



LOCAL Voice



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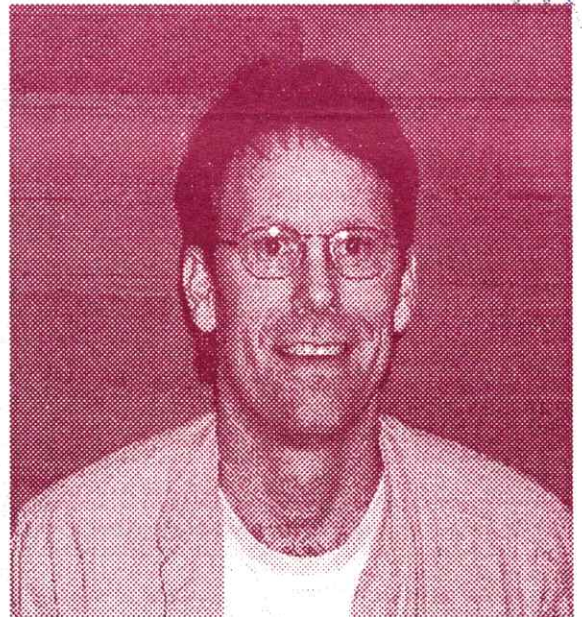
Spring 2000

New Union President, Doug Drake Speaks Out

Choices and Challenges

by Doug Drake

I am being asked, "So why did you want to be President?" It's not an easy question to answer. I guess the best response I have is "This is the right time for me." I think we all have moments that challenge us to make tough choices. Whether it is a new relationship, a new job or maybe new and different responsibilities with family or community, we all have opportunities and challenges that present themselves. Sometimes you have no choice, you must forge ahead regardless of whether you want to or not (like getting up to feed the kids every morning - you just do it). Other times you can just say no and then move forward by letting go. I could have said no, but I didn't. I made a choice to grab hold and take the challenge.



This is an exciting time for the labor and environmental movements. I want to be part of building an alliance between these and similar minded folks. The WTO conference in Seattle brought these kinds of people together to demonstrate. As Paul Hawken writes; "They were human rights activists, labor activists, indigenous people, people of faith, steel workers, and farmers. They were forest activists, environmentalists, social justice workers, students, and teachers." I can't think of a better bunch of people I'd rather hang out with.

We are that kind of people.

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When I was approached about being President I had already been thinking about getting more involved with the Union. I hadn't been very active, a few meetings and reading the emails to stay current mostly. I knew that the Union leadership were good people and, I like many of us think, were "taking care of business." Being asked to be part of the leadership was flattering. It made me realize that for the dozen years I'd been out here at the lab doing my thing (I'm a biologist), I wasn't a complete stranger. It made me feel needed and that I might have more to offer than I realized. So I said yes. I said yes because I think we all react to the notion that we can give a little and make a difference. I had intended to give a little, maybe become a steward, well the best-laid

"I heard recently that only 6% of people aged 18 to 34 registered to vote in Oregon actually voted in the last election. That means their future is being decided without them!"

plans....

So now what? I have no illusions about the Union. Most people at the Department are like me: "Somebody will take care of it, I'm too busy to do much anyway." The irony of course is that that means you aren't participating in the process. "I heard recently that only 6% of people aged 18 to 34 registered to vote in Oregon actually voted in the last election. That means their future is being decided without them!" I see the same sort of apathy with the Union. While I don't expect everyone to become an officer or steward, I do think it only works when people actively participate. Participation can be anything from speaking up at meetings, to volunteering to do some surveys. Maybe it means talking to other members about what the Union is working on. It's up to you to figure out how to participate. But do participate!

I see the Union as a vehicle for DEQ employees to participate by expressing their ideas and concerns separate from those of agency management. We are a rare group as a union. We work at a state agency

charged with protecting the environment. Many of us have college degrees. Most of all, we are caring hard working people. For many of us the work itself is enough. There aren't many jobs where, at the end of the day, you hope the planet is a little better off for your efforts.

Sometimes our work can and does accomplish that. But at times the bureaucracy gets in way, or maybe politics override sound science, or sometimes it's the personalities and quirks of management that frustrate us. Outside the agency there are forces out to diminish the work we do. By attacking the rights of government unions or worse, gutting state funding, these forces think they know what's best for us. Whether it's a grievance or the antics of Sizemore and his cronies that gets your hackles up, the Union is listening. So what do you say? It's your choice and my challenge.

If any of this strikes a nerve with you, let me know. The easiest way to get a hold of me is to email me at home (which I prefer): kaliuma@hevanet.com or work. I look forward to hearing from you!

.....Doug

Organizing and Participation - The Only Path to a Strong Union

by Leslie Kochan

Organizing Never Stops

The best organizers in the labor movement will tell you that "Organizing never stops." That's true no matter what the arena for organizing. It may be organizing new leadership and member participation in your own local, organizing through labor-community coalitions to improve the lives of low-wage workers and fight back against bad ballot initiatives, or organizing new locals.

Recognizing the need to never stop organizing, AFSCME Local 3336 Executive Board members and stewards met for an all day strategy session on January 9th. Our goals were to review and update our 1998 Strategic Plan, define and determine tasks

for new committees, and to educate ourselves about the challenges we face over the next year. Twenty-one Local 3336 activists participated along with our facilitator, Lynn Feekin, from the Labor, Education and Resource Center at the U. of O., and our AFSCME field representative, Yvonne Martinez. AFSCME lobbying and organizing staff generously gave up part of their Sunday to stop by and give presentations on upcoming ballot initiatives and organizing opportunities.

The Union is All of Us

Weak unions with ineffective leadership can only exist where there is a vacuum of good leadership and active participation. If we want strong leadership, a strong union and democracy, we (all of us) have to participate. Our Strategic Plan focuses on good communication and increased participation, the backbone of creating an effective union. In presenting the five new goals for our Year 2000 Strategic Plan, I emphasize what each of you, as represented employees, can do to help the Local achieve these goals:

Goal One: Increase membership and member satisfaction

It's an on-going struggle, requiring real dedication and volunteerism, to communicate with and educate the membership, as well as non-members, about the union and union issues. We depend upon both officers and stewards to help disseminate information and talk directly with DEQ employees. We need to recruit new stewards who are willing to help. We need to increase our membership. We plan to continue our newsletter, the Local Voice. We plan to schedule more membership meetings at the lab, in the regions and at the VIP Tech Center.

How can you help?

- Become a member of the Local's new Member Mobilization and Organizing Committee. (Contact Chair Leslie Kochan.)
- We need new outreach stewards who are willing to spend small amounts of time talking to their co-workers about joining Local 3336, attending membership meetings and getting involved in activities. (Contact Elliot Zais.)

- We need new mediation stewards who are willing to attend a training or two and assist in handling mediations and grievances. (Contact Elliot Zais.)

- We need non-members to sign membership cards. If you have concerns about the Local, unions in general, etc. that make you hesitant to sign a card, share that information with a steward or officer. If you just want to know more about the union, please let us know!

- If you don't know what the union has accomplished over the years, read the What's the Union ever done for me? article. (See the Local 3336 Bulletin Board.)

- Attend membership meetings (in person or by phone) and find out what the heck is going on!

Goal Two: Activate Members Politically -

We face some really nasty ballot initiatives in November; ballot initiatives which if passed, could harm each and every one of us, as well as our families and the health of our communities (see article on ballot initiatives). The time to start educating ourselves and others is now. In the months ahead, members will be asked to talk to friends, family and neighbors about the issues, participate in phone banks and gather signatures.

We also need to be more active in various labor forums where we can receive information and participate in the development of strategies and endorsements of candidates. And we need to support other workers' struggles through organizations like Portland Jobs with Justice and the Eugene-Springfield Solidarity Network.

What can you do?

- Become a member of the Local's new Political Committee. (Contact Chair Doug Drake.)
- Take advantage of upcoming educational opportunities to learn about the ballot initiatives.
- Commit to doing SOMETHING to help support the good and defeat the bad ballot initiatives. If each of us did something, guys

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like Sizemore would lose so bad, they would give up and we could focus on the good stuff!

• Let us know if you want to be involved in other labor forums (e.g. your regional labor council, Jobs with Justice, AFSCME's political endorsement process, conferences). We'll plug you in!

Goal Three: Address VIP Contract Workers Issue

Currently close to 100 contracted workers, with temporary agency wages and benefits, work side by side with our permanent DEQ vehicle inspectors. This situation is unfair to all - the workers who receive substandard benefits and have no security, the permanent employees who see high turnover and lower skill level amongst the temps, and the public, who deserve better service. The Local is committed to researching options and identifying solutions to this situation.

What can you do?

• Agree to work with members of the Member Mobilization and Organizing Committee on a solution for VIP contract workers (Contact Leslie Kochan for more information.)

• When the time comes, commit to supporting a permanent solution that benefits everyone.

Goal Four: Perform Work Related to Contract Negotiations and Labor-Management Meetings

Research and polling related to our next contract negotiations needs to begin soon. Key issues must be identified. Workgroups will be responsible for specific issues. Unresolved labor-management issues must be resolved prior to contract negotiations or considered as contract issues.

What can you do?

• Participate as a member of the Local's new Negotiations Committee. (Contact Henning Larsen.)

• Let the Local know if you have specific contract issues you want to see addressed

• next round. (Contact Elliot Zais.)

Volunteer to participate in Workgroups on specific negotiations issues as they are announced.

Goal Five: Involve Local in Broader Environmental Issues, Particularly Where the Local Can Influence the Labor Movement

Common ground can often be found when workers' issues and environmental issues come into conflict. However, there has been no concerted effort within the Oregon labor movement to begin a dialogue around these issues. Our Local is the best positioned of any to begin to articulate a vision and a path towards environmental sustainability within the labor movement. We need to identify key issue and opportunities for bringing those issues forward.

What can you do?

• Become a member of the Local's new Environmental Task Force (a subcommittee of the Political Committee) (Contact Chair Doug Drake.)

Now, What Will you do?

TRANSITION

(Or, Out with the Old, in with the New)

by Brooks Koenig

Local 3336 has a great new group of officers. As the outgoing President, I have the opportunity to pontificate on what our Local accomplished during my watch, and where we might be headed as Doug Drake, the new Prez, takes over.

I had a pretty *modest agenda* as the president: increase participation, improve communication, secure a decent contract, and act to keep/make DEQ a better place for employees. The modest agenda begot modest, but significant gains.

Maybe the *greatest gain* is our group of new leaders (**Doug as President, Henning Larsen as 1st VP, Julie Schlafle as Sec., and Marilyn Daniel, Tom Hack, and Shari Harris-Dunning as Board members**). We also have continuity and skill with our returning officers (**Elliot Zais as Chief Steward, Joe Edney as Treasurer, and Jim Glass as Board member**). And, finally, we've done a bit of recycling with the return of some former officers (**Leslie Kochan as 2nd VP and myself as a Board member**). We also have new trustees (**Bill Brown, Tim Brown, and Holly Stewart**) who will soon be conducting an audit. Participation was broader than in the past on the political front as well - we had people getting signatures for good ballot measures and fighting on multiple fronts against bad measures.

Communication was better. The Local Voice got a voice and people actually read it. Kudos to the old team (**Ann Levine, Deb Nesbitt, and Jim Sheetz**) and welcome to the new team (**Kim Carlson, Marti Roberts-Pillion, and Dave Kunz**). Meetings were better if not always scintillating - when we had "outside" speakers, participation was up markedly. The e-mail folder got some use, and e-mail was the same blessing/curse it is with other communication. The bulletin boards left a lot to be desired, but, hey, there is a chance for instant improvement.

The contract is decent. Not great, not what I wanted, but no take-aways and modest incremental gains. I won't re-hash everything here that I discussed in the other article, but I will repeat that my biggest disappointment was that DEQ failed to be an environmental leader when it came to transportation options whether it was subsidized bus passes, pre-tax pass purchase or incentives for alternative modes. Of course, I also would have liked more than a paltry 2% wage increase in these economic boom times, but that is a much longer article.

DEQ is a slightly better place to work for a few people. We made a few gains for VIP workers (the return of booths and a few

safety improvements). We protected a few employees through the grievance process. Still, we didn't really get to the point where it felt like the Union and Management were working together to make DEQ a truly "family-friendly" workplace. Whether it is mutually-developed workplans, career development, or wellness programs, we seem to be at a point where "just say no" was the management position and I/we could not get beyond it.

But, we do have a new Union team and a new sense of optimism. If people point out the silver lining in a cloud to me, I tend to see tarnish. The new crew sees the silver and is equipped with tarnish remover. There are some major challenges on the horizon: Sizemore is back with more bad initiatives; the Legislature will be pushing for more privatization and for reducing the cost of government (including keeping a tight lid on salaries); there are a number of political battles both within and without the Union; and DEQ will face budget battles and the attendant pressure to cut any and all "frills." We as a Local need to be stronger: we need more members and more participation. The transition we all need to make is to be an active force (leader) to make change. You have a good group of leaders, but paying dues and sending an occasional e-mail is not enough. There are numerous opportunities for you to participate detailed elsewhere in this newsletter - make the transition from passive to active.

Where The Buck Stops....

Or....The Buck Stops Here

We all owe a big thanks to **Brooks Koenig** for the work he has done as the AFSCME Local 3336 President for the past two years. As President, he quickly learned that, THE BUCK STOPS HERE. While the President shares responsibility for the quality and health of the union with other officers, stewards and with all represented workers, he/she usually shoulders an ex-

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cessive workload. The President must balance the competing needs of the union and the competing desires of the represented workers. The person in this role must respond to many of the concerns of represented workers. The role of President requires an ability to remain dedicated to a job that you don't often receive recognition for and to remain patient out of respect for the integrity of the union as well as each and every worker. It also requires intelligence and good communication skills. In Brooks, our Local found someone who had all of these qualities and steadfastly carried out the work of the presidency. Brooks always managed to make a joke in stressful situations rather than scream (Some of us think there are times when Brooks should have screamed!). So -- Thank you Brother Brooks for a job well done!

Committed to the agency's work, he realized he could sit back and criticize or step up and contribute to the Union's efforts. We're glad he chose the latter!



**A Gallery of New Officers:
Giving Their Time to Help
Us All!**

Doug Drake is our newly elected President. Doug has been with the agency since February 1987. He is an aquatic biologist in the Bio-Monitoring Section at the Lab. Like many of the folks you'll read about in this newsletter the time was right for Doug to accept the challenge. To hear it in his own words see Doug's "Letter from the President" in this issue.



Leslie Kochan returns in the position of Second Vice President, a new office for Local 3336. Leslie has held several offices including Co-President and Officer-at-Large. She has been with DEQ since November 1988 and she is currently working in Northwest Region's Solid Waste section doing recycling and waste reduction work. Leslie has been instrumental in our Union since the beginning and she remains an excellent role model. She stays involved because she "wants to encourage more members to be active in our Local as well as the broader labor movement so that we can better protect and enhance the benefits working people have in Oregon."



A Gallery of New Officers: Giving Their Time to Us All !

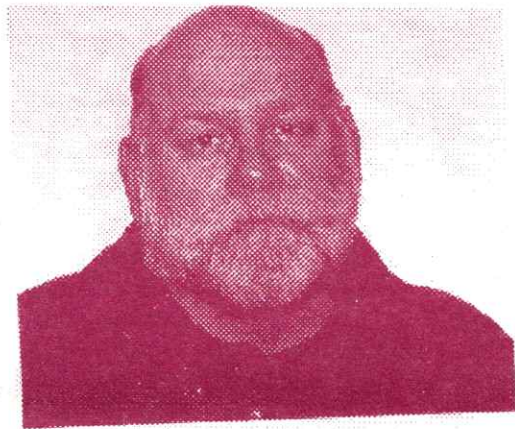


Julie Schafle is our newly elected Secretary. Julie has been with the agency since July 1992. She provides administrative support to the newly formed Environmental Cleanup Division activities. Julie was happily recruited for service at a point in her life when she felt it was time to learn more about our Local's activities. Her personal goal is to become more active and involved with the Union and to make things happen! Julie's optimism and can-do attitude are a true asset to 3336!



Henning Larsen is our newly elected

First Vice President, a new office for Local 3336. Henning began his work with DEQ as a temporary employee in the Water Quality section in 1992, going permanent in February 1994. He is currently a hydrogeologist in the tanks section. Henning sees our general cost of living expenses out-pacing our salaries. Committed to the agency's work, he realized he could sit back and criticize or step up and contribute to the Union's efforts. We're glad he chose the latter!



Joe Edney is returning as Treasurer for a fourth term. Involved from the beginning, Joe is also a past President. Frustrated with the lack of accountability back then, Joe took on the role of treasurer to create a dependable, easily used and transferable bookkeeping system that would withstand the scrutiny of an audit. Having done that for Council 75 (for which he is also Treasurer), as well as Local 3336, Joe is now seeing the process WORK! Everything is electronic with a CPA firm paying bills and taxes, and compiling reports. Joe has been with DEQ since November 1989. He is a Natural Resource Specialist in the Water Quality South section in Western Region and his office is in Eugene.

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The Local Voice

Doug Drake, President, Lab	229-5983	Kevin Downing HQ, AQ	229-6549
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Leslie Kochan, 2nd V P NWR, VCS	229- 5529	Joe Edney, Treasurer WR,	541/ 686-7838x237
Julie Schlafle, Secretary HQ, WMC	229-6170	Jim Glass, Board WR,	378-8240x249
Joe Edney, Treasurer WR,	541/686-7838x237	Tom Hack, Board ER,	541/278-4626
Jim Glass, Board WR,	503/378-8240x249	Shari Harris-Dunning, ER,	541/388-6146x240
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George DiDomenico, Lab	229-5983		

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