

# EDITORIAL/OPINION

## Prophet selection brings unity

The selection of Matthew Prophet as superintendent of the Portland school district provides an opportunity that the district has not had for many years—the opportunity to unify with a strong, competent leader and get on about the business of education.

The process used by the School Board to screen candidates and to make the final selection brought together the many varied elements of the community. And as rarely happens in a school district as troubled and divided as Portland's, all of those elements came to the same conclusion—that Matthew Prophet should be the new superintendent. Representatives of business, unions, teachers, administrators, parents, all came to one decision—for the first time ever, they agreed.

This unity can become the basis for a new coalition of support for the school district. The difficult decisions ahead—budget cuts, more school closures, adjustments to a shrinking economy—can be palatable and the changes that are necessary to ensure the academic success of all the district's children can be easier if the School Board also united behind Dr. Prophet and uses the tremendous goodwill toward him exhibited by the community to enhance the district's image.

After more than ten years of agony the Black community can look forward to a genuine opportunity for educational excellence. But this hope cannot fall on the shoulders of Dr. Prophet alone. It will only be fulfilled by the commitment of every member of the School Board.

## Support Jefferson football team

Jefferson High School plays Corvallis in the State AAA Football Tournament this Friday night at Jefferson. This is an opportunity for the community to come out and support our young men and women.

Last year some community members were embarrassed to find only about 25 Jefferson supporters at the game at Gresham, while the

Gresham supporters overflowed their side of the stadium.

We do a lot of talking about community support and we do a lot of talking about the need for a community high school. Now take a couple of hours and show up at Jefferson High School to see a good game. Give the team the support they need and deserve.



This should just about close that "window of vulnerability."

## Crashing reapportionment gates

by Mary Ellen Leary  
Pacific News Service

Congressional reapportionment, once the exclusive preserve of secretive, dice-loaded political pros, has been swept out of the smoke-filled back room to become one of today's hottest political issues.

Two new factors have wrought havoc with the traditional rules of the political gambling game this year: minorities and computers.

Black and Hispanic demands for fairness in political district design have been bolstered by the Voting Rights Act and now are guided by a multitude of track-wise, sophisticated organizations. This thrusts a new nonpartisan and unbalancing element into what traditionally has been a two-party squabble; Democrats vs. Republicans.

Minority demands in the reapportionment process have been greatly enhanced by the recent universality of the computer. No longer a tool reserved for a few experts, computers now can be used to design districts to suit anyone's taste, down to a gnat's eyebrow.

Computer-designed voting blocs can be applied to protect the cohesiveness of local neighborhoods, to hold together minority groups, to prevent dissection of cities and counties. A computerized argument complete with printouts illustrating unfairness packs a wallop no mere protest or legal arguments have provided before.

Of course, they also can be used to raise the art of gerrymandering to new heights.

"Computers open the door for more sophisticated gerrymandering," says Common Cause.

"Some wicked things are being done," said Alan Heslop, a reapportionment consultant at the Rose Institute at Claremont College in California. "A wave of gerrymandering worse than ever seen before is sweeping the U.S."

Fifteen states have finished drawing up congressional lines and 19 states have redrawn their legislative districts. Already it is clear the the shenanigans which in 1812 created the salamander-like district for Massachusetts' Gov. Elbridge Gerry and bequeathed his name to history has been better this year. North Carolina has produced "Fountain's Fishhook," Washington state has "Kiskaddon's Pimple" and California has "Burton's Bump."

But increasingly powerful minor-

ity groups have other factors going for them this year, especially the Supreme Court's 1979 affirmation of provisions of the Voting Rights Act aimed at insuring fair minority representation. In addition, a number of states have reformed their redistricting processes to ensure such things as contiguity (districts cannot leapfrog), cohesiveness, minority bloc protection and population equality.

Consequently, for the first time, substantial interests are intervening in a process previously thought too mysterious and arcane to quicken a citizen's pulse.

In Texas, which gains three new congressional seats because of population shifts to the Sun Belt, a coalition of minority groups has established its own computer center to challenge the congressional districting plan for that state. They are carrying their objections both to federal courts and to the Civil Rights Section of the Department of Justice.

In Virginia the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), along with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Common Cause, successfully mounted lawsuits challenging the constitutionality of that state's redistricting plan. In Missouri the NAACP is similarly challenging new districts with a lawsuit.

In Colorado computer programmers are helping Hispanics challenge new alignments. In California Hispanics have created an umbrella agency of some 60 different groups called Californios for Fair Representation, have hired a staff and secured their own political scientists, computer experts, accountants and lawyers to create the basis for opposing that state's redistricting plans.

While irate Republicans dominate the challenge to reapportionment in California with a petition drive to get a voter referendum, Hispanics, especially offended at the state Senate plan, are giving them some support. In a number of Southwest states Hispanics and Republicans have found mutual advantage in combining their protests. Hispanics also have mounted challenges in New Mexico, Arizona and even Michigan.

The NAACP, which is ahead of Hispanics in political know-how, is taking the same computer approach. "We may not get precisely what we want, but this infor-

mation gives us bargaining power," said Althea Simmons, director of the NAACP Washington office.

Of course, many of the disputes springing up across the country are traditionally partisan. In Oklahoma, where Democrats managed to solidify their strength, Republicans have a petition drive under way to ask voter repeal. In Illinois legislators literally got into fist fights over redistricting. Indiana Republicans, who dominate the state legislature, used the computer skills of pollster Robert Teeter's Market Opinion Research to devise congressional districts which seemed sure to transform that state's Democratic edge of 6-5 into a Republican majority of 7-3. Both parties have fled to the courts. In California Democrats contrived to push their one-seat congressional edge to a six-seat majority. "A sham," cried Common Cause, but it sailed through.

While California Republicans are retaliating with a petition drive for a popular vote on the Democrats' plan, this state's two biggest minorities, Blacks and Hispanics, are locked into their own rivalry over new districts that pit them against one another.

Said Verna Canson, NAACP regional director in California: "Whether this was done deliberately or not, the two minority blocs seem forced into conflict." One legislative consultant protested: "We didn't bring this about. We just counted people where they live, and in many areas, especially around Los Angeles, Hispanics are moving into and even dominating neighborhoods formerly all Black."

Some observers fear this kind of minority bloc confrontation may spread across the country though the '80s if it is built into reapportionment. Others believe Hispanic aspirations are being manipulated by Republicans to embarrass Democrats.

It is curious that the efficacy of the Voting Rights Act is being tested with this year's reapportionment process just as Congress is debating whether to extend it. Many think reapportionment will prove conclusively how much the act is needed.

"Whatever Congress does about the future, the Voting Rights Act is law right now," said the NAACP's Simmons. "We see reapportionment closely linked with that act. Where we find discrimination, we will turn to the Department of Justice."

© 1981 Pacific News Service

## Letters to the Editor

### Shadburne challenges McCoy's charges

To the editor:

I must take issue with a statement made by Commissioner Gladys McCoy in the October 8, 1981 issue of the *Observer*. In that article, McCoy stated that I had been responsible for the Regional Jail not being sited in Troutdale and this led to the inability of the justice system to handle prostitution in Portland.

The record, however, shows that I

had agreed to work with the then-director of Justice Services for Multnomah County in dealing with the City of Troutdale, with which the County was ineffectively negotiating.

I am further of the opinion that Commissioner McCoy has misread the community by suggesting that the only solution to the prostitution issue is to "lock up the prostitutes." It seems to me that a more positive

approach would be to also strengthen law enforcement on the "John" or customer. This is one suggestion of the Task Force on Prostitution which I have set up. I hope we can all work together to solve this community problem. If you have any ideas for making your neighborhood safer, please contact my office at 248-5213.

Gordon E. Shadburne  
Multnomah County Commissioner

### Reagan should support Voting Rights Act

To the editor:

In 1981, our nation's political leaders in Washington, D.C. are debating the passage of the Extension of the Voting Rights Act.

Many Americans may find it hard to believe that certain Americans of color still are victims of violations, manipulation, gerrymandering and language barriers as they seek to exercise their right to vote.

The Voting Rights Act, first passed in 1965, provides protection for these citizens.

Both the House and the Senate must act on this measure. The House has already voted; the measure is now pending in the U.S. Senate.

Despite the fact that the members of the U.S. House of Representatives have passed the Voting Rights

act by an overwhelming majority—389 for, 24 against, and 20 not voting—President Reagan has yet to lend his support to the passage of a strong measure.

He is strangely silent; he must speak out.

NAACP's Benjamin Hooks testified, "There is no doubt in my mind that the Voting Rights Act is the single most effective piece of legislation drafted in the last two decades."

The Joint Center for Political Studies, a non-partisan research group in Washington, D.C., states, "It would be a serious mistake to abandon the protection of minority voting rights at the very time our nation is undergoing a systematic reassessment of many national policies, commitment and even beliefs."

"In times like these, when so much is at stake and when new

political and economic realities are having a wrenching effect, the Voting Rights of the most disadvantaged in our society must be protected."

"In the final analysis, it is the only safety net that minorities can rely on."

NAACP believes the majority of the citizens of this nation fully support a strong Voting Rights Act.

The President of the United States needs to know you support the Voting Rights Act. He must be told.

Please speak up and let him know. Place a call or send a wire to President Ronald Reagan, The White House, Washington, D.C.

Thank you.

Lucious Hicks, IV  
President, NAACP,  
Portland Branch

### Reagan persecutes federal employees

To the editor:

I am outraged by the Reagan-initiated bust of the air controllers union (PATCO) by the Federal Labor Relations Authority. As a former federal worker and union member, I am horrified to watch this shocking persecution of federal employees set a dangerous precedent for all public workers (30 percent of the workforce) and for the public we serve.

Never before has the federal

government perpetrated such harassment, slander, jailings, fines, general legal terror, and wholesale firings against its own workers. The government, as representative of citizens, ought to be the fairest, most eager-to-negotiate employer. Instead, Reagan is using the PATCO challenge to resurrect the worst union-busting tactics since the grim days of Joe McCarthy.

My experience as a public servant convinced me that union representation and the right to strike are often the only means to fight effectively

for decent working conditions which will safeguard public health and welfare.

I see the administration's vindictive campaign against PATCO as part and parcel of their starve-the-poor, feed-the-rich (and the military) campaign. All targets of the social service slashes and of Reagan's anti-labor offensive must unite behind the valiant air controllers.

Jamie Partridge  
Portland, Ore.

### PERS Fred Meyer investment defended

To the editor:

Fred Meyer is one of the best investment opportunities that has ever been opened to the Public Employees Retirement System. The benefits from this transaction will clearly fall on all Oregonians and particularly the members of the Retirement System.

The management structure of Fred Meyer will not be changed by the sale. And, the current management will own a considerably larger portion of the company than they do now. Fred Meyer employs thou-

sands of Oregonians and will continue to be headquartered in Portland.

Concern over potential conflicts between regulatory agencies and Fred Meyer was expressed in a recent letter to the editor. Retirement funds are not owned by the State. They belong to the workers and retirees in the system.

The retirement fund is currently invested in hundreds of other companies doing business in Oregon. It is unlikely that the Investment Council, as trustees of this fund, would consider trying to affect any

state or regulatory decisions concerning one of its holdings. They never have in the past.

The Fred Meyer investment will not favor one retailer over another. Retirement funds are already invested in Sears, May Department Stores (Meier & Frank), K-Mart, Albertsons, and many other retail businesses. Fred Meyer is a very strong retailer with high earnings that will continue to prosper for the benefit of Oregon's retirees.

Roger S. Meier  
Chairman, Oregon  
Investment Council

## Portland Observer

The *Portland Observer* (USPS 959-680) is published every Thursday by Exile Publishing Company, Inc., 2201 North Killingsworth, Portland, Oregon 97217, Post Office Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208. Second class postage paid at Portland, Oregon.

Subscriptions: \$10.00 per year in Tri-County area. Postmaster: Send address changes to the *Portland Observer*, P.O. Box 3137, Portland, Oregon 97208.

283-2486

National Advertising Representative  
Amalgamated Publishers, Inc.  
New York



MEMBER



Association - Founded 1885

Be concerned!  
Be informed!!  
Know the facts!!!

Subscribe Today!

Receive your *Observer* by mail  
Only \$10 per year.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Make checks payable to:  
Portland Observer  
P.O. Box 3137  
Portland, Oregon 97208