

Vanguard Editorial UNITY

The Los Angeles Vanguard is a weekly newspaper which informs and communicates with people who seek control of their lives through alternative means of political, economic, social and personal survival.

We recognize that this community is greatly fragmented today. We hope to provide a channel for unification through a dialogue bringing us in closer touch with one another. Vanguard readers will have new information enabling them to make intelligent decisions for their own actions and commitments.

The Vanguard will expose the propaganda that the arrogance of power uses to trample on the rights of people. We will probe consumer ripoffs, environmental degradations, unfair labor practices, attempts to limit personal and social freedoms, mass media and cultural brainwashing, and offer solutions.

We will provide extensive coverage of people's activities in a four-page pullout resources section. This calendar will be a compilation of places to go, things to do, and information on: social services, crises centers, free clinics, food conspiracies, child-care cooperatives, theater productions, multi-media performances, classes, seminars, meetings . . .

The Vanguard entertainment pages will be filled with reviews of both large and small productions. Our reviewers will be analytical not presumptuous. Quality features will be an integral part of the newspaper.

We will hold politicians and bureaucrats accountable for their conduct, reminding them that they are public servants. We will closely watch the actions of large corporations, utility companies, transportation and communication lines, the Los Angeles moguls and others in positions of economic power. To this end, we will engage in advocacy journalism and some good old-fashioned muckraking, launching our own investigative reports and carefully following up our readers' complaints. We will examine all forms of repression, from the blatant to the subtle. We won't be afraid to take stands when necessary.

The Vanguard is more than a newspaper, it is an organizing tool for community groups and individuals to fight back through citizen action. FIGHT BACK will be a regular feature of such efforts.

We also encourage communication from our readers. We will print responses and select readers' opinions for our editorial pages.

Recognizing that this is a cooperative effort, we will strive for the maximum degree of ownership and control by the people whose energies go into making it happen. Finally, we hope to return a measure of our success to the community by sponsoring cultural and community projects.

Editorial

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BOARD OF DIRECTORS: Jim Horwitz, Dave Lindorff, Ron Ridenour, Dorothy Thompson, Tom Thompson

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Unsolicited manuscripts, FBI/CIA/Police inquiries, love letters and hate mail must be accompanied by stamped self-addressed envelope if response is desired.

The Vanguard is a non-sexist, non-racist, worker-controlled publication.

COVER: MARK JONES



VANGUARD STAFF: Sitting (l to r) Ben Pleasants, Tom Thompson, Dave Lindorff. Standing (l to r) Dorothy Thompson, Ron Ridenour, Mark Jones. (Photo by MARK JONES).



Francoise Beauchamp



Jim Horwitz

Letters

Dear Editor,

Congratulations on the launching of Vanguard. A very impressive effort. Good, serious competition for the Los Angeles Times.

Sincerely,

James E. Bartlett, III
Publisher/President
Skeptic Magazine

Dear Editor,

Receipt of Dave Lindorff's fine article and the pilot edition of VANGUARD was preceded by a Pacifica broadcast over WBAI the other night, in which you explained the results of your investigation. It's a solid issue — with two boys in school I'm particularly concerned about all attitudinal surveys that in effect seek to rope the kids into the bureaucrats' effort to change the parents' mindset. I am convinced that you could take an East German school administrator and shift him around with the same fellow here; both, aside from semantics, would scarcely miss a beat in the new environment. Keep up the good work — I'll spread the word here. Also, sign me up for life.

Dear Editor,

Paper looks really good! Congrats. Interesting community issues from a left perspective — a very refreshing change from the youth cult stuff of the past.

Liberation News Service

Christopher G. Trump
Assistant Dean
Graduate School of Journalism
Columbia University

Dear Editor,

I picked up the Vanguard the other day and was much impressed. I've been reading Boston's Real Paper, Phoenix's East-West Journal, and the Guardian, for some time and I heartened to see a rag which intelligent without hiding cynicism. Most "underground" papers purport cameraderie with the masses, but maintain an concealed contempt for the Vanguard appears to be a healthy positive journal with much potential. And I feel very good about the prospects of contributing to the paper.

Enclosed you'll find \$10 — please put me on the subscription list.

Sincerely,

Doug Bond

Some of the articles in the premiere issue appeared in limited circulation preview issue.



Campaign 76:

Will Ted Kennedy Take The D...

Photo by TOM

FIGHT BACK

Dialing for Dollars Ma Bell's Phoney Ring

Burt Wilson

To give us information is thy vice!"—Euripides

Traditionally, Pacific Telephone repackages reams of figures and charts to show why they need millions of dollars in rate raises and, traditionally, the PUC scales down their request a few million. This kind of "ask for more than you need" tactic is familiar enough. The phone company ends up getting what it wanted in the first place and the PUC appears to be doing its job. It's a cozy public relations trade-off that has the effect of diffusing any hostile public reaction to what amounts to blatant rip-off.

This time around the phone company has filed an application with the PUC requesting a rate increase of \$119.6 million, which it says it needs to "recover increases in operating costs, principally wages, for the 12-month period ending June 30, 1976." Now here's the gimmick: they say they will reduce that request to \$79.6 million if the PUC allows them to start charging 20 cents for information calls. The lower figure would be achieved by what Pacific Telephone says are "expense savings and the effects of separations and settlements" as well as additional revenue. Included in the plan is a "magnanimous allowance of three (count 'em three) free calls per month. The blind, handicapped, pay phone callers, hospitals, hotels and motels would be exempted from all charges.

Pacific Telephone, one of the bigger hogs at the public trough, is currently making its periodical appearance before the California Public Utilities Commission (PUC) with their usual request: they want more of our money. Only now they've added a new gimmick.

Ma Bell says this deal is fair and square. But CAUSE — Campaign Against Utility Service Exploitation — is refusing to buy that line.

CAUSE project coordinator Peter Christiansen says, "This is the phone company's version of Dialing for Dollars — we do the dialing while they rake in the dollars. Their proposal is full of more loopholes than Rockefeller's tax return. For example, they say 87% of the people make an average of three Directory Assistance calls or less per month. They claim this places the burden directly on the heavy users — the 13% who make over three calls per month. But these are phony figures because they are averages. If a person makes six calls one month and no calls the next, true, the average is three, but they will also be paying for the three calls they made over the limit in the first month — 60 cents. If this deal goes through, the phone company will rake in millions in hidden revenues!"

Members of CAUSE brought this blatant manipulation of statistics to public attention during a press conference on March 8, 1976, when they released further information giving Ma Bell her biggest public relations setback since the days when fundamentalist preachers



Drawing by Francoise Beauchamp

labeled the telephone an "instrument of the devil."

In researching the several-hundred pages of PT&T's rate increase application, CAUSE found that nowhere was any mention made of distributing the necessary phone books to customers so they could avoid calling information by looking up needed numbers. The implications in that omission were ominous. Anyone who did not have all the books in their area code would be forced to dial Directory Assistance for help.

deal with customers calling for all the books in the 213 area code.

The message called for business operators to try and "dissuade" customers by using the following arguments: (1) That directory costs won't be affected by the rate change, (2) That the directories would be obsolete by the time the Directory Assistance charge would go into effect, (3) Asking "Are you really going to use them or will they be another stack of unused paper?", and (4) That the cost of printing the books would be reflected in future rate cases.

Operators were requested not to offer the Catalina directories unless they were specifically requested and then insisted upon. It seems the Catalina books were in short supply.

Sure enough, when members of CAUSE called the phone company and asked for the books, they got the patented spiel complete with the stone-walling on the Catalina directory.

In a subsequent CAUSE executive committee meeting, the significance of Pacific Telephone's actions were debated. It soon became apparent that Ma Bell had put herself between a rock and a hard place.

On the one hand, the phone company's rate increase application, which included the Directory Assistance charge proposal, stated that "revenue requirements are higher than they need be because the majority of requested Directory Assistance listings can be found in the customer's directory." One logical conclusion drawn from that statement is, of course, that customers could immediately do their part to reduce revenue requirements by looking up numbers — if they had the books! On the other hand, here was the phone company actively doing all it could to "dissuade" its customers from getting the necessary books!

That meant that the conduct of Pacific Telephone management personnel in dealing with customers in such a manner was contradictory to and at cross purposes with the very intent to reduce revenue requirements, as

outlined in their rate increase application!

A formal complaint was filed March 22nd with the Public Utilities Commission. CAUSE was not without experience in this area. The consumer group had filed a formal complaint with the PUC in the ARCO/SoCal Gas deal, a move that helped pressure the termination of that rip-off.

The complaint included nine paragraphs detailing the contradictory actions of Pacific Telephone and ended with: "Wherefore, complainants ask that the commission (The PUC) immediately either eliminate the Directory Assistance Charge Proposal from PT&T's Application No. 55492 or instruct the Pacific Telephone and Telegraph Company to cease forthwith all attempts to dissuade customers from ordering any telephone directories."

"Complainants ask furthermore that a bill-stuffer announcement be prepared by PT&T for all area codes explaining the need to look up numbers rather than dialing Directory Assistance and listing the white pages and yellow pages directories available to them free of charge."

Filing the formal complaint helped crystallize an overview of just what the phone company was trying to get away with, namely that they are deliberately covering up a revenue expense that would significantly do away with any savings — whether real or imaginary — which might result from a Directory Assistance charge plan.

The key is the distribution of phone books. If the Directory Assistance charge proposal is allowed to go into effect without any provision for the distribution of all necessary books, it will be challenged in the courts as unconstitutional because it is discriminatory. The phone company must know this. But if a massive distribution of books were part of their proposal, that would entail a huge revenue expense which would probably amount to more than would be saved through cutting down the number of information calls. Of course, this would negate the whole premise of charging for calls to Directory Assistance. They could never get it through the PUC.

Clearly, the success of Pacific Telephone's proposal is dependent on keeping this quiet by focusing attention on the wholly illogical premise that they are going to save us money by charging us more money.

Another factor is that the Los Angeles Times prints the phone books! The Times-Mirror Co. has a \$3.2 million contract now and that would shoot up perhaps five times if they had to supply all the books to all 3.6 million customers in the 213 area code.

The proposal is now in the hands of the PUC. Objections should be addressed to 107 S. Broadway, Los Angeles, 90012. In the meantime, CAUSE urges all phone company customers to call Pacific Telephone — the number of the business operator is on the phone bill — and order all 13 books in the 213 area code — and not to be dissuaded by their propaganda. Directory Assistance service and free phone books are a right — a part of PT&T's service contract with the state.

Use it!

Look for a "Fight Back" column in this space each week.



"COURSE, YA CAN ALWAYS PAY THE 20¢..."