Enron filed bankruptcy four days after proposing to sell PGE to NW Natural Gas in November 2001. In mid-February, The New York bankruptcy court responsible for handling the Enron case ruled to approve the sale of PGE to NW Natural Gas.

There are several reasons why this sale is a house of cards which will ultimately be detrimental to Oregon, its economy, and the welfare of its people. This deal would include multi-million dollar bonuses for PGE executives, the details of which have been sealed by Enron executives. Also, the purchase of PGE at $800 million dollars over book value, although attractive to Enron’s creditors and arguably the deciding factor for the approval of the sale by the bankruptcy court, jeopardizes the financial stability of NW Natural Gas. The sale would place a debt burden of high interest-rate loans requiring rapid repayment on the company. This burden would likely be passed on to ratepayers. Increased rates would further tax Oregon’s struggling economy and eliminate more jobs, as small businesses continue to fold under the pressure of increasing utility cost. The details of this sale would make Enron the largest shareholder in PGE and NW Natural Gas with a 4.9% stake in the company and two seats on the board.

There are two real alternatives to selling off the state’s energy assets. These assets can either be transferred into state or local governmental control. This was the intent of Oregon voters in the early 1930’s, when they passed a voter initiative to amend the state constitution.

This amendment, placed into the Oregon constitution (article 11-d) in 1932, asserts the state’s right to control, use, transmit, distribute, sell and/or dispose of electric energy, and to acquire, construct, maintain and/or operate hydropower plants, transmission and distribution lines. The Oregon legislature has the ability to activate the State Power Authority and transfer to it the state’s ownership of PGE hydropower assets. The Authority could then acquire other PGE assets by eminent domain. Failing that, city municipalization of Portland’s energy supply is another option ratepayers could pursue. This would put Oregon’s utility infrastructure back into the service of the public, a viable response to the deregulation fiasco that could set a precedent nationwide. Recently there were two public hearings regarding this sale, one of which was held in Gresham at the the Midland Library on 122nd Ave. According to one witness, the representative from NW Natural Gas, who was 20 minutes late to the meeting, stated that the sale would be good for customers because it would prevent duplication of services. She denied any knowledge of large bonuses from the sale to PGE executives. About two hundred concerned citizens also attended this meeting, and about 25 were allowed to testify. About half of the testimony heard was in favor of municipalizing PGE or enacting the State Power Authority. Several of the speakers also took an anti-Enron approach, and a handful of people spoke in favor of the NW natural gas sale.

Because not everyone was allowed to speak at the hearing who signed up, the public utility commission stated that they would schedule another hearing soon.

New Portland Police Review Board Draws Criticism

The newly active Citizen Review Committee (CRC) of the Independent Police Review Division (IPR) is proving to be less than independent or citizen-based in its first few proceedings, according to analysis released by Portland Copwatch, a grassroots, volunteer organization which promotes police accountability. The CRC is the city government’s response to community calls for a citizen review in reviewing cases of police misconduct.

Even before the first IPR hearing, which took place January 4, 2002, Copwatch expressed worries about CRC members being ill-trained by the Portland Police, citing concern that the members had not been trained in constitutional, civil, and human rights. Additionally, Copwatch criticized the fact that the IPR were evaluating their own feedback forms to be used in the proceedings. This, coupled with the fact that board members encourage the police “union” to work in “partnership” with the IPR, raised concerns for Copwatch that the IPR was not adhering to its claimed to be “independent”, and about the IPR’s ability to remain neutral in deciding cases.

On January 7th, Copwatch released their report on the first hearings by the CRC, which took place on January 4th. “To put it mildly, [the] hearings ... were worse than we anticipated”, the report began. In addition to Copwatch’s long-standing objection to investigations about police done by police, three major problems were cited, to quote: (1) A very limited standard of review which forces the CRC to decide a case based on whether a “reasonable person” could make the same finding as the Police Bureau “in light of evidence, whether or not the reviewing body agrees with the finding”; (2) A large and misleading amount of input from Internal Affairs, even though IAD had performed the initial investigation, and reviewed and commented on the summary report by IPR staff; and (3) The overzealous involvement of the IPR’s staff director, Richard Rosenthal, in a process that is supposed to be citizen-driven. All three cases from this first hearing involved use of force against citizens. The full report can be found on the Portland Indymedia website.
Ben & Jerry’s effectively labeled as “Terrorist” at Congressional Hearing on “Eco-terrorism"

Not content to label groups such as the Earth Liberation Front (ELF) as “terrorist organizations,” corporate business leaders also declared that Ben & Jerry’s, the Ford Foundation, PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) and others be either “terrorists” or “terrorist supporting.” Though the primary questioning before the Sub-Committee was slated to be directed toward former ELF spokesperson Craig Rosenbaugh, representatives of several multi-national corporations were on hand and offered testimony of their own in which they made clear their belief that various groups advocating “domestic terrorism” are being financed by and share “interlocking executive boards” with various progressive companies and organizations throughout the North American continent.

Craig Rosebraugh, present under Congressional subpoena, invoked his 5th Amendment rights in response to dozens of questions. The chair of the sub-committee openly taunted Mr. Rosenbaugh’s legal strategy and flatly informed him and his legal counsel that the sub-committee would likely reconvene for the purpose of charging him formally with Contempt of Congress. This in stark contrast to the various Enron executives who have pleaded the 5th but who will likely never be cited for contempt. In the end, the subcommittee seemed nonplussed about what to do with Mr. Rosebraugh and let him go with the assertion that they will send him questions and expect him to answer them satisfactorily under threat of Congressional Contempt hearings if he does not.

Mr. Rosebraugh did submit written testimony, which outlined his position quite clearly regarding how he feels about the hearings and radical environmental activists.

“Since 1997, the U.S. government has issued me seven grand jury subpoenas, raided my home and work twice, stealing hundreds of items of property, and, on many occasions, sent federal agents to follow me and question me. After this effort, which has lasted nearly five years, federal agents have yet to obtain any information from me to aid their investigations. As I have never been charged with one crime related to these so-called ecoterrorist organizations or their activities, the constant harassment by the federal government constitutes a serious infringement on my Constitutional right to freedom of speech. This Congressional Subcommittee hearing appears to be no different, harassing and targeting me for simply voicing my ideological support for those involved in environmental protection.

I fully praise those individuals who take direct action, by any means necessary, to stop the destruction of the natural world and threats to all life. They are the heroes, risking their freedom and lives so that we as a species as well as all life forms can continue to exist on the planet. In a country so fixated on monetary wealth and power, these brave environmental advocates are engaging in some of the most selfless activities possible.”

The media was in full attendance at the hearing, and a small protest was held in front of the Longworth building where it took place.

Here in Portland, activists and supporters gathered at the Federal Building to listen to speakers, current ELF spokesperson Leslie Pickering, Alan Graf of the National Lawyers Guild, and Lisa Distefano, co-founder of Sea Shepard. The 60 or so people then marched around the downtown, to Pioneer Square, and back to the Federal Building. The federal police once again felt compelled, as everyone was dispersing, to arrest those who were1

Hiroshima Flame Pilgrimage continued

this location that carried so much responsibility for the world’s safety.

Jan. 31 - Portland - The Hiroshima Flame Pilgrimage arrived quietly today in Portland along with the Hiroshima Flame. Several of the walkers have yet to have a pain free day of walking, but they continue onwards on their way across the United States. They will be stopping at ports and analyzing can be obtained from Copwatch. Issued extensive analyses of each case that went before the CRC, pointing out numerous problems and areas of concern. These reports and analyses can be obtained from Copwatch.

Furthermore, Portland City Auditor Gary Blackmer released his new proposal for the IPR on January 14th, in which he proposes an outside “expert” to review deadly force cases and to recommend policy issues to the CRC. Copwatch objects to this new proposal because it modifies what they see as an already flawed and biased system such that deadly force cases never truly come under the scrutiny of members of the community, despite the community’s strong position that public forums be held regarding such serious cases.

For further information, please visit Portland Copwatch’s website at http://www.portlandcopwatch.org/ or contact them at copwatch@portlandcopwatch.org or 503-236-3065.

Indymedia Newswire

These stories and more are on our website http://portland.indymedia.org

• Historic victory for Oregon farm-workers union (PCU)
• Peace Elves build bridges
• Olympic-size corruption from Portland to Salt Lake City
• Utah House passes frightening bill defining commercial terrorism
• UK warns over war fever in White House
• 20,000 take to the streets of Tel Aviv to demand peace
• War Time News from the Cascadia Media Collective

Portland Indymedia

Portland Indymedia provides grassroots, non-corporate coverage of major issues and events through open publishing. Anyone may post their stories, images, video or audio to this site. Don’t hate the media — become the media!

For information on getting involved, publishing your own stories, or to read independent news, visit our website at: http://portland.indymedia.org/

Contact Portland Indymedia:
portland@indymedia.org
PO Box 66914 • Portland OR 97290

All content is free for reprint and re-broadcast, on the net and elsewhere, for non-commercial use as long as the author is cited, and Portland Indymedia is named as the source, with the URL, http://portland.indymedia.org

inFINITE

JUSTICE

Supreme Court Justice Scalia describes how an "originalist" interprets the U.S. Constitution:

I'd rather live in 1791 anyway. It's where my ancestors hung their hat.

We shot up to 4 Supreme Court Justices.

Standing Ovation

Police Review Board Criticism continued

Since this initial hearing, Copwatch has issued similar reports on subsequent hearings, pointing out problems such as police bias, double standards, declining appeals before CRC members have had a chance to look at the case, disclosing confidential information, and many more. In addition to these general criticisms, Copwatch issued extensive analyses of each case that went before the CRC, pointing out numerous problems and areas of concern. These reports and analyses can be obtained from Copwatch.

Furthermore, Portland City Auditor Gary Blackmer released his new proposal for the IPR on January 14th, in which he proposes an outside “expert” to review deadly force cases and to recommend policy issues to the CRC. Copwatch objects to this new proposal because it modifies what they see as an already flawed and biased system such that deadly force cases never truly come under the scrutiny of members of the community, despite the community’s strong position that public forums be held regarding such serious cases.

For further information, please visit Portland Copwatch’s website at http://www.portlandcopwatch.org/ or contact them at copwatch@portlandcopwatch.org or 503-236-3065.

No stranger to democracy, Scalia urges citizens to pass laws that would either grant or ban the right to an abortion, for instance.

Police Review Board

North American continent.

Craig Rosenbaugh, representatives of several multi-national corporations were on hand and offered testimony of their own in which they made clear their belief that various groups advocating “domestic terrorism” are being financed by and share “interlocking executive boards” with various progressive companies and organizations throughout the North American continent.

Craig Rosebraugh, present under Congressional subpoena, invoked his 5th Amendment rights in response to dozens of questions. The chair of the sub-committee openly taunted Mr. Rosenbaugh’s legal strategy and flatly informed him and his legal counsel that the sub-committee would likely reconvene for the purpose of charging him formally with Contempt of Congress. This in stark contrast to the various Enron executives who have pleaded the 5th but who will likely never be cited for contempt. In the end, the subcommittee seemed nonplussed about what to do with Mr. Rosebraugh and let him go with the assertion that they will send him questions and expect him to answer them satisfactorily under threat of Congressional Contempt hearings if he does not.

Mr. Rosebraugh did submit written testimony, which outlined his position quite clearly regarding how he feels about the hearings and radical environmental activists.

“Since 1997, the U.S. government has issued me seven grand jury subpoenas, raided my home and work twice, stealing hundreds of items of property, and, on many occasions, sent federal agents to follow me and question me. After this effort, which has lasted nearly five years, federal agents have yet to obtain any information from me to aid their investigations. As I have never been charged with one crime related to these so-called ecoterrorist organizations or their activities, the constant harassment by the federal government constitutes a serious infringement on my Constitutional right to freedom of speech. This Congressional Subcommittee hearing appears to be no different, harassing and targeting me for simply voicing my ideological support for those involved in environmental protection.

I fully praise those individuals who take direct action, by any means necessary, to stop the destruction of the natural world and threats to all life. They are the heroes, risking their freedom and lives so that we as a species as well as all life forms can continue to exist on the planet. In a country so fixated on monetary wealth and power, these brave environmental advocates are engaging in some of the most selfless activities possible.”

The media was in full attendance at the hearing, and a small protest was held in front of the Longworth building where it took place.

Here in Portland, activists and supporters gathered at the Federal Building to listen to speakers, current ELF spokesperson Leslie Pickering, Alan Graf of the National Lawyers Guild, and Lisa Distefano, co-founder of Sea Shepard. The 60 or so people then marched around the downtown, to Pioneer Square, and back to the Federal Building. The federal police once again felt compelled, as everyone was dispersing, to arrest those who were dispersing.