

Civil Rights

By WILLIAM R. DEIZ

Portland has made some notable gains in the area of civil rights in the past few years, particularly in the areas of housing and job opportunities. But Portlanders seem to forget that for the gains to maintain a degree of permanence, for them to MEAN anything, constant attention must be paid to the cancerous problem of racism. There can be no period of "benign neglect" as had been suggested by Patrick Moynihan but rather there must be anew commitment on the part of white America, particularly on the part of those in authority, to stamp out racism's ugly head.

For the past few years young blacks have been responding to the challenge "Stay in school, get an education" in ever-increasing numbers. But many of them, after years of training leading either to college degrees or specialized skills, are finding the door of real opportunity in the business sector still marked "for white only." Talented blacks, after being given an opportunity to develop their talents, are finding the same jealousy and resentment on the part of white employers and co-workers that plagued their parents.

In the job sector, blacks are faced with a stubborn and built-in bias -- that they are by nature "inferior" in intelligence to whites. Thus when blacks argue certain points with their employers, when they question certain policies, they are looked upon as either being "troublemakers" or as "having a bad attitude". When opportunities for advancement are continually denied talented blacks, and they become discouraged (as is only human nature) they are said to "not care about their jobs" when in actuality they may care deeply about their jobs and their own place within the company hierarchy.

Whites must begin facing up to the fact that they have no monopoly on brains and abilities. And blacks must be educated to the realities of living in a white world in which most majority members feel superior to minority members in EVERY category -- with the possible exception of sport (And in the long and glorious history of this country it is important to remember that only since the 40's have black athletes been allowed to prove themselves against white competitors).

Portland is a sleepy town and it is a pleasant one. It has been spared the bitterness and the demands that have confronted other American cities in the past decade. Portland has prided itself on being an enlightened, albeit out-of-the-way place to live. But Portland is going to have to start waking up to the real world -- a world in which not everyone is living comfortably in middle-class neighborhoods while their children attend comparatively well equipped schools and play in large parks away from busy traffic. A world in which black are looked at first and foremost as blacks and whatever else they may be -- author,



lecturer, teacher salesman, mechanic is secondary. The tragedy is not that blacks know all this -- they are made painfully aware of the real world every waking day; but that most whites refuse to admit to themselves that this world which is so real for blacks is also a part of their world.

Equal employment opportunity is not just a slogan, not something to joke about at a cocktail party or bring up at school board meetings, equal opportunity is a necessity if this city and this country are to survive.

It is fortunate to whites and blacks alike that most blacks are religious people who try to respond to outrage and indignity with compassion and understanding rather than hate. With God's help black people in America have come as far as they have against what seem like overwhelming odds to many whites.

But more and more, blacks, particularly younger ones, are turning away from the religion of their parents and substituting instead a doctrine in which violence and revolution are acceptable alternatives to compassion and love for ones enemies.

This is all too bad but it is a reality that must be faced. Stealing from another is considered a crime. Yet stealing from black people has been condoned by society. Mannered clothing styles, employment ideas are "borrowed" from blacks with no thought at all that this "borrowing" might make blacks angry. Blacks are constantly patted on the head, told "they are doing a good job" when what whites really mean is that the black in question has finally allowed himself to be put on a shelf, out of the mainstream of real authority and real power and thus powerless to direct his own destiny.

Those who refuse to go along with this systematic dehumanization, degradation and yes castration are "done away with" -- not by the lynching of grandfather's day, but by the lynching of the 1970's -- dismissal from the job...or transfer to another department.

When blacks cry out for their manhood it is not by any means the cry of an adolescent. It is the cry of someone who HAS his manhood, and isn't about to let society take it away from him without a fight.

We are all human beings and the one thing besides food and love that all human beings require is dignity.

Phone rate hike proposed

Pacific Northwest Bell filed (February 17) with the Oregon Public Utility Commissioner at Salem a request to increase telephone rates in Oregon.

The request, according to PNB Vice President and General Manager Donald L. Gundersen, would provide some \$20.6 million in additional annual revenue. Only about one half of this amount would be retained by the company after taxes.

It is expected that the PUC will suspend the rate increase and conduct extensive hearings.

Gundersen pointed to increased operational cost -- wages and materials -- and the increased cost of capital money as factor which have brought about a continuing downward earnings trend as the reasons for the company's decision to seek increased rates.

Underlining the seriousness of the company's financial position, Gundersen said, "we are asking the Commissioner for permission to put into effect immediately about \$5 million of the total increase. We need this amount to meet the immediate situation."

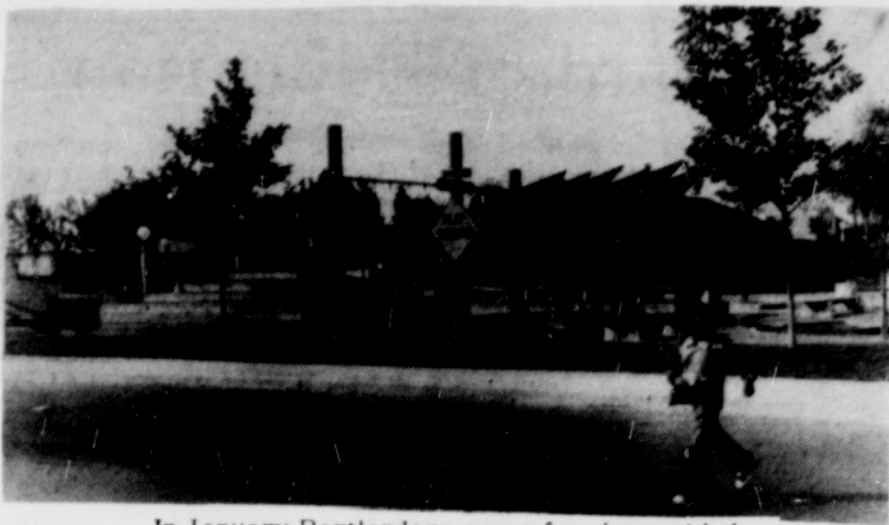
Gundersen said that details of the proposed rates and PNB's full filing in support of the request are available for review at the company's business offices throughout the state for persons wishing to learn more about them.

"During the past year," Gundersen said, "our earnings have not kept pace with inflation despite all-out internal efforts to control cost."

"It is because of this continuing drop in earnings," Gundersen added, "that we are seeking the partial relief that would raise our current rate of return to the level determined by the PUC in its order in 1969."

He said that it will become increasingly difficult for PNB to keep its commitment to provide quality service in the face of these lower earnings and the inflated costs of doing business.

The partial rate relief that PNB is requesting would provide increases in service connection, and move and change charges, and bring intrastate long distance rates generally... in conformity to the current level of interstate long distance charges.



In January Portlanders saw a few days with the sun shining as bright as a sunny southern California. Pictured here is a Unthank park.



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