

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Black men, Black women

by Ronnie Herndon

### Keep the rate hearing

Public Utility Commissioner John Lobdell, recently appointed by Governor Victor Atiyeh, has said that he might eliminate the process of electric rate increase hearings.

Rather than hold a series of public hearings on The Pacific Power and Light Company's application for a 15 percent increase, he might grant a 9.5 percent increase and cancel the hearings.

The logic behind this is that rather than making PP&L wait for months of public hearings, as well as spend money for its testimony at those hearings, the smaller increase would be granted immediately. Therefore, although the percent increase is smaller, the extra months of collecting the extra money would give the company as much or more money.

Also, the 9.7 percent increase is within the inflation guidelines, and a larger increase might be hard to explain to the Carter Administration.

PP&L has had a rate increase each year since 1974. These were: 1974 — 20.7 percent; 1975 — 11.5 percent; 1976 — 14. percent; 1977 — 16.7 percent. All were well above the inflation rate and the Portland Consumer Price Index increase. The Public Utility Commission staff has recommended an 11.5 percent increase this year.

Lobdell's suggestion might sound fair enough, and there may be no great difference in the utility bills paid. The real issue is whether the public will have the right to participate in setting the rate structure. The customers have no choice in the electric company they use — in Portland they get PP&L or Portland General Electric, depending on where they live. The customer can't get mad and change companies.

The only way for a customer to intervene is at the public hearings held by the Public Utility Commission. If this process is taken away, not only will the people have no forum to present their ideas and information, but they will have no way to determine whether the PUC is doing its job properly.

Until the people of Oregon progress to the point where they will take over the utilities and control them themselves, they had better hang onto their right to be heard.

### Is this justice?

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Racism, poverty and all of the problems caused by an imbalanced economy — an economy where a few have the money and the power that it brings and the many have little or nothing — are at the heart of the matter. But aside from that — the basic cause of crime — it is easy to understand why there is so little respect for the law.

Right here in Portland we see what little chance a Black person has when he comes before a white jury, especially if the alleged crime was committed against a white person. A Black man defends himself against an armed white assailant and is found guilty of manslaughter; a white man shoots an unarmed Black and it is self defense. The government doggedly pursues a Black man for four years and when all else fails indicts him for mail fraud, knowing that for a Black indictment means conviction. Thousands of tax dollars are spent to convict a man who has devoted his life to helping others while organized crime runs rampant.

Young people are hassled and treated to profane and racist language by police officers who are sworn to protect them. The gang leaders get less prison time than the helpers and informants get the least of all.

The FBI and local police not only have infiltrated civil rights organizations with the intent to destroy them, but have participated in crimes against innocent people. Abroad, the CIA has killed, overthrown governments and perpetrated wars.

Business refuses to hire and house Black people, relegating them to a life of poverty, while the government refuses to enforce the laws. The public schools neglect to educate minority children and the children of the poor.

So when the subject of crime is discussed, it would do well to consider the criminal justice system and how it can be made just.

while every weapon this country possesses has been viciously used against them. Quiet as it's kept, Black women have always been and continue to be one of the most important psychological sources of strength, courage, and love for Black men.

**Black Women's Treatment of Black Men** "Black women don't know how to treat Black men," often times Brothers use this as justification for having white women. Space does not now permit discussion of that malady. Like most Black men, I was raised by a Black woman; because of this, I feel I can make a few comments about the treatment I, as well as other Black men, received from Black women.

I watched my grandmother go out to do maid work in white folks' houses year after year. She, like millions of other Black women were forced to accept the worst of the lowest paying jobs in this country. Black women did this not only to put food on the table, but as importantly to give their children a chance at a better life than they had. Along with the physical nourishment, we were daily given by example and lecture, the lessons and values we would need as men if we were to survive in this hostile country. Remember what we once called "Mother Wit?" These women did not suffer and toil to raise us so that we would forsake and condemn their daughters. Most Black women still stick by their men through thick and thin, which is a miracle when we realize how insidiously this country has worked to prevent this. I do not minimize personal problems that we encounter with each other. They seem worse now because more and more of the strengths of our African culture are being stripped from us; with the loss of this cultural protection and wisdom, we are beginning to suffer from mental and behavioral diseases we were once immune to. While we search for solutions to our problems, never should we forget what the real source of this misery is — P.S. it is not the Black woman.

**Black Women and Jobs** — Some misinformed Brothers are saying that "The Black woman is taking jobs away from the Black man." Brothers, in spite of those few sisters you see in office jobs, Black women still on the average earn less than Black men; Black women still are unemployed in higher percentages than Black men. Brothers, if you look real close as you will see that in many cases the jobs that have been taken from you have been given to white women. We must stop accusing each other of being the forces responsible for our oppression.

We are surrounded by grave problems that are the result of unrelenting racism: high infant mortality rates; low life expectancy; high unemployment; poor schools; and a rampaging drug epidemic; all of these problems will worsen with the coming recession. None of the problems are insurmountable, but if they are to be solved Black men and women have to be tighter than the nuts and bolts on the St. Johns Bridge.

Whether we decide to have serious relationships with one woman or five women, we must work at bringing strength and intelligence to our women — they deserve no less because they have given us all of this and more. It may or may not be important, but I have at one time or another made every mistake that I have described. Most of us have felt the pain of a broken heart, some of us have felt the gut-wrenching ache that comes from being separated from our children. Within me this pain is more than offset by the knowledge that the most precious, tender moments of my life have been shared with Black women and children.

Black man, all of this has been said knowing that this system is trying to make us all into sissies. We have no choice but to fight and solve our problems, to do otherwise will be to disgrace Malcolm, Martin and nameless millions of Kunta Kintes. Our allegiance must be to our women and children.

### Jury finds Gilcrease guilty of mail fraud

(Continued from Page 1 Column 6)

membership list for duplicates and missing ballots, and went with Marcus Glenn to deliver ballots. He said he had delivered ballots to three of the persons who had sworn that they had no knowledge of joining NACD or voting.

He said that he knew ballots had been marked without permission, but that "Gilcrease would not have done those things."

#### Gilcrease testifies

Gilcrease testified that when he agreed to run for president of NACD, there were less than 250 members in Region X (the Northwest) so he realized there would have to be an effort to increase membership if he were to have a chance to win.

In 1974, after receiving approval of the PMSC Board, he set up a committee of staff and supporters. They drew up campaign materials, application forms and material about NACD. He told them to go out and tell people about NACD, and to recruit members. Money was raised to pay for memberships for low-income people who could not afford to join.

He said he never instructed anyone to register members without their knowledge and never instructed anyone to complete a ballot without permission.

"Control addresses" were used by all the regions and this practice was approved by the NACD board because in previous years some people had not received ballots and others had received duplicates. The use of "distribution centers," insured that not only ballots would be distributed, but they could be checked against membership lists.

By the time of the 1974 election, the membership for the region (Idaho, Washington, Oregon and Alaska) was approximately 1,400. Most of those who had paid their own fee went to their personal addresses, and the remainder to the distribution centers.

Andrew Branch, the Seattle CPA who supervised the 1975 election verified that this system was used across the country.

Gilcrease testified that when he saw staff members mailing ballots, "I was very happy and enthused. I had a good feeling." He said he thought each person had been given permission to mark the ballot and didn't take time to check.

Gilcrease testified that during that period he was gone from 50-55 percent of the time and relied on his staff to follow directions and do their work.

The period 1973-1975 was extremely critical, with the Nixon Administration putting pressure on Congress to phase out the poverty programs. Gilcrease spent much of his time lobbying on that issue and also pursuing additional funds for PMSC.

Gilcrease explained the use of the labels. In the 1975 election the CPA had made an error when sending out the ballots. When this was discovered, eighteen members of the NACD Board decided in a conference call to send out new ballots. Because time was of essence, it was decided that Gilcrease's labels be sent to Seattle for the CPA's use. (This had been verified by Branch). Gilcrease had a set of labels because when the ballot labels were made, the president was routinely sent a set of labels for his mailing use, and these were also made available to any other member that wanted them.

#### Defense Summary

Brian Welch, in his closing summary, pointed out that the government had five years and unlimited resources to prepare its prosecution yet there was nothing to link Gilcrease to the illegal activity except the uncorroborated testimony of witnesses who were hostile to him — former employees he had fired.

The prosecution brought witnesses from across the country, yet rather than call some of those who were in town and readily available they referred to what those persons had said or might have said to the FBI or the U.S. Attorneys.

He mentioned that key witnesses had not been taken before the Grand Jury for sworn testimony, that witnesses had been told by the U.S. Attorneys that the defense attorneys would harass and attempt to confuse them, that the key prosecution witnesses had refused to talk with the defense attorneys, that at least one defense witness was threatened with prosecution if he testified.

One witness, Beverly Holderby, testified that the U.S. Attorneys said they would make an example of Gilcrease.

Out of 100 or so available witnesses, the government chose as its key witnesses four people who had previously been hostile toward Gil-

crease and had been fired by him. When testimony was received that Ms. Price and Ms. Kerans had poor reputations for truth, the government brought no evidence to the contrary. No members of the PMSC Board, the NACD Board, were called to testify. Betty Overton, chairman of the election committee was not called.

Government witnesses were provided immunity, or forgiveness of their part in any illegal activity as well as forgiveness of any prior lies to the government.

Welch said there was no testimony that Gilcrease marked any ballots or caused any ballots to be marked without permission. Welch maintained that if anyone had ever heard Gilcrease say to mark a ballot inappropriately "we would have heard about it."

Although inferred by the government to be wrong, use of the money, the labels, the controlled addresses were proper and approved by the Board.

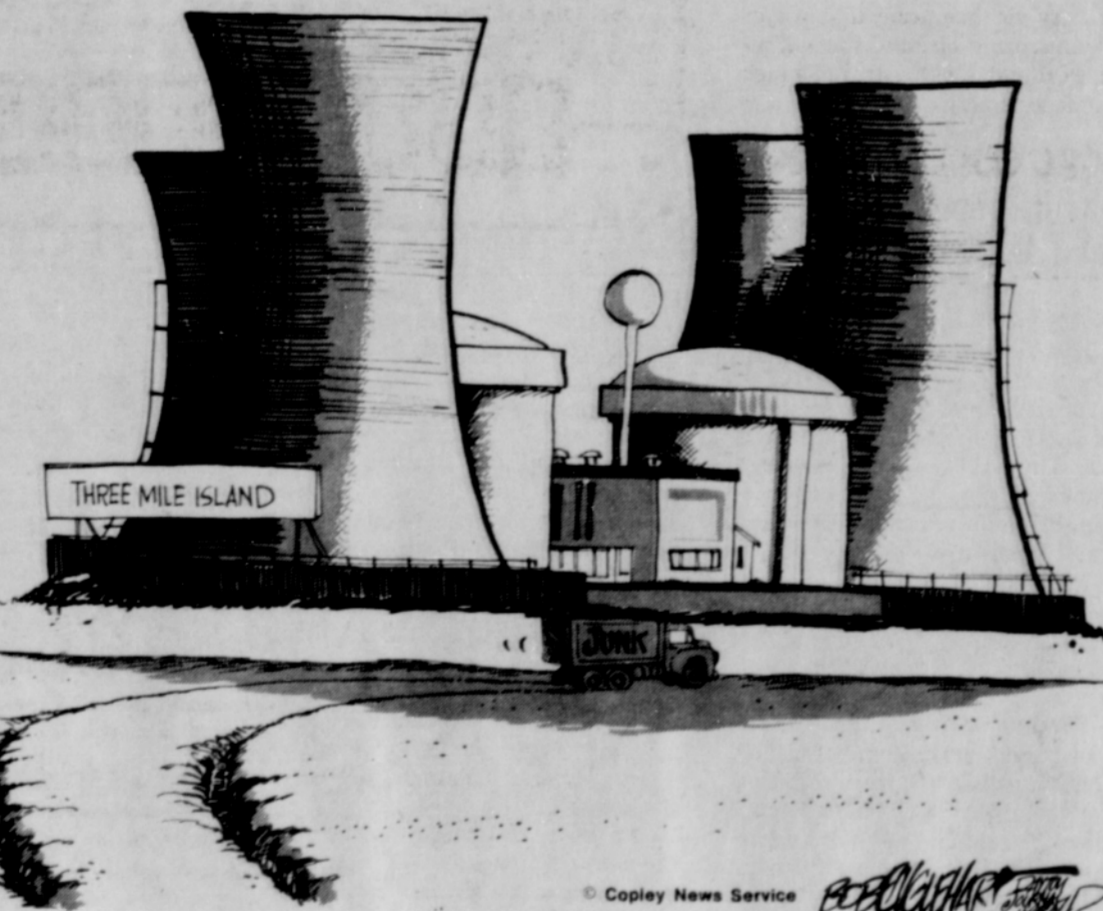
The hostility of Linda Campbell, he said, was demonstrated by the fact that after she testified, she stayed in Portland another day, and at noon during the trial reported to the U.S. Attorneys a conversation she just had with Lucas.

Pointing out that Gilcrease was a successful man, administering a \$60 million budget while at PMSC, whose career had been ruined by the accusations against him, asked, "would he have conspired with the likes of Lommie Price and Pamela Kerans, and then fire them? Does that make sense?"

The eleven member jury deliberated for approximately ten hours before reaching a verdict of not guilty on the eight 1974 counts and guilty on the twelve 1975 counts. One juror had been removed from the jury after other jurors reported that on the first day of the trial he said he had already made his determination on his own investigation.

This conviction is the termination of five years of investigation. Investigation of alleged misuse of federal funds led nowhere, but shortly after that investigation was closed, investigation of complaints of mail fraud in the election began.

FBI investigators reported that at one time four agents were assigned to the mail fraud case — interviewing hundreds of persons who had been involved in PMSC or NACD.



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