



Clay Hardy enjoys the music of the Cascade Center Jazz Ensemble during Career Day.



Alyce H. Marcus, Affirmative Action Officer for the City of Portland, discusses city programs with Sylvester Keels.

(Photos: Richard J. Brown)

Public power interest grows

Washington, D.C. -- The interest in public power that has been growing in Oregon through the 1970s will climax on Election Day, November 4, when residents of 14 Oregon counties will vote on forming new people's utility districts (PUDs), writes John Bartels, a Eugene (Ore.) Water & Electric Board commissioner, in an article in the September/October issue of *Public Power* magazine.

Public Power is the journal of the American Public Power Association (APPA), the Washington, D.C.-based national trade organization representing more than 1,400 local publicly owned electric utilities in 48 states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, and American Samoa.

In his article, "14 New PUDs on Oregon Ballot," Bartels cites the principal reason for heightened interest of Oregonians in public power. "The rates of the Oregon publicly owned utilities are up to 50 percent lower than IOU (investor-owned utility) rates," he writes. "Recent public opinion polls indicate IOU ratepayers are envious of lower rates paid by the 20 percent of Oregonians served by consumer-owned utilities."

In addition to his position with the Eugene Water & Electric Board, Bartels is chairman of the National Public Power Planning Committee, an organization promoting the formation of publicly owned electric utilities across the nation.

Portland General Electric (PGE) and Pacific Power & Light (PP&L) are the two investor-owned utilities currently serving 80 percent of the population that will vote in the November election. Multnomah County, including the City of Portland, is the most populous area. Other PUDs are proposed in north Lincoln County, and all of Clatsop, Yamhill, Polk, Marion, Benton, Jackson, Klamath, Coos, Linn, Clackamas, Washington, and Hood River Counties.

A statewide organization, Oregonians for Utility Reform, is heading the drive to form the PUDs. The group also led a 1978 campaign successfully banning construction work in progress (CWIP) from the investor-owned utilities' rate bases. Bartel writes that David McTeague of Salem, Oregon, a director of Oregonians for Utility Reform, estimated that in 1979, "\$15 million was saved by Oregon ratepayers through (CWIP), but the way to really save money is public power."

Lower rates are not the only factor in the PUD movement, believes Bartels. He quotes Beverly Stein, a Portland attorney and legal advisor to the county PUD committees, who said, "People realize this energy problem is not going away and they don't see private utilities making the strides necessary for dramatic change...Dissatisfaction with nuclear power is also prevalent. Customer-owned PUDs would be more likely than private utilities to invest in conservation, cogeneration and small-scale renewable energy projects preferred by Oregon ratepayers."

Support for the PUDs, Bartels says, comes from established groups such as small Grange locals, the In-

ternational Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, Communications Workers of America and International Woodworkers of America locals, Northeast Portland Association of Neighborhoods, Oregon Gray Panthers, the Oregon Federation of Teachers, Oregon Fair Share and the Ratepayers Union.

Bartels expects the areas' privately-owned electric utilities to wage an expensive battle against the formation of PUDs. "The IOUs will likely do what they have done in the past, confuse the issues by expensive, saturation media campaigns designed to create fear..." He says that PP&L's filings with the state public utilities commission indicate that it will spend at least

\$840,000 to defeat the ballot measures.

Citing the strong records of existing Oregon publicly owned electric utilities which have pioneered wind energy research and other renewable energy projects, Bartels concludes, "In the next few years, we should know if Oregon public power can gain sufficient momentum to bring on the state's energy potential, creating jobs and securing for Oregon communities the anti-inflationary effects of local ownership of renewable resources. In a few weeks, when Oregonians vote, the likely course of events will be more clear."

A copy of the September/October issue of *Public Power* magazine is available upon request.

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