

Is Portland's Water Supply In Trouble? I

By Prof. McKinley Burt

Several months of water quality-related news articles suggest that this may be an area of serious concern to a growing number of governmental agencies.

Like many, I find that I have more than a passing interest in this fundamental environmental issue. Not just as a citizen troubled by even an intimation that there could be any level of problem with this vital resource - but by the close up view as a member of our city's "Water Quality Advisory Committee"; 1991, 1992, 1993. I certainly advise similar civic interaction.

I look in my files for that period and I find some very strongly expressed concerns in the media - and I assure you that no new territory has been intruded. In the Portland Oregonian for 21, December 1990 we have the headline, "City Commissions Extensive Study of Water Supply in Metro Area".

"Businesses and more than

700,000 homes - in Portland and the suburbs - depend on the city's Bull Run Reservoirs. But as the region grows, that water system is about drained. The city is thinking about long-range planning to the year 2050. CH2M Hill was awarded a \$375,000 contract to find solutions."

Now what the Water Quality Advisory Committee does is implied in its title and the advisee is Portland's Bureau of Water Works. Monthly, the group meets for several hours to hear and evaluate relevant issues brought to its attention by citizens, technicians, land and resource managers from other city, county, state and federal agencies, academics, and environmentalists. Not to mention, 'politicians'.

A serious effort is made to draw committee members from a diverse, but relevant, spectrum of professions and civic interests. During my tenure the group consisted of about ten members, whose occupations ranged from engineers, medicine (County Health

officer and a practicing physician) to a biologist, geologist, professor, houseperson, so forth. How broad can you get? But it is surprising how many important viewpoints there are on exactly how that precious and most vital fluid, water, should be treated and distributed. The Water Bureau valued our input.

I am sure that the reader can appreciate how any of the above members might develop a particular position by simply reflecting on how his own attitudes have been shaped by the recent media flurry. How about that 3/29/98 special report, "Metro Floats Rules To Shield Urban Waters: Portland-area neighborhoods would add vegetation along stream banks and limit new construction on flood plains." Pardon me, but isn't this where I came in seven years ago?

Though I have cited the rather general makeup of the Water Quality group I am quite certain some readers may have difficulty picturing me sitting at that lone curved-rostrum,

looking like a Metro Councilor. I forget now who recommended me for the position (unpaid), but I do recall that in filling out the City's "Qualifications Form", I did come up with what I thought were several excellent areas of relevancy.

For the one thing I had ten years of contracting with the U.S. Forest Service, a job that at various times took me to all of the nine forests of the Pacific Northwest. My activities required an interface with every personnel and operational element of the nation's largest manager of natural resources, Timber, Recreation, Wildlife and Watershed.

Put a big emphasis on that last category for it's most contentious component was Portland's own Bull Run Watershed.

The story is fascinating and will be continued next week, as well as my experience as a technician in monitoring water quality controls at an Aluminum Plant - a 'self-contained city'. (1967)

Oregon Welfare Reform Is Not Only Saving Tax Dollars. It's Also Helping Low-Income Families Achieve Self-Sufficiency.

CONTINUED FROM METRO.

We expect people on welfare to work at becoming self-sufficient. This includes spending 35-40 hours a week in job training, job search and in learning how to succeed - basics such as showing up on time, doing what you say you'll do and getting along with co-workers.

The only exceptions are people whose disabilities prevent them from

working, people who are in treatment, and mothers with infants under 3 months old.

Granted, there are those who look at Oregon's declining welfare caseload and conclude, "It's the economy, Stupid." But if that were true, then other states with booming economies would be matching Oregon's results. And they aren't. Oregon hasn't succeeded by accident.

Our entire way of thinking has changed.

We used to take people's information, rule whether they were eligible for welfare, and then get the checks out on time. Now, our goal includes helping people find alternatives to welfare.

For example, a family recently came to one of our rural offices to sign up. But instead of opening a welfare case, we enrolled the

breadwinner in English-as-a-second-language classes and bought him some tools. He's now working as a cabinet maker at \$9.50 an hour.

All of which may explain why Oregon is recognized as a national leader in not only changing welfare as we know it, but also in helping poor people improve their economic well-being.

DELAUNAY FAMILY OF SERVICES

Keeping your visitors in check and paying your rent on time every month are some of the themes echoed in this housing educational video "Living Large-how to keep a rental."

"Living Large" video will premiere Thursday, May 28th at Portland Community College Cascade Campus, Terrell Hall room 122 from 7 pm-8 pm.

"This video evolved from working with Young Moms and Teenagers around housing issues," said Sandra Johnson, Case Manager for Gift Family Services G.I.F.T. (Gang Influenced Female Team) was created to work with social, housing and educational issues of Young Moms and Teenage Girls.

Gift sponsored housing educational classes for (17) youth, guest speakers from public and private market rentals addressed tenants' rights and responsibilities.

"This video is a creative tactic to engage and teach Young Moms and Teenagers how to control situations with their visitors. We want to prevent evictions which can devastate budgets and create homelessness," Johnson states.

The premiere party will be videotaped to create a video within a video. Entertainment and refreshment will be served. For more information contact Sandra Johnson at 285-9871, ext. 158.



Grassroot News Thanks our Staff, Talent, Clients, and Community for another award winning year!

Dating in the Hood: Domestic Violence-1997 Silver Medal-Summit Creative Award

1997 Bronze Apple-National Educational Media Network Film and Video Competition. Clients: Portland's House of Umoja, City of Portland Operation Refocus, Multnomah County Violence Prevention Program, Department of Community and Family Services and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Clocking Dollars: How to Keep a Job 1997 Best of the Northwest

Client: Albina Youth Opportunity School, and Gift Family Services
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