



## The Editor's Desk

ALFRED LEE HENDERSON



## WE SEE THE WORLD THROUGH BLACK EYES

### Jungle or fort?

When a stranger travels Union Avenue he must think he is in a jungle or a fort. Store windows are boarded over, ramshackled buildings line the streets, even buildings in use are in poor repair.

Yet this is a community where people live, shop, work, and would like to have some degree of pride in their surroundings. Many residents, through Model Cities and other programs, or through their own hard efforts, have managed to repair and beautify their homes and gardens.

Many people spend hours in their yards, fussing with lawn and flowers; but much of the incentive must be lost when they have to drive past boarded-up buildings and tumble-downed shacks to get to their homes; or when they see a vacant and rotting house out of their kitchen window.

Any man who wants to do business in a community should have some interest and concern for his neighbors. No businessman should operate in such a way that he is a detriment rather than an asset. There is no excuse for the run-down condition of most of the business buildings.

Why should people shop in a store that looks like a fort -- that says with its exterior that it not only doesn't care, but is afraid of its neighbors? How can a businessman expect to obtain the business of the residents of Albina, let alone entice consumers from other parts of Portland into his store, when he implies that it is not safe.

We hear that many white Portlanders are afraid to shop in Albina, although they would be safer here than in nearly any other area of Portland. Who can blame them? Putting racism aside, who would want to pick among shattered glass and rubbish to step into a store that looks like a dungeon?

The fact that the old buildings can be remodeled to be presentable and convenient is demonstrated by the offices of Nero Industries on Union Avenue near Fremont, or by MEDIA's building. The fact that Jewell Glass and the Cathay Restaurant, among others, have chosen to relocate in Albina rather than leave the area, should demonstrate that they think this is a good place to do business.

The Lampus company surely must be attracting more consumers now that the people passing by see the furniture displayed behind beautiful show windows. Who can be inspired to go into a store and look around if they don't see anything but boards.

This is the age of the consumer and one of these days the people of Albina will show these merchants how they feel about those who think they must protect themselves against the people. They will stay away from those businesses that won't invest in a can of paint, who won't sweep the sidewalk occasionally, or who feel they must protect themselves from the community.

## Media needs leadership

Two board members of MEDIA, Inc. have announced (through the Oregonian) that they have appointed temporary co-directors for MEDIA, pending approval of the full board.

Louis Scherzer, President, and Bob Rogers, Secretary-Treasurer, said they have appointed MEDIA employees Harvey Rice and Dr. Donald Jones to be co-directors, although, because of the need for a singular figurehead, Rice "will probably act as temporary executive director."

Rice and Jones will replace Joseph Bostic, who was asked by the board to resign.

The decision to replace Bostic with two employees was based on two premises: 1) Leadership was picked from the ranks of the employees to avoid lengthy orientation. Scherzer said, "there is so much unrest in programs like this that to go out in the open market and attract someone new would be rather difficult." 2) The program is funded for only 8 months.

We believe these suppositions to be false and to be against the best interest of MEDIA. If there is a need and a purpose for MEDIA, then it should be given the strongest possible leadership. A joint directorship is difficult to administer and nearly impossible to define in terms of responsibility. If there are personnel problems and unrest among the staff, a strong director is needed.

Bostic is the second director fired in the last year due to staff dissatisfaction. Perhaps the board should look at its personnel practices, appeal procedures, and administrative lines of communication -- then stick to the policy.

The idea that no one outside the program would want the job, and the inference that perhaps an error was made in bringing in someone from California, is typical of the Oregon stigma against "newcomers". Oregonians, and especially Portland Blacks, seem to fear and mistrust anyone who was not raised in Oregon.

The two staff members will serve as temporary co-directors for 8 months, at which time the Model Cities grant will end. As an independent agency, it is not necessarily true that MEDIA cannot exist without Model Cities. If the board believes the program is valuable, they must hire a director who can find the necessary money to continue the program.

In these times of conflict, unrest, budget cuts and indecision, it would behoove MEDIA to hire a permanent director with the strength to overcome the problems and shape up the program, wherever he must be found.

Harvey Rice and Dr. Jones are probably both qualified for the position of Director. They should both be considered, along with any other applicants who are interested, for the position of permanent Executive Director.

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Rocky Butte conditions aired

Dear Sir:

As far as conditions are here in Rocky Butte Jail, we spend 22 1/2 hours a day in a dormitory. Our activities are dominoes, cards, chess, books, T.V., and a radio. We are not allowed outside activities, even though there is a yard with double fences and towers for this purpose. There is no circulation of fresh air, and there is a constant odor of human bodies and jail stink. When one man catches a cold or the flu, rather than remove this man to a hospital room here in the jail, he is left, among us and so everyone becomes ill.

If an inmate gets in trouble, he goes to the hole (isolation) cells for punishment. Here he may have mace or tear gas thrown on him, or maybe the guy in the next cell has a mental problem, and screams all night, while the guards squirt cold water from a hose on him. They say they have hearings here for offenders of the rules, but their hearings are by a sergeant and another guard who very seldom give justice.

I fell in the hallway once, injuring my arm. I was taken to the hospital and a cast put on. A few days

later the cast became unbearable, so I removed it. For this, I was put in the hole. While in the hole, I had a first hand view of how the hole was run. In my cell with me was an obviously demented man. I found that he had refused food for five days. I do not know what became of him, but I do know his only crime was a fifteen dollar traffic violation.

I have seen inmates who were seriously ill and refused medical treatment. We had a flu epidemic in January, and our only relief was aspirin. And if anyone could not get out of bed to eat, they were thrown in the hole. Drug addicts have been refused medical relief and told to suffer. Our medical care is faulty and incompetent on the whole.

I being a reasonably sane man, find this jail to be an insult to humanity and the

public it serves. When a man allegedly is confined for an infraction of the law, he is supposed to be innocent until proven guilty. I say this jail is run completely different than that. Here a man is treated as a convicted criminal, deprived of all his rights and forced to suffer indignities unfit for an animal and if, as I am doing

now, he complains, none hear him.

I have found all ears closed to the cries of men confined in this jail. I say it is time for change. We the inmates are humans, and we feel we are being treated as less.

Bruce Joe Gisbin  
 C Tank  
 Rocky Butte Jail

### Seniors honored

Dear Editor:

We certainly want to express our appreciation to you for giving recognition of our senior citizens in the **Portland Observer**, on a monthly basis, for the first time in the history of this city.

We believe you should be commended for your efforts

in attempting to improve the quality of life for all people in the community.

May God continue to bless and strengthen you.

Sincerely yours,  
 Marie Smith and Bill Ingram,  
 Advisors, Senior Adult Service Center



With Ron Hendren

### A YOUNG VIEW OF WASHINGTON

#### THE GREAT MAIL ROBBERY

WASHINGTON—After a year and a half of operation, America's latest governmental Edsal, the Postal Service Corporation, is grinding its way toward crisis as mail delivery grinds to a halt. Same-day mail service, which at one time was the pride of the nation, has already become a thing of the past in many parts of the country. The grand scheme of incorporating the postal system, operating it as a business, cutting costs and speeding delivery, has simultaneously become the butt of a new breed of cruelty jokes.

Former Postmaster General Winton Blount, sitting in on one of the early brainstorming sessions on the problems of mail delivery, is reported to have said: "I've been listening patiently now for three hours, and all I want is a simple answer to a simple question: If it is neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night that is holding up the mail, then just what the hell is the trouble?"

The trouble is that the postal corporation has moved too far too fast in an effort to cut costs at the expense of service. While the mail volume increased by 2.3 billion pieces over the last two and a half years, the number of postal employees decreased by more than 63,000. New machines designed to automate the mail system were installed without proper testing, and the system has been designed around other machines which are still on the drawing boards.

The haste has resulted in long hours of mandatory overtime for remaining postal employees, plummeting worker moral to an all-time low.

Only top postal administrators haven't felt the crunch. The old Post Office Department had eight assistant postmasters general. The new corporation has 17 assistant postmasters general and a new category of five senior assistant postmasters general -- bureaucratise which translates to high salaries. Today 20 postal officials are salaried at \$42,000

per year or more -- as many high-paid executives as are authorized for the entire federal executive branch minus cabinet members.

The new approach calls for centralized automated mailing centers, and even before the first of these new complexes was finished and tested, the corporation committed itself to spending \$5 billion for additional centers.

Meanwhile, neighborhood post offices are being phased out and local postmasters have not been allowed to fill vacancies. That, coupled with ever-increasing growth in suburban population centers, has pushed local offices to the brink. One California resident reported it took 14 days to receive a letter mailed from a post office only 25 miles from her home.

Members of Congress have been flooded with similar complaints. Senator Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) told his colleagues that constituent complaints about mail service in the nation's largest state sometimes reach 100 per day in his office. That level of congressional mail flow spells trouble for the fledgling postal service corporation.

And even the corporation admits it may have goofed. "We probably did go too far in our effort to save money," says Assistant Postmaster General Murray Comarow.

Save money for whom should be the question: An increase in first class mail rates from eight to 10 cents per ounce is probably on the way in the near future. Meanwhile the jokes continue to make their rounds (Smash the Mafia--mail it parcel post) and the mail backlog grows.

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ALFRED L. HENDERSON  
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