Citizens Urge City Officials to Enforce Subpoenas

by Jerry Garner

"Why does this city council want to weaken a process established by the voters and intended by them to have the powers to achieve its goals?" These statements were made by Herb L. Cawthorne, president, Urban League of Portland.

Cawthorne made this comment last Wednesday while testifying before the Portland city council, regarding whether the Police Internal Investigations Audit Committee (PIIAC) have the power to subpoena police officers. More than a dozen witnesses testified before the council, each stated that PIIAC does have subpoena powers.

The reason why Cawthorne and others submitted testimony to the council, is due to the refusal by three Portland police officers to testify before PIIAC. PIIAC has been trying since October of 1985 to get the officers to testify before the committee, concerning allegations made against the officers by a citizen.

On the advice of an attorney representing the officers on the behalf of the Portland Police Association, they have refused on three different occasions to testify before the committee. The police association claims that PIIAC has no subpoena power, therefore, no authority to compel the three officers to testify before it.

Others, like Jeffrey L. Rodgers disagrees with the police association's interpretation of PIIAC's authority. Rodgers is a former city attorney, and a former member of the Citizen Task Force/Study of Internal Investigations. He told city council members that PIIAC **does** have subpoena power.

Rodgers said, "The jurisdiction of PIIAC is limited to investigating the internal investigations system utilized by the Bureau of Police in resolving allegations of police officers' misconduct. Rodgers went on to say that therefore PIIAC has the authority to question witneses appearing before it on all subjects which are relevant to evaluating the nature and quality of the Police Bureau's system for resolving allegations of police misconduct, or which are relevant to the nature and quality of the Police Bureau's investigation of a particular allegation of police officer misconduct which is on appeal to PIIAC.

The police association has been resisting PIIAC since its formation in 1982. PIIAC, was formed due to two scandals involving Portland police officers in 1980 and 1981. In 1980 members of the bureau's drug unit were involved in criminal activities, the 1981 incidents involved officers dumping dead oppossums in front of a black owned restaurant.

These improper actions by members of the police bureau led to ballot measure 51. The ballot measure which led to PIIAC was placed on the ballot for voters. The police union campaigned hard for the defeat of ballot measure 51; it was reported that the union contributed $70,000 in hope of defeating the measure. Ballot measure 51 passed by a narrow margin.

So far the council committee, which oversees PIIAC, has voted 2-1 in favor of the officers testifying before the audit committee. Commissioners Mike Lindberg and Margaret Strachan voted in favor of the police officers testifying; Commissioner Dick Bogel voted against making the officers testify before PIIAC.

Now the full city council must vote on the issue. John Blank told council members that they should make the officers testify to show citizens that PIIAC is "not a window dressing committee." Representatives from the NAACP; Portland Chapter of the National Lawyers Guild; Urban Indian Council; Black United Front; PIIAC; National Conference of Christians and Jews, each urged council members to enforce the subpoena authority of PIIAC.

Only Stan Peters, president of the police union and an association attorney testified against making the officers testify before the audit committee.

Poor Health Cause of Increase in Black Death Rates

by Jerry Garner

The difference between whites and blacks in the areas of education, income and type of employment are revealed most vividly in the facts concerning health and life itself. Disparities in health claims the lives of 60,000 black Americans each year.

Although poor lifestyle contributes to the poor health among blacks, poverty and deep cuts in food and health programs are also to blame for high death rates among blacks.

Blacks' disease and death rates compared to whites are greater in the following six categories: heart disease, homicide, cancer, low birth weight, cirrhosis and diabetes, according to a report recently released by the Department of Health and Human Services.

The report, based on a year-long study of minority health problems estimated that from 1979 to 1981 an annual average of 138,635 blacks below the age of 70 died from all causes. From the same diseases, had the black death rates been the same as white's death rates, the number of black deaths would have been 79,693 annually. This means that 58,942 blacks die needlessly each year.

Besides poverty, the lack of health insurance and poor prenatal care are the major contributors to health problems (one-fourth of blacks and hispanics lack year-round health insurance coverage, almost twice the rate of whites).

Homicide is a health problem among blacks also. This is because 10 percent of black death rates are homicides, 50% of which result from drug abuse and 50% to abuse of alcohol. Despite the serious health problems facing blacks, the Department of Health and Human Services has failed to take action to reduce the disease and death rate of blacks.

The only action the agency plans to do is to improve the health of blacks and other minorities, by working with new initiatives that can be achieved with existing resources through added education, research and "outreach" programs.

Aerobics for Kids

A new class at Peninsula Park Community Center, spring term, is Fun With Aerobics, an exercise and conditioning class especially for youth 8-14 years. The aerobics class will meet at Peninsula Park Community Center on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 2 four-week sessions from 4-5 p.m.

Register for Session I — April 8-May 1 or Session II — May 6-May 27. Cost is $10 per 4 week session. If signing up for both Session I & II, the fee is $15.

Call Peninsula Park Community Center — 285-4222 for more information or stop in at the community center on N. Portland Blvd. & Albina to register.

The Olympic runner, Jesse Owens, established four world track records in one afternoon.

Don't throw out overripe bananas. Mash or sieve them, sprinkle on a little lemon juice and freeze. Use later in cake or bread batter.

Senior Citizens Can Defer Paying Property Taxes

Oregon homeowners age 62 or over can delay paying property taxes on their residences under the state's Senior Citizens Property Tax Deferral Program. Interested seniors who haven't already signed up for the program need to apply with their county assessor by April 15.

Under the program, the state pays the qualifying homeowner's property taxes. The deferred taxes must be repaid when the owner dies, sells the property, or no longer uses the property as their main residence. An annual interest charge of 6 percent also must be paid.

To qualify for the program, a homeowner must be 62 or over by April 15, must own and live on the property, and must have a household income of less than $17,500. Household income includes both taxable and nontaxable income.

Senior citizens only have to file once to defer taxes on their residence. After the initial filing, the deferral automatically continues every year, unless the homeowner decides to withdraw from the program.

A second property tax relief program for senior citizens — deferral of special assessments — allows homeowners age 62 and over to defer payment of special assessments for property improvements. These are assessments by a city, county, sanitary district or other taxing district for improvements such as paved streets, sidewalks and sewers.

Homeowners must meet the same requirements as for the property tax deferral program, except they must apply each year to defer the special assessments. Applicants file with the office of the taxing district that billed them for the property improvement. The initial application may be made any time during the calendar year in which the payments to be deferred will come due.

For more information on these programs, contact your county assessor's office or the Oregon Department of Revenue.

Deaths on Oregon Highway

Forty-one traffic fatalities were reported in Oregon during March compared with 24 fatalities in March last year. The March total brings the 1986 count to 121 for the first quarter, compared with 94 for the first quarter last year.

The 41 fatalities included five people who died in Multnomah County when their car was forced off the I-205 bridge over the Columbia River. Although only two of the five bodies have been found, the other occupants of the car are presumed dead by authorities.

Double fatality accidents occurred in Multnomah and Clackamas counties. All other fatalities occurred in single-death accidents around the state.

Traffic victims included 23 drivers, 10 passengers, three motorcyclists, four pedestrians and one bicyclist.

March fatalities by county are listed below.

Baker, 1; Clackamas, 4; Clatsop, 1; Columbia, 1; Deschutes, 1; Douglas, 1; Gilliam, 1; Grant, 1; Jackson, 1; Klamath, 1; Lane, 5; Lincoln, 2; Marion, 2; Multnomah, 11; Umatilla, 1; Wallowa, 1; Wasco, 1; Washington, 3; Yamhill, 1.

Artists Space Available

The Buckley Center Gallery at the University of Portland has space available for artists from the Portland metropolitan and surrounding areas to display works.

The deadline for interested artists to submit slides and biographical information has been extended to April 25. Send the material to: Director of Cultural Programs, University of Portland, 5000 N. Willamette Blvd., Portland, OR 97203.

Exhibits run from three to four weeks, September through April.