

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

Officials between a rock and a hard place

Local government officials throughout Oregon have been put in an extremely difficult position because of the passage of Measure 8, which directs all state and local government employers to stop putting six-percent of their employees' salaries into the Public Employees Retirement System and, at the same time, requires the same employees to put six-percent of their take-home pay into PERS. This directive results in a six-percent decrease in the employees' take-home pay because the employer-paid amount was not deducted from their pay, but was a fringe benefit.

The legality of the measure will certainly be reviewed by the courts. In the meantime, local governments are relying on a state attorney general's opinion that contracts agreed upon prior to Dec. 31, 1994, will not be affected by Measure 8.

The dilemma for local governments lies in the conflict created by concern for their employees, the six-percent reduction in those employees' wages, and if, by taking care of the employees with new contracts or extensions of existing contracts, they are ignoring the will of the voters.

In some cases, as in the City of Vernonia, voters rejected the measure, though it passed on a statewide basis. Even on a statewide basis, the vote was so close it required a recount. Though the courts will eventually sort out what can and can't be done, that will probably take years and the officials must make decisions before the end of 1994.

Predictably, some officials have felt it isn't right to ignore the vote, regardless of how they feel about the results of Measure 8. Others officials have felt that it isn't right to make employees take a six-percent pay cut even though the voters approved the action. Both views are understandable.

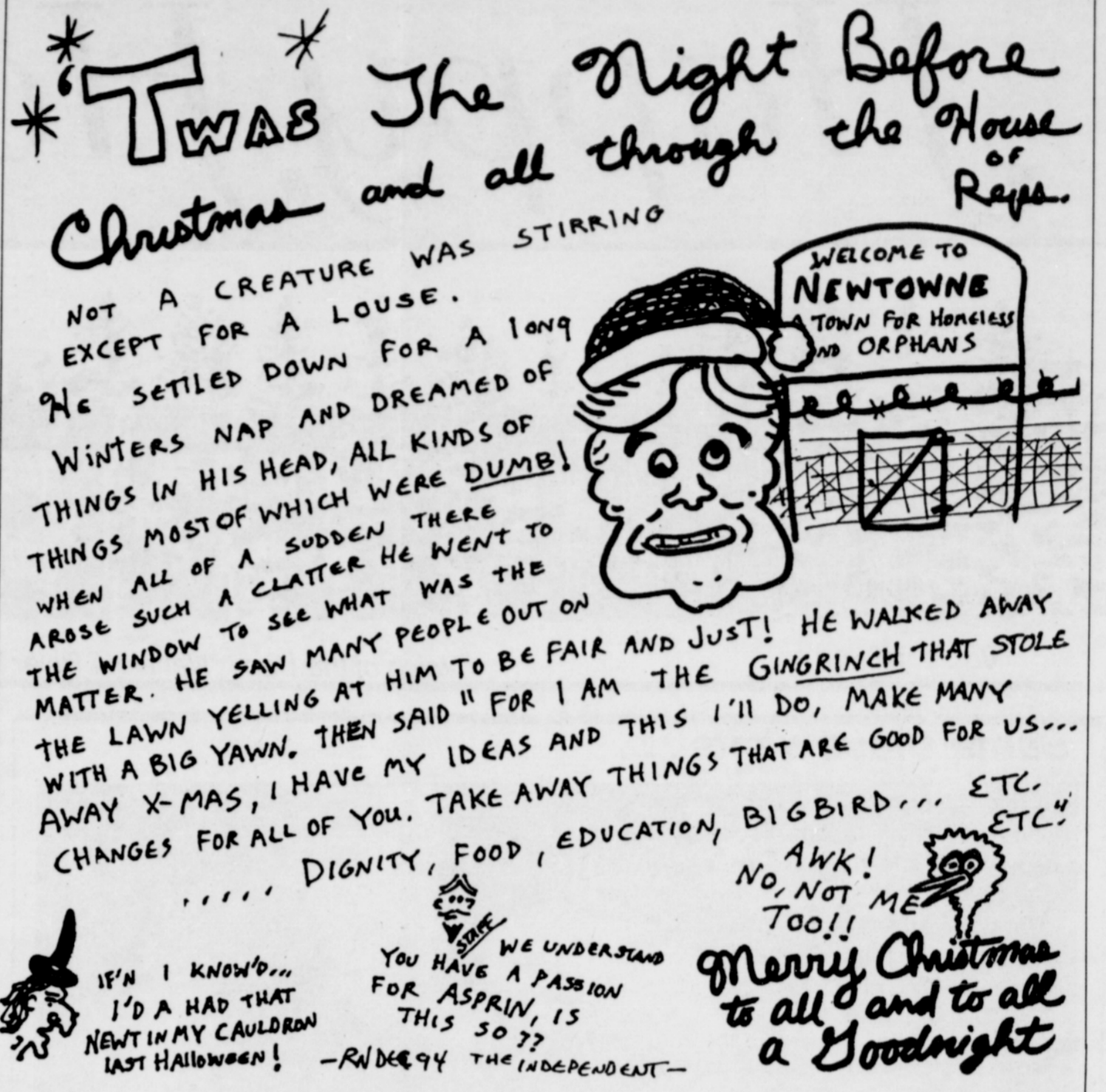
Though the Measure 8 campaign focused on highly paid, long-term state employees, it might be more instructive to look closer to home. Public employees include school cafeteria cooks and helpers, beginning police officers and teachers, clerks and classroom aides, custodians and groundskeepers. Any implication that they are overpaid is truly ludicrous. Not only are their salaries modest, in many cases their salaries aren't enough to take care of a family—even before the six-percent is removed.

These are the people who are truly harmed by the pay cut, and they are the reason local government officials are divided in how to handle the situation.

No matter what decisions are made, it seems that the officials are damned if they do and damned if they don't.

It is too bad there isn't some sort of "common sense" test that could be applied to initiatives so tax dollars wouldn't have to keep being used for litigation, but that's another subject.

Nevertheless, at this special time of year, instead of railing at the officials, perhaps the citizenry should show some compassion. Let's wish them all a Merry Christmas and hope the whole mess gets through the courts in time to have a Happy New Year—at least by 1998.



The Says

By David Michael Jones, member
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Putting something back... Thoughts on catch and release fishing.

Why should an angler practice "catch and release" fishing? Well, there are a number of reasons and one of the first is that, on many streams and other waters of the State, it is the law. This applies in recent years to the Native Steelhead in most waters of Oregon and also to many of the salmon species that are in dire straits, such as the Coho or Silver Salmon. Catch and release has been practiced on some of Oregon's waters for a number of years at the request of fishing groups that desire a quality fishery that will be here for our children and our grandchildren. Rivers such as the Deschutes, Metolius and the North Fork of the Umpqua readily come to mind when an angler thinks of "fishing the way it used to be". Many rivers that still provide quality fishing have restrictions on the use of bait, the type and size of hooks and what type of lure one may use.

These are restrictions that an angler may also impose on himself to insure that the fish he releases will survive, even though it may be legal to fish without the restrictions. I found years ago that de-barbing the hooks on my dry flies allowed me to often "release" small trout and smolts by simply throwing slack in my line and, if I had to "land" the fish, I could often take hold and turn the hook with a forceps and the fish could swim away without being handled. I will no longer use bait for Native Steelhead. I will debarb the majority of my hooks and am converting many of my lures to single hooks. These things are being done to insure that all fish I release will have a better chance of survival. Now let's return for a moment for reasons why we should want this fish to survive or why we should release it.

It is real hard to catch a fish again after it is

dead and it is a lot harder for that fish to spawn and reproduce its own kind after it has been konked on the head. A properly released fish can grow larger, be caught again, and reproduce. How many times have we heard "I used to catch cutthroat of sixteen and seventeen inches in that stream"?.....Do you really need that fish to eat? Wouldn't a nice picture be as good or better a trophy than a cold, stiff fish? Gently holding a fish under its belly while a friend snaps a photo will give you a memory to share with others. If the fish is large (and I hope it is), a hand around the wrist of the tail will hold it for the few seconds needed to take a photo.

Often, being prepared ahead of time to release a fish will insure the survival of that fish. Have a forceps or pair of long-nosed pliers at hand to enable you to grasp the hook without even touching the fish and this can often be done while the fish is still in the water. I have found that long-nosed pliers work very well for releasing plug-caught fish alongside my boat without having to even touch the fish, just grasp and turn the hook. If a fish is bleeding from a deep hook, as when bait is used, it is often better to cut the leader and leave the hook in. It will break down in a short period of time and it is much easier on the fish. A small pair of scissors works better than a knife. If anyone begrudges a hook to the fish, I will be happy to reimburse you if you contact me.

We also need to eliminate the phrase "throwing a fish back" from our minds and manner and replace it with "slipping a fish gently into the current until it is breathing" (gill covers moving). A large fish can be grasped around the wrist of the tail (preferably with a gloved hand) and moved gently back and forth with its nose toward the current. It is sometimes necessary to hold the fish in the current for a while, until it recovers from the fight. Often it is best to release it into a gentle flow on the second time that it feels "strong".

Good Luck fishing!



Merry Christmas