

Tenant Rights Project and some West Coast coalition-building

BY LEW CHURCH
CONTRIBUTING COLUMNIST

Lew Church is an organizer for Portland's Tenant Rights Project and Coordinator of PSU Progressive Student Union, and can be reached at lewchurch@gmail.com or 503-222-2974.

As one of the organizers who was able to go on the Sisters of the Road/Street Roots four-van caravan to San Francisco in January to protest the Obama administration's insufficient funding for decent, affordable housing and protect poor people from "crimes of status," I was happy to see hundreds of protesters (including 40 of us from Portland) march in the rain down Market Street in San Francisco and present Nancy Pelosi's office a letter advocating for housing and human rights. "House keys not handcuffs" was a great slogan used on many of the protest signs on Market Street.

As an organizer in Portland, since September 2007, for Tenant Rights Project (supported by Portland State University Progressive Student Union), our campaign has focused on advocating for the rights of tenants and other poor people to have decent, habitable, safe housing. Tenant Rights Project was happy to endorse the Western Regional Advocacy Project's San Francisco march.

Here in Portland, Tenant Rights Project has met every week since early 2009. Our meetings are open to tenants interested in organizing against slumlord practices, including: persistent pest control problems (cockroaches, mice, bedbugs), crime (drugs, prostitution, violence and kickbacks which come in off the street into single-resident occupancy housing, frequently), and in the case of one landlord campaign – protesting a local, large, nonprofit landlord's practices which include board meetings that are

closed to tenants, and where board minutes are secret (which is illegal).

Tenant Rights Project meets at 6 p.m. every Sunday in the Biltmore Hotel lobby, 310 NW Sixth, in Old Town. So far, Tenant Rights Project has held one picket in downtown Portland protesting landlord practices.

In the past, at Portland State, the Progressive Student Union and the Student Rent Strike Committee organized a six month rent strike against student housing (then run by a contracted-for landlord, not the university itself) which protested persistent pest control problems (cockroaches, silverfish, mice), frequent rent increases, harassment of tenants by managers, and lack of transparency and accountability to tenants. We picketed twice at the landlord's other businesses, and got the concessions of one abusive building manager being fired, and, eventually, the university taking over student housing directly (a much better solution).

As someone who used to do anti-poverty organizing on tenant rights and housing as a VISTA volunteer with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (Dr. King Jr.'s organization), in Macon, Ga., several years after Dr. King's assassination – I appreciated that the San Francisco pro-housing protest by WRAP focused on the one-year anniversary of President Obama's inauguration and on Dr. King's birthday, as well.

Many of us were hopeful when a liberal, Democrat senator (and the first African American) became elected president.

However, as we have seen in the year since, Barack Obama's lofty rhetoric doesn't, ipso facto, translate into anti-poverty work or social justice on the ground, locally or globally.

Despite its purported liberal or progressive image, when it comes to jobs, health care, the economy, schools, and things like tenant rights and housing for people, Oregon gives short shrift to economic justice. For example, Oregon's K-12 classroom size ratio is second worst in the country, second only to Arizona.

What is to be done? As groups like Sisters of the Road, Street Roots and WRAP join forces on the west coast, nationally, and even globally (Tenant Rights Project has been getting emails from a Squatters Movement in neoliberal South Africa despite there being a black-majority government in Pretoria for many years now) – we have a chance, as Robert F. Kennedy once said (quoting Aeschylus), "to make gentler the life of the world."

Dr. King Jr.'s last campaign in 1968 was the Poor People's March on Washington. In Portland, we need to start holding the City Council to a higher standard than the present "go along and get along," pro-capitalist "consensus," which seems pervasive between Commissioners Fritz, Fish, Saltzman, Leonard and Adams. In Salem, in Washington, D.C., and at the WTO (World Trade Organization) we need to start organizing in coalitions in order to put some teeth in all that "liberal" Obama rhetoric. Is Portland "the city that works" for yuppies, or the city that belongs to all of us?

#254

STOP THE FARE HIKE! STOP SERVICE CUTS!

Respect the Ride(rs):
DON'T LET TRIMET
TAKE YOU FOR A RIDE!



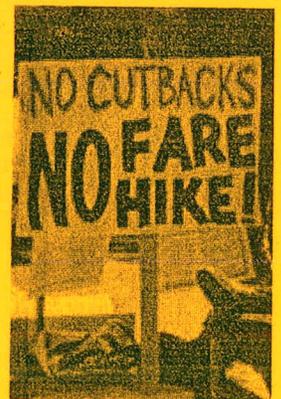
TRANSIT RIDERS UNION opposes both the 5 cents fare increase and the service cuts to 60+ bus routes!

According to Willamette Week, TriMet has \$2.5 billion in funds (including capital projects). Yet, TriMet says it has a \$27,000,000 budget shortfall. Is this true?

TriMet ignored 1,400 transit riders who signed petitions to keep Fareless Square, in Jan. 2010. The TriMet board is not elected, but appointed by Oregon's governor.

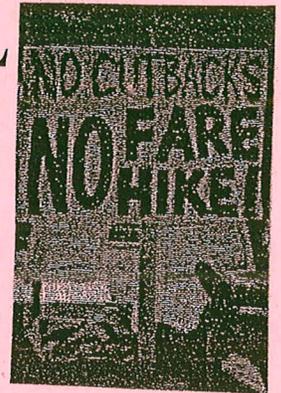
TriMet's GM, Fred Hansen, makes \$250,000 per year + a PT consulting job in Australia. George Passadore, TriMet board chair for 13 years, is also ex-regional president of Wells Fargo (Wells Fargo made \$6 billion in profits in 1st 6 months of 2009).

TRANSIT RIDERS UNION meets Saturdays,
12 noon, Chit Chat Café at PSU, next to Hot
Lips Pizza, 1906 SW 6th, or contact
www.trimetriders.org / 503-222-2974.



TAKE OUR TRANSIT BACK!

JASON BARBOUR FOR PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL



**Send Nick Fish BACK
to private practice!**

****JASON BARBOUR has been an organizer with the Transit Riders Union & supports electing the TriMet board (it is currently appointed by Oregon's governor), reviving Owl bus service, & fighting the proposed 2010 fare hike!**

****JASON BARBOUR supports tenant rights & opposes Nick Fish's stonewalling against low-income tenants in downtown Portland, 5x, in 2009.**

****JASON BARBOUR supports forcing the Obama Administration to adequately fund decent, habitable, affordable housing & opposes 'crimes of status' like sit-lie and the new, \$175 fine for not paying the buses-only fare in what was 'Fareless' Square.**

www.trimetriders.org

****JASON BARBOUR believes that in local elections, and with new media (Facebook, et al.) it is more feasible to upset & disprove the corporate media/poli sci industry 'stats' that only well-heeled candidates can win, or impact, elections (despite the recent anti-campaign spending limits ruling by the Supremes).**

****JASON BARBOUR asks WHY Nick Fish, a purported liberal, is in part being bankrolled by anti-66/67 Portland Tribune publisher & Portland polluter Robert Pamplin. Why Nick, why?**

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JASON BARBOUR FOR CITY COUNCIL is supported by PSU Progressive Student Union, Transit Riders Union, Tenant Rights Project, and workers, tenants, transit riders across Portland.

www.electjasonbarbour.com

PORTLAND CITY COUNCIL
COMMUNICATION REQUEST
Wednesday Council Meeting 9:30 AM

Council Meeting Date: 2-24-10

AUDITOR 02/16/10 AM10:24

Today's Date 2-16-10

Name Lew Church

Address PO Box 40011, Portland, Oregon 97240

Telephone 503-222-2974 Email lewchurch@gmail.com

Reason for the request:

ACTIVISM + SOCIAL JUSTICE

Lew Church
(signed)

- Give your request to the Council Clerk's office by Thursday at 5:00 pm to sign up for the following Wednesday Meeting. Holiday deadline schedule is Wednesday at 5:00 pm. (See contact information below.)
- You will be placed on the Wednesday Agenda as a "Communication." Communications are the first item on the Agenda and are taken promptly at 9:30 a.m. A total of five Communications may be scheduled. Individuals must schedule their own Communication.
- You will have 3 minutes to speak and may also submit written testimony before or at the meeting.

Thank you for being an active participant in your City government.

Contact Information:

Karla Moore-Love, City Council Clerk
1221 SW 4th Ave, Room 140
Portland, OR 97204-1900
(503) 823-4086 Fax (503) 823-4571
email: kmoore-love@ci.portland.or.us

Sue Parsons, Council Clerk Assistant
1221 SW 4th Ave., Room 140
Portland, OR 97204-1900
(503) 823-4085 Fax (503) 823-4571
email: sparsons@ci.portland.or.us

Request of Lew Church to address Council regarding activism and social justice
(Communication)

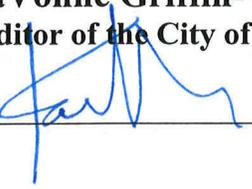
FEB 24 2010

RECEIVED 8:12:15 AM FEB 19 2010

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Filed FEB 19 2010

LaVonne Griffin-Valade
Auditor of the City of Portland

By  _____

COMMISSIONERS VOTED AS FOLLOWS:		
	YEAS	NAYS
1. Fritz		
2. Fish		
3. Saltzman		
4. Leonard		
Adams		