

Editorial and Opinion

Chairman's Report: Rumors aren't always the whole truth

By Mark Mercier



On April 5 1995, I attended a hearing conducted by the U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs to present testimony on welfare reform, with respect to block grants.

Since November's election, Congress has been moving at a rapid pace to re-structure government, and welfare reform a priority. Congress is committed to reducing the federal deficit, and it is a real possibility that some social

programs may be cut.

It is our belief that since Congress is going to re-structure these programs, that the Tribe may wish to provide some suggestions on how these programs may be administered. In my testimony, I told the Committee that we feel we are capable of putting welfare block grants in a more effective and efficient way than either a Federal or State agency can.

One may ask, "Why travel to Washington D.C. to attend these hearings?" Our response is that few Tribal leaders get invited to these particular hearings when they are conducted. Whatever course of action Congress takes on this important issue, will have a profound impact on all tribes throughout the United States. Therefore, it is prudent to let Congress know what we feel would be beneficial to the Tribe, since they requested our input. It is considered an honor to be invited

by these Committees to participate in their hearings.

I received a letter dated April 6, signed by Senator John McCain, (Arizona) the Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs.

There is another subject I wish to address, that is the "rumor mill". Currently, there is talk among the tribal membership regarding a so-called "Executive Committee," made up of administrative personnel, also allegations are circulating that this "Magnificent Seven" have received enormous pay raises for serving in this capacity. This needs to be clarified. First of all, due to the growth of the Tribe, it is sometimes necessary to make some changes to how we operate. The result of this is the Tribe is in the process of doing a comprehensive strategic plan for the future direction the Tribe wishes to pursue. Attached is a memorandum dated March 9 which explains

the process to be used in developing this plan. Also, no pay raise was provided to any of the participants listed in the March 9 memo.

Rumors such as this one circulating only damage the morale of staff working for the Tribe. No attempt is being made to exclude anyone from this planning process. The Tribe has done several surveys urging General Council input into the Strategic Planning Process. Also, the Tribe seeks Staff input into the process as well.

Another "rumor" circulating is that the Tribe is over harvesting timber on the reservation. The Tribe has a timber management plan, which the Tribe sought input from the General Council while the Tribe was formulating the plan. Some of the questions asked of the General Council was if the Tribe should intensively harvest the timber, or reduce the annual cut, by focusing on wildlife management

and recreation. The majority of respondents said they felt the Tribe should be able to harvest the timber on a sustained yield basis, and effectively manage for wildlife and recreation purposes as well.

The Tribe harvests six million board feet from the reservation annually, on a 75 year rotation. Most of the harvest areas are "clear cut" rarely exceeding 40 acres in each unit size. Also, the Tribe works closely with the State of Oregon Forestry Department and many different Federal agencies to insure that over cutting is avoided. In the period of twelve (12) months or less, each area harvested is replanted.

The Tribal Council feels it important to counter some of these frivolous allegations since the facts can demonstrate otherwise. If any one has questions about what the Tribe is doing, feel free to ask. We urge everyone not to rely on rumors.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters From Our Readers

Smoke Signals is a publication of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon. We have recently adopted an Editorial Policy that encourages input from readers about stories printed in *Smoke Signals*, as well as other tribal issues.

Letters must be printed or typed, and cannot exceed 300 words. *Smoke Signals* reserves the right to edit any letter for clarity and length, and to refuse publication of any letter or any part of a letter that may contain libelous statements or personal attacks. Not all letters are guaranteed publication upon submission. Published letters do not necessarily reflect the opinions of *Smoke Signals*, tribal employees, or Tribal Council.

Mail letters to: SMOKE SIGNALS, 9615 Grand Ronde Road, Grand Ronde, OR 97347.
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Letters

Concerns about Forestry building

Tribal Members:

I am writing this letter as a concerned tribal member. I am concerned with the burning of the old Forestry building. On March 19, the building was burned. Prior to burning the building the Tribe allowed people to come in and take what is salvageable, however the Tribe did not get any money for all the materials that were salvaged.

I feel that it is important for Tribal members to be aware of this action. To point fingers and find blame will not solve the problem. It is important to now see that this kind of action does not take place in the future.

This Casino is important to the future of our Tribe, but we must also live in the present. Mistakes now will effect our future. The concern that the Tribe has in the Casino should not blind our concerns in the present. I feel that money could have been made regarding the salvage of materials. This money may have been minimal, but the Tribe could have used this in many ways. It could have been used for relocating the forestry, renovation of the new training facilities, or over expenditure on the Public Works building. It upsets me that we burned a house that before it was stripped, was in better condition than many of the houses that our elders are living in today. As what was stated in the April 2 General Council meeting by Tribal Council, there was a mistake made. This mistake was made by what I feel a lot of miscommunication. The building was burned and the mistake made that is done, however my concern now is did anyone learn from this mistake? Are people going to be held accountable if a mistake like this happens again?

In conclusion I would like to emphasize that I am not pointing fingers, but I would like to make Tribal members aware of the action that take place. I encourage you Tribal Members to take notice and hopefully next time a circumstance like this arises the situation will be handled differently.

Reynold Leno

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