

Tommy Two Moons

Dear Uncle:

How come the only thing we ever get to vote on during tribal elections is how much we want to raise tribal council pay. Isn't the Coyote Tribe doing anything else that we could be voting on?

Tommy Replies:

I've sort of been wondering about this myself. I sent your question the Coyote Tribe's Chairman, Loren D. Spiggs. This is what Chairman Spiggs had to say:

"Letting people vote on things used to work. Back in the old days when one of us Indians was just as smart as another. But then the whiteman came, and who knows how it happened? But now, most of us Indians are dumb and just a few of us are smart.

"I myself am smart. That's why I am a tribal leader. My job is to inform the rest of you of what you don't know because you are ... well, er. Hmm. Let's just say you're not very well informed.

"For instance, I've been trying my darndest to inform you about this pay increase for us Tribal Council members. But even though I inform you until I am out of breath, you turn around and vote it down.

"And this has been going on for the last five years!

"Now you tell me. If you can't vote in an informed manner on this issue, which is pretty simple, how are you going to vote on something really important, like whether my job should become full time, with a salary of about \$100,000 and a brand new Lincoln Continental at my disposal?"

"Accountability," continued from page 1

another form of recommendation due her: Gladys is the sister of current Tribal Council Chair Delores Pigsley.

Who knows how this really might have worked? Maybe John Roe got tired of all those ridiculously small Tribal Court budgets and figured out that the best way to increase the funding was to hire Dee's sister. Budgetary concerns, you'll remember, were on the top of the list when it came time for ousting the former judges while money seemed to be of little concern when it came to hiring Judge Bolton.

Whatever the motives and thoughts behind the recent decisions, the shake-up in court personnel has left the appearance of a Chief Judge anxious to forge good relations with the same Tribal Council whose actions his Court is charged with overseeing.

System #2: The Tribal Newsletter. There has not been much change. An untrained and overworked newsletter editor/writer/photographer/production staff all rolled into one person (with another job) has yet to figure out how to cover current tribal affairs without getting fired and without working nights.

The only change with the newsletter itself has been the deletion of the Tribal Council minutes. That change means that instead of the Tribe sending 2,100 people a detailed account of Tribal Council business and discussions, the Tribe now sends its official minutes to a list of about 30 people.

Tribal members letters are still open to editing if they're over the allotted 350 words, although the limit doesn't seem to apply to non-tribal members such as Newport Bank President Don Barth who wrote a "Dear Editor" letter of approximately 600 words, which was printed in its entirety.

System #3: The Policy of Separating Busi-

ness From Politics. The current Tribal Council seems to have forgotten this lesson, gleaned at some expense by tribal leaders during the late 1980's. Visits to various Indian reservations prior to setting up ST-EDCO drove one point home, we were told, over and over again: You must separate tribal economic development from tribal politics.

The effort to establish a gaming enterprise has proven a major exception to this rule. Politicians are rubbing elbow with financiers who have money they're willing to give away. And for all I know they're playing footsies and passing little bags of goodies under the table, too.

I guess maybe that lesson—separate economic development from politics—was only valid for the 1980's when tribal politicians were in direct control of STEDCO and the Tribe's economic development.

System #4: Tribal Members Going to Meetings and Asking Questions. You can always gauge this by the number of "Executive Sessions" Tribal Council engages in. The more tribal members in the room, the harder it is for Council to kick everybody else out so that they can discuss their secret business.

One meeting in October had four Executive Sessions. Nearly every meeting has at least one.

And so it is that you can find virtually no discussion of taxes paid to Lincoln County and virtually no discussion of gaming and self-governance. All this vital business, it appears, was conducted off the record.

So much for accountability at the Siletz Tribe in early 1992.