

METROPOLITAN



Easter is the season for renewal and life: Charles, 12, Michael, 8, Sarah, 4 and Allegra Green, 9, coax along two beautiful plants. (Photo: Richard Brown)

Unemployed explain problems

Out of work Portlanders testified to common losses and injustices they've suffered in the current depression at an Unemployed Speakout last Tuesday. They also spoke of possible unity so the unemployed can help themselves. The March 22nd event, sponsored by the newly-formed Portland Committee for Unemployed Action (PCUA), attracted 35 at the King Community Center.

The committee is among a growing number of local unemployed groups which are forming around the country.

Rosie Goldsmith of PCUA explained the group's origin, picketing against the Hyster plant closure. She said PCUA viewed the closure as corporate irresponsibility, playing communities against each other for concessions, then closing down anyway.

Ms. Goldsmith said PCUA hopes to bring unemployed and employed people together to demand jobs, basic needs such as health insurance, and to prevent foreclosures, evictions, and utility shutoffs. Unemployed groups in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia have won delays on foreclosures, and prevented plant closures.

Ms. Goldsmith complimented those giving testimony for their "courage to speak out and determination to make their voices heard." Common themes of unfair management, family difficulties, and demands to accept less pay and benefits or lose jobs came up in the speakout.

A man fired from an auto dealership said he was doing the job of the boss' brother as well as his own. He said job tensions led to frequent fights with his girlfriend. He believes that "The employers have us

by the b----- . . . They know there's a vast ocean of unemployed out there to replace us at any time."

A Mr. Rich attacked government rules that require accepting jobs near the minimum wage, or losing unemployment checks when that wage will hardly support a teenager, much less a family. He said that blacks are still last hired, first fired, and even many with college degrees can get only janitorial jobs. Jokingly, he said with several TV cameras and radio microphones present, he hoped a "Hollywood producer will spot me, and I'll be gainfully employed again."

A woman laid off from a proof-reader job said she had to endure harassment from her boss because she had a family to support. Despite compliments from customers on her work, and four raises, she said she was laid off to make way for a woman who held the job before her.

She and a female city employee said management rejected offers from employees to work shorter hours to prevent layoffs. The city employee said management let it be known it felt accepting suggestions would set a bad precedent of labor telling management what to do.

Jamie Partridge, a laid off grocery clerk, said he worked several years at low paying jobs to qualify for a \$10-an-hour union grocery clerk job. Within a few months he was laid off, and now much of the same job is being done by \$3.60-an-hour courtesy clerks. He said the "recovery" means people are hired back at lower wages, and low wages will cause another crisis in a few years.

Marceline Canterbury said she spent nine months' unemployment planning a support group, Unemployed United. She said she

hopes the group (operated through the Southeast Uplift neighborhood group) will help jobless people share skills and information, such as babysitting, job leads, and free entertainment.

PCUA brought a speaker from a New York unemployed group, Ronnie Laland. He said the jobless crisis will continue as jobs are exported to low wage havens in the Far East and elsewhere, or replaced by high-tech machinery. People find themselves in breadlines "not knowing what to do. . . feeling dehumanized by having to look for jobs that don't exist." He said that as individuals people are powerless, but together they can win changes, a consciousness he finds especially strong in the black community.

PCUA sponsored a picket of about 25 at the Northeast Unemployment Office March 23rd. PCUA spokesperson Sandy Willow said the picket called for ending the "ludicrous requirement for job searches for jobs that aren't there." She said the unemployment system encourages people to think unemployment is temporary, when it's permanent for many black youths as well as an increasing number in other groups.

Ms. Willow said PCUA wants to work with other groups on welfare issues, and on a People's Court of the Hyster closure later this spring.



Construction contractor Paul E. Emerick, president of Emerick Construction Company of Portland, was installed as chairman of the Highway Division of the Associated General Contractors of America (AGC) March 15 during the group's convention in Atlanta.

AGC represents 8,500 general contractors in the construction industry and approximately 24,500 other firms in related fields.

Bell joins education council

EUGENE—Jewell H. Bell, 51, a former education specialist with the Massachusetts Bureau of Equal Educational Opportunity, has been named director of the Council for Minority Education at the University of Oregon.

She will administer the council's programs for minority students including the orientation program, tutorial services, career and academic

counseling, and student advocacy. As the director, she will also plan minority student recruitment efforts and serve as executive officer for the council.

The council is composed of eight faculty members, four community members and four students. The council office has a staff of four, including the director.

Ms. Bell currently serves on the board of directors of the Campus Interfaith Ministry and of the Eugene Symphony Association. She also serves on the Equal Educational Opportunity Review Committee for the Oregon Department of Education.

She and her husband, Derrick, UO School of Law dean, have three children.

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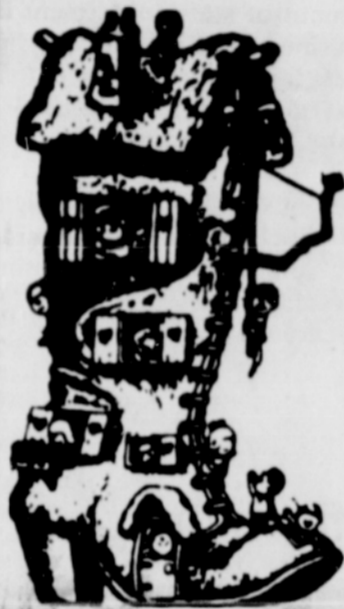
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