Siletz News II

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Storm at STEDCO

Five years after its creation, the Siletz Tribal Economic Development Corporation experienced a major shake-up that saw three of its top employees fired and five members of its Commission replaced.

The latest wave of firings came December 9, 1989 when Executive Director Ted Werth and Salmon Enterprise Supervisor Tom Staggs were fired by the Board of Commissioners. Four members of the eight-member Board resigned in protest of the firings. Another Commissioner, former Chair of the Board Delores Pigsley, was replaced because of a change to the STEDCO Charter made by the Siletz Tribal Council.

Over twenty allegations of wrongdoing preceded the firings and mass resignation. Most of the allegations centered on STEDCO's Salmon Enterprise and included charges of mismangement, embezzlement, and employee favoritism.

Tribal Council appointed a Task Force to look into the allegations on Nov. 18, 1989. The Task Force was composed of Tribal Council Secretary Jessie Davis, Tribal General Manager Phil Rilatos, STEDCO Commissioner John Roe, and Ted Werth.

The Task Force spent the week of November 20th in an attempt to separate facts from rumor. The fruit of this work—a twelve page report—was issued in late November. At press time, the the Task Force report had still not been made public, although private sources have made available copies of the document to this reporter.

A nearly complete copy of the Task Force report appears in this issue of Siletz News II (see page 5).

Many of the people involved in the shake-up have refused to comment. Frank Simmons, Interim Chair of the STEDCO Board, stated publicly in mid-January that the investigation at STEDCO is ongoing. Simmons also promised a full report on STEDCO later this Spring.

But Simmons, and every other tribal official con-

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Council Waives Debt

Tribal Council, in action taken on September 13, 1988, voted to forego the collection of a $5,315.94 owed to the Tribe for timber cut but left unharvested on the Lower Gorge Timber Sale.

Voting 5-0-2, Tribal Council passed Resolution #88-189, which says in part that "the Siletz Tribal Council deems it not to be in the best interest of the Siletz Tribe for the logger to relog the Lower Gorge Timber Sale."

The logger on the sale was A.C. Brown and Co. Two Tribal Council members—Frank Simmons and "Bud" Lane—have identified themselves as employees of A.C. Brown and Co.

Although STEDCO was named in the resolution as the entity "released" from the debt, it was the logger who, under the conditions of the contract signed by STEDCO, would have been ultimately liable for the $5,315.94 bill.

According to Gary Varner, Forester at the BIA's Siletz Agency, "When the Tribal Council's passed the resolution, the BIA cancelled the bill-of collection"—in effect, making the Tribe $5,315.94 poorer and A.C. Brown and Co. $5,315.94 richer.

Varner said that, to his knowledge, the 1988 resolution was the first and time such action had been taken.

Council minutes show that Simmons and Lane abstained from voting on the matter. But minutes of Council's 8/26/88 meeting show that Simmons initiated discussion on Lower Gorge relogging issue. Simmons also seconded a resolution at the meeting designed to "modify the contract with the [B.I.A.]".

Both Simmons and Lane admitted to advising other Council members to vote in favour of the resolution releasing their employer from the $5,315.94 debt.

"I walked the area," Lane said. "Based on what I saw, I didn't think it warranted relogging."

"The timber was not marketable," Simmons said. "It was not merchentable."

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