, Texas, that refines 470,000 barrels a day, is at half-capacity.

"**COINCIDENCE?"**

★★★

**AN UPDATE** on Merchant Marine legislation: Oregon U. S. Representatives David Wu, First District; Greg Walden, Second Dist.; Peter DeFazio, Fourth Dist.; and Darlene Hooley, Fifth Dist., have agreed to co-sponsor House Resolution 23 to provide a \$1,000 monthly pension to World War II veterans of the U.S. Merchant Marine. Representatives Earl Blumenauer, Oregon Third Dist.; and Brian Baird, Washington Third Dist., support the legislation but are not co-sponsors.



**CHRIST VOKOS**

U.S. Senator Ron Wyden of Oregon also supports the legislation — Senate Bill 961 in the upper chamber — but is not a co-sponsor.

The preceding information comes from Christ Vokos, president of the Columbia-Willamette League of U.S. Merchant Marine Veterans of World War II, and Bill Fast, a member of the League. Vokos is a retired secretary-treasurer of Portland Bakers Local 364, and Fast is a retired Portland port agent of the Marine Engineers Beneficial Association. Both unions are affiliates of the AFL-CIO.

**VOKOS SAID HR 23 AND SB 961** are in committees in their respective chambers but are not expected to be acted upon before

the upcoming House and Senate recesses. Vokos also said that there were some 250,000 World War II veterans of the Merchant Marine but that fewer than 9,000 are still living.

★★★

**EMSIE HOWARD**, who worked from 1952 to 1962 as associate editor of the Labor Press, merits having her name added to the Labor Honor Roll. In addition to being associate editor, she was the office manager and advertising manager in the days when this newspaper bore the Oregon Labor Press logo. The name was expanded to Northwest Labor Press two decades ago. Jim Goodsell was the editor when Mrs. Howard worked here.

The Labor Press started the Labor Honor Roll to give a posthumous salute to labor people of the past. The Labor Hall of Fame honors retired unionists while they are still living.

Howard was born in Portland, a descendant of the pioneer Failing family. While with the Labor Press, she was a member of Portland Newspaper Guild Local 165 and active in the Oregon State Congress of Industrial Organizations prior to the 1956 merger with the Oregon Federation of Labor that produced the Oregon AFL-CIO. She was a delegate to the merger convention held in Portland. Assertive in her opinions, she publicly criticized the national leadership of the Guild over its handling of the Portland newspaper strike and its failure to support the 1960 start-up of the striker-staffed Portland Reporter.

**EMSIE WAS ACTIVE** in the Democratic Party and in civic groups. She was vice chair of the Multnomah County Democratic Party, then the highest post a woman could hold. Her other interests included music, golf and swimming.

Stories she wrote for the Labor Press won several awards from the International Labor Press Association.

Howard took a leave of absence for medical reasons in October 1962 and later retired on the advice of her physician. She died at age 71 on June 30, 1985.

# OPEN FORUM

## U.S. citizens would take jobs held by illegals at Del Monte

**To The Editor:**

The raid at the Portland Del Monte plant shows that illegal aliens are taking away jobs from U.S. citizens. Portland is not at full employment and Del Monte has hired illegal aliens to work for them instead of U.S. citizens.

The method for showing unemployment rates is to use people who recently have become unemployed. When that person runs out of unemployment benefits they are taken off the unemployment rolls. This is a way to purge unemployment rolls.

The illegal aliens are being used as strikebreakers to lower the standard of living of U.S. workers. This has nothing to do with the company not being able to find people to fill those jobs. This has everything to do with the company wanting to lower wages.

There are U.S. citizens right now

who are lining up to go to work at Del Monte. This reminds me of when I was in Sundown, Texas, in 1984. I was at the Chevron CO2 recovery plant. There was a line of people a mile long. This carload of people came in waving green cards in the air. They were hired immediately. This was unreal. There were fliers on the job that encouraged those people to seek a career in the petrol-chemical industry.

The company hiring was Brown & Root. You were given a paper to sign that said you would cross a picket line. With that information, as well as their hiring policies, it is obvious that their agenda was to break the unions and the wages of U.S. citizens.

When I was at the shipyards there were people who would go in the sewage tanks of the ships and clean them out. Then the tanks would be

pressure-tested to make sure there were no leaks in them. If we can find U.S. citizens who are willing to climb in sewage tanks and clean them out by hand, then there is no other job that we can't find U.S. citizens to do.

This is not the U.S. I was born in. In the late 1970s I was making more than \$10 an hour. Right now, more than 25 years later, we have a lot of people in the U.S. who are unable to find a job making more than \$15 an hour. This is not right and we should do something about it.

These actions send a message that the government is engaging in class warfare and is trying to wipe out the middle class.

**Jeff Lyles  
Plumbers & Fitters 290  
Tualatin**

## Blumenauer reflects on passage of public employee collective bargaining legislation

**To The Editor:**

Participating in the debate on public employee collective bargaining in the Oregon Legislature in 1973 was one of my first experiences as an elected official. As a young freshman legislator just out of college and from a union family, it was eye-opening for me to listen to some of the arguments against collective bargaining rights of public employees. As history showed, we prevailed, and it has provided a good framework for all Oregon's public employees.

Because of my experience and steadfast belief in collective bargaining rights, I have co-sponsored in the last seven congresses legislation that would extend federal collective bargaining protections to public safety employees in the 28 states that don't already have them.

This bill has always had bipartisan support, but the Tom Delay Republican Congress refused to allow the legislative process to work and repeatedly

kept this bill bottled up in committee to die.

There is no clearer indication of what difference the new leadership means than watching this legislation finally see the light of day in the U.S. House of Representatives. With Speaker Nancy Pelosi in charge, House Committee on Education and Labor Chairman George Miller quickly passed this bill out of committee on a 42 to 1 vote. The Public Safety Employer-Employee Cooperation Act of 2007, HR 980, garnered 280 co-sponsors and passed overwhelmingly on the floor by a vote of 314 to 97.

It was a special honor for me to be presiding in the chair during the debate and passage, watching first-hand, not only important legislation being finally passed, but giving me a vital reminder of what it meant to be part of this new Democratic majority.

I want to thank all of our friends, especially in organized labor and public safety, for their commitment, work, patience, and enduring hope in continuing the fight for worker protections for their brothers and sisters across the country.

I deeply appreciate that effort and look forward to seeing this bill move through the Senate.

**U.S. Rep. Earl Blumenauer  
Portland**

## Law is needed to stop corporations from running U.S.

**To The Editor:**

A declaration that "corporations are not people" would be the most important law that has come before the people for a vote.

We no longer claim that the United States is a democracy. The U.S. is run by and for corporations. This is a law that should be in the national Constitution, but it would be great to have Oregon be the first to vote for it.

**Joe Hamm  
Machinists Lodge 63  
Portland**

## Medicare Advantage program is corporate welfare that must stop

**To The Editor:**

Congress has a chance to end an outrageous example of corporate welfare — the Medicare Advantage program. A vote is expected soon.

Right now the advantage is all for the big insurance companies. Our tax dollars subsidize them to offer Medicare programs. We overpay them 12 percent more — \$7.5 billion each year — than it would cost Medicare to directly serve the same people.

Lately the newspapers and television news have been filled with horror stories of these Medicare Advantage companies using bait-and-switch marketing tactics to confuse and mislead seniors and deny them medical care.

The Bush Administration failed in privatizing Social Security. Now, Congress must stop Medicare privatization by standing with Oregon seniors and not with Wall Street and the insurance industry.

I urge Representatives Earl Blumenauer, Darlene Hooley, David Wu, Peter DeFazio and Greg Walden to vote in favor of this legislation.

**Verna Porter  
President  
Oregon Alliance for Retired  
Americans  
Portland**

## Salem retiree suggests new initials

**To The Editor:**

Old saying, new meaning for "BC" and "AD:"  
It could now mean: Before Clinton (BC) and After Dummy (AD).

**John Theodore  
AFSCME  
Retired  
Salem**