

EDITORIAL

The Portland Observer

School Daze: Still With Us

By Professor McKinley Burt

Last week I concluded my article on education with a comment on the 'appalling' test scores for third graders in the northeast community. What is even more appalling is that no one I talked to was surprised. There was

“...one can detect a slow ominous 'had-it-up-to-here' burn”

We hope this is not an indication that the public in this area has been whipped into a sullen silence by years of cumulative educational and social events seemed destined to crush the hopes the most committed parents for a good education for their children; Nor that our most strident activists have, like revolutionaries,

grown older and quieter—just when they are most needed. It could be the case, however, that the people are angry, just plain angry and sick and tired of years of frustrated attempts to secure a decent education for their kids.

The conversations I have had with a number of parents, teachers and students have not revealed that usual tendency to leap upon the classic 'whipping boys' of the educational institution, accom-

panied by demands to "throw the rascals out". Rather, one can detect a slow ominous 'had-it-up-to-here' burn. The kind of hard-nosed mindset that may presage some long and bitter struggles ahead—quite possibly legal.

It will be interesting to see where the first 'revolts' will break out, for we have intolerable situations all over the place, not just Albina. And not just Portland, or Oregon. For the present, the establishment (school administrations) has been able to keep the public mind focused on the economic themes; "American education is 'going to hell in a handbasket', primarily because we refuse to fund it at a level worthy of a leading world power". All over the nation we have the "Proposition 5" model for generating visions of absolute collapse of school systems. No one on either side in the education cost controversies seems to remember that all of these shortfalls were predicted years ago.

So it is that when there was no meaningful response from the powers that be—school districts and boards, city councils, state legislatures, congress, etc. --fast-aging property owners brought matters to a screeching

halt. The education establishment is fighting back with statistics; reams of them, but centering around (again) two prime economic themes underlying what is called "school productivity". The May issue of "Oregon Education" magazine brought this out very clearly. This is the official publication of The Oregon Education Association.

Theme No.1 provides us with the popular (and fashionable)

"Public School Expenditures Per Pupil: Comparison of Lowest and Highest Spending States". On the left hand of a chart are listed in descending vertical order, first, the seven "lowest spending states" and below them the "highest spending states."

To the right, we have three columns of corresponding performance: "School Expenditures per Pupil 1989-90; Average SAT Scores, 1990"

Percent of High School Seniors taking SAT, 1990".

This type of chart, whether com-

pared for 14 states or for all the nation's states, has occasionally produced absolute hysteria among protagonists on either side of the education controversy. Why? Because we see that the seven states spending the least on education, averaging about \$3200 per pupil per year, spend about half of what is spent by the seven states with the highest per-pupil expenditures. But when you look at the average SAT scores, you see that the lowest spending states show much higher achievement.

But before you fall off your seat, be advised that the higher-spending, lower achieving schools had as many as ten times the number of high school seniors taking the SAT. This is also a state-wide and urban phenomenon and, according to school administrators, the cause derives from the "the kinds" of students who nowadays take the SATs. Do you know who they are talking about? You'll find out next week.

Mets Outfielder Surrenders

New York Mets outfielder Vince Coleman surrendered to authorities and was freed on \$5,000 bail for allegedly throwing a powerful firecracker at a group of fans.

Police said the 31-year-old outfielder surrendered to Los Angeles City Fire Department arson investigators about 5:30 p.m. Tuesday and was booked at the Parker Center jail in downtown Los Angeles.

He was to be arraigned Wednesday in Los Angeles Municipal Court on one felony count of unlawful possession of an explosive device.

Two children were injured and a woman's hearing was reportedly damaged when Coleman allegedly tossed a powerful firecracker near a group of fans outside Dodger Stadium last month. Coleman is on unpaid leave from the Mets.

Support For Child Care Workers "Worthy Wages" Grows

Calling it a "win" for this session to be the first state in the nation to have introduced "worthy wage" legislation for child care workers, proponents of Senate Bill 1089 plan to continue in their push for minimum wages and benefits for child care workers through the legislative interim.

SB 1089, introduced at the request of the Oregon Public Employees Union:

Calls for a Hay & Associates wage and benefit comparability study of nonmanagement positions at a sampling of certified day care and residential facilities;

Requires all certified day care facilities to pay comparable rates within five years;

Encourages all certified day care facilities to provide a sliding scale to ensure that 10% of the facilities' customers are low income individuals or households; and

Provides for 75% any new federal child care and block grant money to be used for compensation during the five-year phase-in period.

SB 1089 was approved in the Senate by a vote of 18-12 on June 2.

"We got a win out of this session of the Legislature by being the first in the nation to have gotten as far as we did in the legislative process," said B Dan Enos, OPEU's lead person on this issue. "It seems absurd to me that in time of war, like World War 2, we can have national support for affordable, quality child care while in time

of peace we do not have national support for 'Worthy Wages' for child care workers."

And the problem still remains that child care workers are paid peanuts; tending elephants pays more.

Using the Hay & Associates point system that SB 1089 calls for to determine which jobs are comparable, the state Executive Department 1993 salary survey found that:

A private sector Early Childhood Assistant was paid \$8,855 while a private sector Office Assistant was paid \$16,572, or an 87.1% difference.

The same survey showed that an Early Childhood Associate Teacher was paid \$10,710. By contrast, other comparable jobs, their pay, and the difference between them and the Early

childhood Associate Teacher are:

Accounting Technician, \$22,356, 108.7%;

Office Specialist, \$23,364, 118.2% and

Licensed Practical Nurse, \$22,956, 114.3%.

The average disparity among all of these jobs with the child care workers is 107.05%. In other words, workers in those comparable jobs are paid more than twice as much as those to whom we entrust our very youngest children.

Based on the educational background required for the job and salaries in comparable professions (such as K-12 teachers' salaries), a reasonable salary would be between \$20,000 and \$25,000 per year.

"A colleague of mine," Enos said, "an experienced child care worker at the Waverly Children's Home in Portland, said, 'I must decide whether to quit the work I love or elect never to have a child because I can't afford to raise one.'"

And, the salary range is hurting our children.

The annual turnover rate for child care workers is more than 60% in child care centers in Oregon -- It's 50% nationally.

"We are aware of the inequities of compensation for child care," said Arlene Collins, chair of the Oregon Commission on Child Care appointed by the Governor. "Our experience with SB 1089 this year and other factors has led the Commission to

believe that total compensation issues will be one of our leading priorities during the interim and at the next session."

Catherine Tetric, legislative spokesperson for the Portland Worthy Wage Coalition, was another leader in the campaign for the worthy wage bill this session.

"The coalition we put together to push this bill will stay together over the interim," Enos said. "We will keep working during the interim and we expect to win next session because we have built the strongest coalition of its kind on this issue."

For more information, please contact B Dan Enos, at 252-4688; Arlene Collins, at 228-4211, or Catherine Tetric, at 774-8459.

We Must Think How We Define Diversity On Campus

by Morris Price

More black students than ever before will be on American college campuses when classes begin this fall. But many of these institutions will not be truly diverse. In fact, it's time to change our thinking about what diversity on campus is really about.

As the result of aggressive recruiting campaigns, many traditionally white colleges attracted a greater number of black students and achieved their goal of diversifying their campuses. The majority of the nation's 1.3 million black students will be on traditionally white campuses.

However, congratulatory handshaking on some of those campuses has turned to concerned handwringing over what is perceived as segregation—more precisely, self-segregation.

There is the understandable tendency of students, many away from home for the first time, to gravitate to

other students with whom they have something in common. This is even more true for black students who are thrust onto the traditionally white college campus.

In the unfamiliar world of the mostly white campus, black students are naturally going to seek out each other for support. Under that stress, in addition to academic demands, black students need to draw strength from the familiar aspects of their culture.

The usual academic stress is increased for black students because they also are asked to educate the rest of the campus community to what is black culture. This was made clear to me by a black student who, while involved in a student organization was dealing with the frustration of planning a black arts program. Exasperated, she said, "I came here to get an education, not give one."

Last year some college students and administrators—black and white

alike—began expressing the fear that diversity wasn't working well on campus. The news media covered the issue heavily but with an inaccurate slant.

Among the prominent media sto-

“I came here to get an education, not give one”

ries last year were reports that black students at Duke University study primarily with black students and whites study mostly with whites. Black students at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill were engaged in a heated debate with the administration about getting a more central location on campus for the black cultural center. A U.S. News & World

Report cover story proclaimed that campuses are more segregated than ever. There are numerous stories about black students sitting together to eat in college cafeterias rather than missing with white students.

Despite the racial overtones suggested in the news media, the situations above are examples of what happens when you have different kinds of people from different kinds of backgrounds together on campus. They simply have different needs and ideas, and college communities must make room for them. This is not racism on campus. This is diversity on campus.

Colleges wanted black students to bring diversity to their campuses, and they are doing that. Black students don't want to be just like white students. They don't think just like white students and they don't do everything just like white students. That would be denying their own culture and differences.

If black students blended completely with white students we would be promoting homogeneity, not diversity. Colleges, and the public, have to recognize diversity for what it is by definition: differences. Different opinions, different ideas, different cultures.

A college's efforts to diversify its student body should NOT be judged by whether the process is smooth or bumpy. Any successful diversity effort will certainly be bumpy, maybe even very bumpy.

Admittedly, overtly racial incidents do occur at colleges from time to time. Those things will happen, but they have to be dealt with in the appropriate manner.

Colleges have long been chided by the general public as being places where students "don't live in the real world." On the other hand, colleges feel they aspire to being just a little bit better than the real world.

Packwood Lunches With Timber Group

Oregon Senator Bob Packwood took a tour of Oriental Hinoki Products in Molalla, had lunch with members of the Molalla Timber Action committee, and interviewed at the Molalla Pioneer newspaper.

Oriental Hinoki, which manufactures cedar tubs, could be clobbered by the recently announced Clinton timber plan. The company employs craftsmen who build the tubs by hand. Owner Eugene Jackson originally intended to manufacture the tubs for export to Japan, but has found a growing market in the United States.

The tubs are built from Port Orford cedar, which grows only in Port Orford, Oregon, and in Japan. The company is concerned that the President's timber plan will make Port Orford cedar unavailable, or much more expensive.

"Here is another Oregon example

of an entrepreneur who has developed an idea into a profitable enterprise," commented Packwood. "Now the President's timber plan may make it impossible for Eugene Jackson to stay in business."

After the tour, Packwood answered questions from Portland area media covering the event.

Later Packwood had an informal lunch with members of the Molalla Timber Action Committee (MTAC), and brought the group up to date on President Clinton's timber plan. The plan will dramatically reduce the traditional timber harvest level in Oregon, and cost thousands of jobs.

"When the President held the Forest Conference," Packwood noted, "he claimed he wanted to find a 'balanced' solution to our problems. I thought he meant that people and jobs

and schools would count in the balance. The plan he has devised, however, is a recipe for economic disaster in the Pacific Northwest."

Packwood predicted that the President's plan would be thrown out by the courts, and that the President would then have to come to Congress for a solution. Packwood vowed to fight for Oregon timber jobs when the new plan is developed.

After the luncheon, Packwood answered questions from Portland area media who were covering the event. Packwood also met with the editor of the Molalla Pioneer. Packwood answered numerous questions about the President's tax plan, the President's timber proposal, and various other issues.

Packwood will meet with the media throughout his August recess trip to Oregon.

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