

EDITORIAL

Co-op board forces open meeting battle with coalition

What exactly is going on with our electric Co-op Board of Directors these days? What started out as a simple attempt on the part of a loosely organized local group to amend the Co-op's by-laws to allow greater member identification in decision making has turned into a brouhaha of the ugliest sort.

At the last general membership meeting, held Oct. 17, the members voted in two by-law amendments that were designed to increase participation at board meetings and provide for public input prior to any future rate hikes. Suddenly, the board has decided to ignore the obvious intent of at least one of these amendments and interprets it strictly within a legal definition.

At their last meeting, two weeks ago, the board voted to require that anyone desiring to address the board must submit their points before hand, including an estimate of the number of people who would be present. The board would then inform said group as to when they might make their appearance. At the board's convenience, mind you. Just a bit high-handed, you might say.

By interpreting the by-law amendment to mean simply that they must provide advance public notice of board meetings, rather than accepting its spirit, which intended that a free and open dialogue be established between the board and the membership, they have raised serious doubts about their intentions. According to Neil Bush, the Co-op's attorney who spoke for them on this matter, the by-law amendments did not give members the right to attend the meetings. They may do so, apparently, but only at the pleasure of the board. believe may at best be questionable conduct.

The people of the Co-op's service area are certainly not children to be led by the hand of a self-styled, all-knowing board down the righteous path of benign leadership. It is high time the board realized that they are intent on finding answers to their questions and that they do intend to have a greater, more meaningful say

in how their money is spent.

Serious questions have been raised recently about the Co-op's involvement in WPPSS and plans for future rate increases, designed in part, to help pay for that ill-advised WPPSS commitment. At their most recent meeting the board voted to go ahead and make just the first payment, in excess of \$200,000, on their share of the WPPSS 4 & 5 mothball plan. With whose permission? By what stretch of reason did the board determine that their membership wanted this step taken? We have no objections to further WPPSS participation if, and it is a big IF, the membership OK's it. Remember, this is just the first such payment. At this point in time no one, least of all West Oregon Electric Co-op, really knows just how much all of

this is going to cost us.

At this same meeting the board, your board, also voted to seek (and we use that term in the blind hope that the board at least intends to hold public hearings first) a 45 percent rate increase next July. This will represent a 90 percent rate increase in just one year. How much longer does the board expect us to let them go on making decisions that effect us each directly without first hearing what we have to say on the matter?

The board's attitude is blatantly obvious. As explained by their attorney; "As a non-profit corporation we are not a public body and are therefore exempt under the newly enacted Open Meeting law." The point still remains, though, that although, like a bank, the Co-op is not forced by weight of law to conduct its

business in the public's eye, one would hope they would be willing to. Especially since we are not, in the strictest sense, the public. After all, we are the members. It is our money they are spending and it is our business they continue to conduct behind closed doors.

Your energy coalition has arranged to hold a meeting at 7:30 pm on Thursday, November 12 at the Senior Center to discuss their next move. Among the possibilities they will explore is the idea of calling a special membership meeting to amend the recent amendments still further, forcing the board to open their meetings in a meaningful way. The possibility of a recall election designed to throw the current board out and replace it with members who aren't afraid to let their neighbors see how they conduct your business will also be discussed.

We urge each and every Co-op member in the area to make it a point to attend this meeting. If you're not heard now, in the long run you simply won't have another chance. If you too want change this may very well be your last hope. Be there; we will be.

Post Office shares mailing hints

The Vernonia postal crew would like to share with their many customers in the Nehalem Valley a few hints and ideas for the busy holiday season just ahead.

Most important, be sure to mail early! Items prepared for mailing by parcel post should be well cushioned and placed in sturdy containers. Reinforced strapping tape is recommended for sealing. The post office has tape and mailing cartons available; ask the clerk.

Parcels mailed to foreign countries and most military post offices (APO's-FPO's) require the completion of various customs forms. These should be completed before parcel is presented for mailing. Call us; we will determine what forms you need and send them to you. It is much easier to itemize on the forms at home those items mailed than later at the post office when the package has been sealed.

Christmas cards should, of course, be separated into bundles for Vernonia and out-of-town. We would appreciate also these being handed to a clerk at the window.

If you are looking for something

different as a Christmas gift you might consider the Mint Sets and other philatelic items we have available.

Mint Sets contain all commemorative stamps issued during the year with an attractive descriptive, folder included. Something new is the Definitive Mint Set which contains all commemorative stamps plus postal cards, envelopes, and aerogrammes issued during the year.

Another item available is the eighth edition of Stamps and Stories - the U.S. Postal Service Encyclopedia of U.S. stamps. This colorful 280 page book provides interesting philatelic information for the novice and experienced collector including an index listing of every U.S. commemorative stamp ever issued. Price: \$3.50.

Through November 20 the Postal Service is offering an opportunity for its customers to place an early order for the 1982 Zip Code Directory. Customers who place an order during this period will not only receive a discount of \$1 off the 1982 sale price (\$9), but will also receive direct shipment from the publisher in January. Order forms are available at the post office.

Finally, the Vernonia Postal crew wishes to extend to their many friends in the Nehalem Valley a joyous holiday season.

Gary Dinger, Marie Bellingham-Clerk
Dick Aldrich-City Carrier
Ed & Jean Balla-Star Rt Carriers
Dan Fletcher-Postmaster

medic relates facts

To the Editor:

I feel that as a resident and former paramedic I must tell some people a few facts.

1. I have never heard, nor heard of, an EMT or paramedic making his or her self "God" by diagnosing anything as a positive (except a compound fracture, which for those who claim to know, but don't, means, "bones sticking out through the skin").

2. No person gets "special" treatment by Vernonia Ambulance, (with the possible exception of any small child).

3. Anyone who feels the persons who donate their time, (which means money also), are not the best, by effort and result, should look to see what they themselves have done to aid the community.

The fact is, my family has had need of the local ambulance more than anybody I know. Everytime the ambulance takes my wife or one of my kids away, I remember the one child who didn't come back. Then I count heads and thank whatever Gods there are for the dedication of a few people who give their all for others.

A special thank you to those who care enough to try.

Jerry Sanders
Vernonia

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Bugas vs. Hanlon

purpose or not, but it can be done. You can do that if you're a member of a committee and you have a special interest in a bill." Bugas qualified the statement by adding, "I've delayed or sped up a bill myself from time to time. It depends on what you want."

Bugas told the group that the amended House Bill 2620 came out of the House and went to the Senate between May 14 and early June. "There was a lot of time to hassle it out then (between the House and the Senate). But it just foundered over in the Senate," he said.

Bugas told the Chamber that although there is still some question as to the actual means by which mineral royalty money can be used to provide relief for impacted areas, there is still some hope that an equitable solution can be reached before the next legislative session begins in 1983. If there's any possibility, he explained, it's going to have to be from the county working under existing statutes. Perhaps a

way can be found to work it out after the next payments are collected by the county in July 1982 and before they are disbursed. Under existing law the State Attorney General's office has said it is illegal for one taxing district to give apportioned funds to another district. Bugas says he believes a way can be found for the county to do it before the money is disbursed.

Hanlon asserts that part of the change he made in the language of the bill would have made it legal for taxing districts to make some of their royalty receipts available to another district. Bugas maintains that that is beside the point as the bill, as Hanlon amended it, would have stood no chance of passing the House on a second vote due to other provisions in Hanlon's proposal.

For a more detailed look at Sen. Hanlon's side of this controversy please refer to the Vernonia Freedom issue Volume 3, Number 49 of October 15, 1981.

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