

STATEMENT

BY

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December 21, 1982

Since the time of Washington it has become traditional in this country for politicians who are "stepping down" from office to give a farewell speech. Not that I would equate myself with General George, but there is something clarifying when one is able to step back and review before stepping down. This clearing of the palate, while esoteric, does encourage me to make observations that if I were in the midst of fray I would not otherwise be able to state. So I ask you to indulge me while I impart a few passing reflections on my tenure and about our Council and its works. For those of you who are "seasoned" veterans of the Council I apologize if I am stating the obvious, but I hope this will serve, perhaps, to reinforce some ideas that we all hold.

The most important task for the Metropolitan Service District Council to keep in clear view is its purpose. While this is stated in the enabling legislation, it might be more succinctly put as: to ensure the continued quality of life for all citizens of the region. Each decision that is ultimately made concerning policies of the District, be it transportation, solid waste, the Zoo, economic development or what have you, the decision must respond to the question: "Will this improve or maintain the quality of life?" Often this is easier said than seen, but it is the purpose of this government and each of

us must be able in our own conscience to know that we have made our decision based on that single factor.

Within that most important factor we must then take into account the form in which we make those decisions. This great republic is just that, a republic. We elect representatives to serve as leaders and bear upon them one heavy responsibility to sort and weigh many factors and then make the decisions which will, hopefully, benefit us all. Playing this part is not always comfortable.

Special interests will bring pressure for their own cause, and their views often do not consider the overall effect of what they are asking to be done. This is further complicated in the Oregon "system" which encourages and demands wide general citizen input into the decision-making process. Still, we must keep in mind that it is the responsibility of the elected representative to further the views of his or her constituency in light of what will best serve all the people of the region. We are also faced with the fact of being part-time elected representatives, volunteering our time to serve. Yet, we have, if we are doing our job correctly, more of the information and salient facts available to us than anyone else and must always take stock of that fact. It is our role to pull together that information, from the experts and the amateurs, and then take a course of action which will further our quality of life.

In doing this the Council must deal with itself as a group and deal with each other as individuals. I have often heard people who run for office say: "I am not a politician." These people either do not know what they are saying or they abuse the legitimate use of rhetoric. The Greeks, who gave us the term, meant the word politikos to be "of the citizens," but one term has also come to convey the concept of "expedient." I would hope that our Council would always keep the meaning of the term in its original Greek concept. That means to act "of the citizens" an extension of the people's will yet one that provides true and not simply expedient leadership. Council members must respect one another in this light. Each of us has been elected "of the people" and bear that responsibility and honor. In our deliberations, then, we must continue that respect for each other's opinions and give heavy weight that when one speaks he or she speaks on behalf of many, many others. It is of serious import what we do and all of our opinions must be made and heard in all seriousness. Give the respect and honor due to your fellow Councilors on their points of view and opinions. And remember, that deliberations are just that. As we debate an issue in Committee or Council it is one time for the sorting and the weighing. It is the crux of debate to trade and exchange concepts, to question and disagree and once a position is taken by an individual he or she has a right and a responsibility to try and prevail. And if he

or she fails to convince the majority, then to accept defeat gracefully.

• With the Oregon system we have the responsibility of encouraging and accepting input to the decision process by all citizens. I do not believe, after four years experience and in spite of some feelings to the contrary, that we are guilty of not bearing (and often acting on) that input. What we must be certain is that we do provide a positive forum for that input. Often our patience is worn thin, but patience we must have. It is far too easy for us to assume, because we are so close to the issues, that we have "heard it all" and so may miss that "jewel" of an idea that comes in from "outside." We must provide a polite, attentive atmosphere to allow our citizens to exercise their rights. We would expect the same should the roles be reversed.

• The Council's relationship with the Executive must be constantly re-examined. In any dynamic organization, personalities will be as significant in the processes of policy-making as position are. Our legislation defines a separation between the executive and legislative bodies, but leaves the somewhat frustrating situation of an Executive with no defined powers. I say frustrating because it, in my opinion, sullies the role not just for the Executive, but for the Council as well. Actually, according to our enabling legislation, the role of the Executive is to prepare and present budget and to execute

the will of the Council. In practice, the Executive has exercised far more of a direct role in policy setting than that. This has been necessitated both by the personality of the incumbent and the requirement to have a day-to-day operations which can reflect some consistency in what we do. The question to ask is whether or not this present arrangement is sufficient and efficient? If the Council is to continue as part-time, as I feel it should, then should the Executive have a larger role--or would that risk total non-accountability, accountability which each Councilor has to his/her district. I have long felt that the Executive should have direct veto over Council decisions and that the Council should have veto override authority. This would clarify roles and achieve greater separation of powers. Short of this the Council may still wish to consider meeting on the basis of a three- to four-day extended period each two months rather than on the basis it does now. That would allow greater ability to look indepth at issues, exchange views with each other, the Executive and staff and then work on the resolution to issues.

Finally, I would like to make some comments on specific issues which Metro faces:

On Solid Waste: Ideally, the best way to reduce solid waste is to reduce it before it enters the waste stream. To tackle this is somewhat Don Quixotish, but is an effort at least worth supporting. Short of this, recycling is

obviously of value and something which Oregonians are generally willing to support. Marketing and costs are factors, but consider that Metro has given PRT less than \$3,000 a month for the past several months. During that period, PRT has on the average, marketed about 300 tons. The subsidy then amounts to less than \$10 per ton--less than our present tipping fee. We should ask ourselves the value of that--I think it is high. At the same time the recycling industry is faced with an obvious conundrum: pay for basic operations while trying to improve basic efficiency and develop markets. Go to a PRT station and watch them break glass by hand rather than using pneumatic crushers. Their truck operates with drop boxes far below capacity. The point is that if we wish to see a real commitment to recycling it will take a considerable effort to gain the infrastructure to achieve a maximum effort. Is Metro in a position and willing to do this? We have the authority to do so, but is that done at the expense of other businesses or is there a way to balance a private sector effort and a government subsidized effort?

Transportation: Speaking of the need for infrastructure, Metro can play a significant role in developing a transportation system to support good economic growth in the region. The state seems to be designating the area from Corvallis-Salem to Washington County and Portland as an area for intensive high-technology development. Fortunately, land for such development exists, unfortunately,

in infrastructure especially in transportation, does not exist. That area is presently served only by I-5 and 99W, plus some inadequate back roads. If there is to be adequate delivery of services and transport of goods, a greater effort will have to be made to develop good roads while maintaining current roads. And all of this must be done while insuring non-destruction of agricultural lands and again, the quality of life in the region. But to not face these issues could result in Oregon becoming the Appalachia of the West.

On the Zoo, well it is nice to have something good going for us. Still, it is a serious endeavor. The Zoo represents a heavy public investment which must be protected. The value of the Zoo cannot be measured in dollars alone as it provides an educational and research resource which is immeasurable. The Council must give the Zoo and its supporters its full attention to assure that the quality and role of Zoo is continued.

Finally a word about disagreement. This may seem an odd note to end on, but I feel that one method of dealing with disagreements with each other and with the Executive is one of our greatest failings. The fact is that we do and will disagree. But, unfortunately, in the first several years of our existence as a government most of the Councilors reached an agreement not to disagree in public and worse, in my opinion, not to make comments to the press unless we all "agreed." Certainly this was an informal arrangement and there were those of us who neither subscribed to this process

nor kept it. The overall result, however, was a kind of "smothering over" of many issues, no "nasty" questions were to be asked, no harsh disagreements to be spoken "out loud." But, there were sharp disagreements. My greatest disappointment in my tenure as a Metro Councilor is threefold: 1) not being able to convince the Council much sooner about the fiscal ills of the organization, 2) that I did not prevail sooner in the attempt to "shut-down" the Johnson Creek LID process, and 3) that I was never able to get a dialog going with Tri-Met about respective roles. The disappointment is not in my not recognizing these problems sooner (I pointed out problems with the fiscal process in our first official meeting; Gene Peterson never was given a fair hearing on his concerns about Johnson Creek; and we still have no dialog with Tri-Met), but that there was a great deal of pressure from the Council and Executive to not air my concerns in public. I fault the press for not giving greater coverage of Metro's business sooner--I went to the newspapers and asked, but was turned down. By the time the papers did decide to take notice we seem to have developed a siege mentality, and the result you all know too well.

The point of this is that this is not good public policy nor process. We are elected to set policy and then to assure that the Executive carries out that policy. We must hold the Executive and staff accountable for the action we set them to do. In reaching those policies and in monitoring them we will disagree with each other. We should be able to do that without rancor and with respect for the position each of us holds. Since we are public officials we should also be able to hold our discourse in public. If we do this

the public will respect us for our candor and the credibility of the organization will be enhanced.

It has been a useful four years. There have been some very positive steps forward. I only hope I contributed in some small way and I wish each of you the very best for the future.

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12/20/82

