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 closer together. 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 arrangement of power is trampl on the rights of people. We will probe consumer ripoffs, environmental degradations, unfair labor practices, and the inhumanity of so-called normal life. The Vanguard will be a voice of the people, a forum for their expression.

We will provide extensive coverage of people's activities in a four-page resource section. This calendar will be compiled of places to go, things to do, and information on social services, centers, clubs, food cooperatives, theater productions, mass media and cultural events. We will also publish reviews of both large and small productions. Our reviewers will be analytical and non-promotional. 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 police and others in positions of economic and social power. To this end, we will engage in advocacy journalism and some good old-fashioned newswriting, launching our own investigative reports and carefully following up on 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 not a newspaper, it is an organizing tool for community groups and individuals to fight back. It is a regular feature of such efforts. We also encourage readers to communicate with their editors. We will print responses and select readers' comments in our editorial pages.

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

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,

Dear Editor.

Letter to the Editor.

Paper looks really good! Congratulations. Interesting community issues from a left perspective—a very refreshing change from the usual hebdomadal fare. Keep up the good work. I'll spread the word here. Also, sign me up for life.

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

Dear Editor,

I picked up the Vanguard the other day and was quite impressed. I've been reading Boston's Real Paper, the East-West Journal, and the Guardian, for some time and would heartenented to see a rag more characterized by an intelligent, non-cynical perspective. Most "underground" papers purport camaraderie and massiveness, but maintain a concealed contempt for the Vanguard appears to be a less positive journal with a real potential. And I feel very excited about the prospects of continuing to read this.

Enclosed you'll find $5—please put me on the subscription list.

Sincerely,

Doug Field

Campaign '76: Will Ted Kennedy Take The Blame? 

Photo by Bob Woll
Dialing for Dollars
Ma Bell's Phoney Ring

Burt Wilson

To give an information in thy
frenzied—"Epictetus"

Traditionally, Pacific Telephone
receives a large number of calls
in the form of requests for infor-
mation. A recent study has shown
that this number has increased
dramatically in recent years.

"Introducing MABEL'S
improved line!"

"Drawing by

Pacific Telephone, one of the biggest hogs at the
public trough, is currently making its periodic
appearance before the California Public Utilities
Commission (PUC) with its 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 Christianen 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
dialogs like those which rocked
the legislature. For example, they
say, 95% of the people make an
average of three calls a month,
so why should the company pay
for the calls from the hard
users—those 15% who make
over three calls a month. But
these are phonies figures because
they are averages. If a person
makes three calls a month, he
would not call the number of
times the number of calls the
company would make. In fact,
the number of calls the
company would make.

And it would cost them dearly.
This means that the company
would have to pay for
the calls to the public
help line.

"In a prepared statement
delivered at the press conference,
Peter Christianen exposed
the phone company’s numbers game
and called upon all telephone
customers to immediately order the 13 books
in the 213 area code. He suggested
that the books might not be free
for another 24 hours that the
people should order
the books from the
public telephone company.

The response was devastating.
Phone company records show
that through March 9th they
were receiving about two
requests per day for the
books. On March 9th, that figure
jumped to 1354 and continued
at that rate for the next three
days: a total of about 2000
requests.

At the same time, people who
worked inside the phone company
began calling CAUSE with
information on the press
conference. On Friday morning
at 9:30, the phone company
announced a public relations
campaign, including the
issuance of a telephone
directory.

"On the one hand, the phone
company’s rate increase
applications, which included the
Directory Assistance charge
proposition, stated that "revenue
requirements are higher than
they need be because the majority
of requested Directory Assistance
charges cannot 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, the phone
company actively doing all
could to "dissuade" its
customers from getting the
books.

That meant that the conduct
of Pacific Telephone management
personnel in dealing with
customers, such as a management personnet
detailing a new training program on how to
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 AICO/South Galas deal, a move
that helped pressure the
termination of that rip-off.
The complaint included nine
paragraphs detailing the cen-
ntral actions of Pacific Telephone
and ended with: "Wherefore, complaints
ask that the commission (the PUC)
immediately either eliminate the
Directory Assistance Charge
Proposal Item PT&T’s Application
No. 50902 or instruct the Pacific
Telephone and Telegraph Com-
pany to cease forthwith all at-
tempts to dissuade customers
from ordering any telephone
directories.

"Complainants ask furthermore
that a full-staffer announcement be
prepared by PT&T for all area
codes explaining the need to look
up numbers rather than dialing
Directly 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 it 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 un-
constitutional 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
expansion 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 numbers. 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
promise which they are going to sell
us money by charging us more
money.

Another factor is the Los
Angeles Times prints the phone
books! The Times-Mirror Co has
at $3.2 million contract now and
that would shoot up perhaps
time if they have 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 10 S.
Broadway, Los Angeles, 90012. In the meantime,
CAUSE urges all phone company
customers to call Pacific Telephone
—the number of the
busier operator is the
phone bill—and order all 13
books in the 213 area
code—and not to be
dissuaded by their
propaganda.

Directory Assistance service

Use it!

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

"Of course, you can always
pay the 20 cents...