

School Board fires Superintendent Blanchard

Monday night the Portland School Board voted to terminate their superintendent, Robert Blanchard, ending a year of turmoil and speculation. Blanchard's problems began when Steve Buel was elected to the Board; Herb Cawthorne was appointed to fill a vacancy; Johathan Newman resigned and Sarah Newhall was appointed to his position.

The Superintendent, who had always had a supportive - often called a "rubber stamp" board was faced with a majority of four who are independent, who have no ego involvement with past policies, who have no constituency other than the voters, and who seek change.

Although some members of the Board and many members of the public felt Dr. Blanchard should have been replaced last fall, the Board decided to complete their

desegregation planning before considering the issue. That period of planning including much of the highly publicized ranting demonstrated decisively the inability of the superintendent to adjust to new philosophies and the inability of his staff to produce accurate information for the Board.

Monday night's decision followed a three part process - evaluation, determination of the role of the superintendent and deliberation as to whether Blanchard could fulfill that role. The Board went into executive session (behind close doors) to protect the confidentiality of personal matters. Although this fact is being used to imply secrecy, Dr. Blanchard had the right to have the meeting open to the public but didn't.

Following the closed meeting with their attorney Jack Faust, the Board

returned to the public meeting which was attended by many Blanchard supporters including administrators, principals, Bob Hazen of Benj. Franklin, former Board members Dr. Howard Cherry and Jonahan Newman. Among those who spoke in favor of retaining Dr. Blanchard was Warne Nunor of Pacific Power & Light, who said the difficulty between Blanchard and the Board revolves around one issue which many others "equal or more important" need to be resolved. LeRoy Moore, principal of King school who is under fire from the BUF, said the superintendent, "sets the tone and atmosphere" and must respond to the entire community, and not a "special interest group." Dean Giswold, rumored school board candidate, and unsuccessful former candidate, said it will be difficult to find a quality person for the

job. Charlotte Beeman, unsuccessful school board candidate and former assistant to Neil Goldschmidt, said she heard Blanchard "passed" his evaluation. Charles Davis, former Public Utilities Commissioner, said Blanchard is being used as a scapegoat.

Mrs. Osley Gates, a long time, volunteer and unsuccessful candidate for appointment to the School Board, praised Dr. Blanchard for his accomplishments in desegregation saying he has had the courage to face difficult problems. Pointing to the district's "benign neglect" of school organization she praised his reorganization attempts. She praised his elevating the office of Human Relations (Dr. Hartzog) to Assistant Superintendent status and said access has been provided at the Superintendent level and

minority groups are to blame for not using it. She pointed out that the district is 30 years behind in specialization and organization. She asked the Board to retain Blanchard.

Gary Witherspoon of 122nd Avenue blamed "self-interested dissidents" and Louise Weidlick, frequent candidate for the School Board and other public offices, spoke for the superintendent.

The School Board voted on a motion presented by Herb Cawthorne - that the superintendent be terminated June 30th with 90 days pay and benefits, and authorized the Board's attorney to negotiate with Dr. Blanchard on his contract. The contract had been extended through June, 1983, as one of the last acts of the "old board" last June, during the desegregation controversy. That action now forces

the district to negotiate a settlement on the remainder of the contract.

In voting for termination Wally Priestley said he thought the city came to a decision in about 1976 that Blanchard should leave, but it took the Board four years longer.

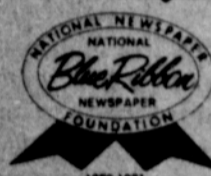
Buel explained that his vote to terminate was not based on integrity or character, that Dr. Blanchard is a fine man.

Cawthorne said the Board had decided to change its executive leadership, something done often by public bodies. The Board believes a different type of leadership is required. "I'm entitled to that opinion...and I will be happy to be subjected to whatever accountability for that decision."

Sarah Newhall said she has come to the conclusion that the breakdown in trust between Blanchard (Please turn to Page 2 Col 1)

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Linda Andrews was the first recipient of the annual Portland Observer Journalism Trophy, to be awarded each year to the outstanding eighth grade staff member of "Boise Speaks", the Boise Elementary School student newspaper.

The daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Andrews, Linda is an outstanding student and a veteran reporter. She loves to read, especially about science. She will attend Benson High School. Pictured with Linda is "Boise Speaks" advisor, Beth Nance.

Scott attempts unsuccessful "end run"

School Board Chairman Bill Scott might have salvaged his own political ambitions according to some "school board watchers" after his Saturday afternoon press conference. "For Bill to have come out like this - publicly endorsing retaining Blanchard as Superintendent when it is known that he privately feels Blanchard should go makes us wonder why."

Scott called a press conference Saturday afternoon to announce his support for Blanchard. The four members of the Board who were believed to favor Blanchard's termination, Steve Buel, Wally Priestley, Herb Cawthorne and Sarah Newhall, were not informed of the press conference although Buel and Ms. Newhall heard about it and attended. Board members Joe Rieke and Frank McNamara, who favor Blanchard's retention, passed out press releases to the crowd that had been invited.

The Board has been involved in a process for evaluating Blanchard - a process designed by Scott. Three meetings were scheduled - the first to evaluate Blanchard, the second to determine what the role of a superintendent should be, and the third to determine whether Blanchard should be retained. The Board members agreed that none would discuss the issue and that throughout the process all questions from the press and public would be directed to Scott.

Scott broke the agreement by holding the Saturday press conference prior to the third meeting, held Monday, June 16th. By way of explanation, Joe Rieke said, "They are going to do their thing Monday night, so we are doing ours now."

In his prepared statement Scott said the district is facing critical times including the need to improve education of children; enrollment decline; needs of handicapped and

immigrant children; desegregation; coordination with the community; a looming financial crisis.

"While we should be establishing priorities and initiating communication with our citizens and the State Legislature, we have instead engaged in non-productive and oftentimes petty bickering over narrow issues..."

"The strife and disagreement that have characterized many of our transactions on the Board of Education have narrowed our reason and impeded our ability to deal with these overriding concerns."

Blaming the "logjam" in the functioning of the district on conflicts within the Board and between the Board and the Superintendent and his administration, Scott called on the Board to "begin to act in a way that generate confidence and trust." He called on the Board to work together on the "real issues,"

the Superintendent to support the Board, and he called on the citizens to pull together to resolve the issues that divide. "It is clear to me that to seek new administrative leadership in this district would be ill-considered and ill-timed."

"Therefore, I call on the Board to join me in working together with the administration to resolve the major issues that I have identified. These are the real issues, not the matter of Superintendent Blanchard's tenure, as some would have it. Until we join with the whole community to define Portland's expectations for schools in the 1980s, we can't expect any superintendent to be successful; the Board has to lead the community in fulfilling the needs of our children, for the sake of Portland's future."

"I call on Superintendent Blanchard to support the Board of Education with earnestness and dispatch in its already established (Please turn to Page 7 Col 4)

Children need protection from volcanic dust

Children may face the same hazards from the suspension in air of volcanic ash as other age groups, except they are unlikely to be routinely exposed to heavy concentrations of ash as are certain occupational groups. However, their exposure may be increased because they are physically smaller and are less likely to adopt reasonable, prudent, preventive measures to avoid undue exposures.

A preliminary study of the effects of the ashfalls of 5/18 and 5/25 on high risk pediatric populations has been initiated by the University of Washington Schools of Medicine and Public Health. At this time, it does not appear that asthmatic children in the paths of these ashfall plumes have had any significant increase in their symptoms compared to children with similar respiratory problems who live in unaffected parts of the state.

The volcanic ash may cause irritation of the lungs or exacerbation or symptoms in children suffering respiratory illness (asthma, cystic fibrosis, tuberculosis). Preliminary samples of the ash show only low levels of free crystalline silica (5% by weight of the inhalable ash).

At this time it is not known whether continued periodic

emissions of volcanic ash, persistence of airborne ash in the respirable size-range, and extended inhalation of low levels of the ash over long periods of time could potentially cause chronic respiratory disease or silicosis among the general population, including children.

The most obvious step that can be taken to protect children from inhaling airborne ash is to keep children indoors when ash is visible in the air. Children should certainly be advised against strenuous play or running when ash is in the air, since exertion leads to heavier breathing, drawing small particles more deeply into the lungs. Parents might plan quiet games and indoor activities during such times. Communities in heavy ashfall area may wish to organize day-care programs to reduce the economic burden on working parents.

If children must be outdoors when ash is present in the air, they should wear a mask, preferably one marked with "TC-21C" and approved by the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). However, commercially available masks are manufactured for industrial use and therefore are designed to fit adults rather than children. One such approved mask,

Number 8710 of the 3M Corporation, is stated by the manufacturer to be adaptable to children as young as 5 years.

Fabric masks, including those improvised from handkerchiefs, will filter out the larger dust particles,

and should be dampened with water to be used when the dust is visible in the air if no approved mask is available. For children old enough to understand the difference, it might be helpful to breathe through the nose, where natural filtration of (Please turn to page 6 Col 4)

BUF applauds Board decision

"The Black United Front called for Mr. Blanchard's resignation more than six months ago, so we are very pleased that the Board terminated his contract," Ronnie Herndon, co-chairman of the BUF told the Observer. "Mr. Blanchard's policies had a catastrophic effect on Black children and parents. Our children were scattered all over Portland. The psychological and emotional damage caused by this is immeasurable."

"Even when our children attend neighborhood schools the education they received remained at the bottom of the academic ladder. We hope the Board will now show the same kind of courage it displayed

with Mr. Blanchard and keeps the promises it made to the Black community last August.

"The resolutions the Board passed last August were a package agreement designed to bring quality education to the Black community; the plan the Board passed in April was fragmented and left out some of the most essential ingredients needed to make quality education a reality for Black children."

"The School Board has a rare opportunity to join with the Black community to develop academic and cultural programs that will properly educate Black children. Hopefully the Board will take advantage of this."

Black United Front plans convention

By John Blank

An event of world-wide historic significance will occur in Brooklyn, New York, this June 26th through 29th: the founding conference for a National Black United Front. Delegates from at least 18 states will meet, according to the conference announcement, "to forge and develop a mass-based activist, progressive movement to speak and act on conditions facing the Black community nationally and internationally."

The conference is the logical outgrowth of grassroots struggles led by Black United Fronts in New York, Philadelphia, Portland,

Oregon, Cairo, Ill., and East St. Louis, as well as Mississippi's United League, around issues like education, jobs, and police brutality.

The delegates will participate in sixteen workshops on issues affecting Blacks, including housing, education, police issues, international affairs, prison, women, youth, and labor organizing.

In addition, interim officers from each region (West, Mid-west, South-Southwest, East-Northeast) will be elected to a national general council. (Permanent officers will be elected for two-year terms in June 1981.)

Rev. Herbert Daughtry, chairman

of the New York Black United Front, points out in the conference call that, "the conditions of our people have reached genocidal dimensions...In subtle and blatant ways, individually and collectively, we are being killed all day long." Noting the increased cutoffs of essential services to Black communities, the high rate of joblessness, the rise in police brutality and terrorist attacks against Blacks, Rev. Daughtry urges: "If we do not hasten to build unity, the 80s will be the decade of death for us."

More optimistically, Rev. Daughtry notes that a National Black United Front can be built

today because "the people are ready...The masses are on the move again. They are searching for a new vehicle. It is obvious that the old reactionary leaders and their organizations are discredited and are kept alive only by the enemies of our people."

The new Black movement is much more significant than one would guess from the almost total lack of attention being paid to it by the establishment press. As Rev. Daughtry puts it: "Black people in the U.S.A. by virtue of their history, number and position, have the potential to influence the destiny of the world."



Little Marie Dawan enjoys a playful pinch on the chin from her father Nebeeh Dawan at the "Tribute to Fatherhood" pre-Fathers Day Observance presented by Masjid Muhammad No. 62 of The American Muslim Mission. Next week, Observer reporter Askari, will feature a full-length report on The American Muslim Mission and their work in the Black community of Portland.

(Photo by Richard Brown)