What is Your Opinion? Of What?

So many things are wrong. Sure taxes are way too high - but we'll manage somehow to pay them.

But sewer bills of $2,300 yearly if we become a town plus higher water bills - plus so many hidden and unforeseen expenses - plus the loss of island identity of uniqueness amongst other things? That's scary and ridiculous!

The concern is great - not only to retirees such as myself but to many young people struggling to buy and remodel homes in which to raise their growing families.

I feel that by voting to secede - if it comes to a vote - we will be destroying everything we've worked so hard and long to achieve.

So much is at stake - our lifestyle, our island culture, our future and our children's heritage - more isolation for all.

As an island of the city of Portland we are unique - as a separate town - so common - one among so many. Life won't be the same as being part of Portland.

This is a year of changes in our nation - does Peaks have to change too?

The alternative government group did a lot of hard work.

“I may disagree with what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it…”

There are those among us who say that expressing a different or opposing point of view breeds dissension. Open debate and the free dissemination of ideas is the basis for a strong and free and, yes, democratic society. Those who would silence the opposition do so from a position of weakness and fear. This is the classic situation that leads to erosion of freedom and a climate favoring the growth of despotism.

Please. Let us debate openly on a level playing field. Listen to the voices on both sides with an open mind. Question. Ponder. Then decide. We will become a stronger and better society for doing so.

Notes from an Island Armchair
Betty Heller

Waste Oil Disposal? Don't Dump it!

Used motor oil cannot be dumped: it wouldn't take much to contaminate every drop of ground water on this island. Mixing it in trash can form explosives and poisons, pouring it down sewers would clog our new treatment plant or foul Casco Bay. Pouring it on the ground pollutes soil and groundwater - one quart can ruin 250,000 gallons of drinking water. There are no longer used oil collection facilities on Peaks Island, so I called Portland Public Works to see if they could collect it for us. Maynard Sprague’s secretary relayed that “It is against DEP regulations for the City to collect used oil.” So I called the DEP. Rick Kasalis (at the DEP) said no such thing. The DEP encourages municipalities to collect and recycle waste oil, “though some cities are concerned about liability (if someone mixed contaminants into the oil, it would be a major headache).” So I called back Maynard who had me call George Fiaherity who called me right back the next day, then followed up with a note. I had told him I was going to print this in our tabloid, but don’t believe that influenced him an iota. He tells me in continued on page 6

Peaks Island Opinion…

A place where we can agree to disagree: this is the intellectually open environment we value in our community, and hope to nourish in this forum.

Two heads are better than one - This project is a collaborative effort of Jenny Yasi, Kathy Caron, and our writers with graphic contribution by Kim Norton. All articles are published unedited. Authors write their own heading and subheadings. Cartoonists are all amateur. We hope our courage in this department inspires other would be cartoonists. We also appreciate POETRY, RECIPES, HELPFUL HINTS ETC., for our Island Home Page. If you would like to contribute, please send your material to Jenny Yasi at 7 Central Ave. Ext. or Kathy Caron at P.O. Box 1 by the last week of each month, or hand deliver to either Kathy or Jenny. All submissions must be signed. Our theme for next month is emergency medical services and public safety. Please do not feel obliged to stick to the theme - we will print your opinion on any island topic.

Send calendar and bulletin board listings to Jenny or Kathy. Calendar and Bulletin Board: $3.00 for up to 20 words. Bulletin Board includes things like rideshare, swap and barter, for sale, calendar. Businesses are encouraged to sponsor an issue: $15.00 per issue. Thank you for your support.
Let's be practical, secession for Peaks makes no economic sense.

We receive excellent services from Portland currently. This has occurred because Islanders have demanded that the City provide the same level of services here that are enjoyed on the mainland. The City has responded by providing two police officers on duty twenty-four hours a day, weekly curbside trash pick-up, the only curbside recycling in the City, emergency medical transportation via the fireboat, our own firetrucks and ambulance, an elementary school that turns out kids with about the highest test scores of any grade school in the City, a local social welfare network as good or better than any other in the State, etc., etc. It is expensive to duplicate services on an island. Many services for Peaks cannot be shared cost effectively, as they are among mainland neighborhoods.

Would it be likely that our voters in an independent town would cut back on services to save tax money and take up the slack with volunteerism? I think not.

Peaks is probably the most liberal precinct in the most liberal city in the State. Registered Democrats outnumber registered Republicans three to one. We are not an isolated community of fisherfolk with a history of frugal self-government. We are, for the most part, a bunch of commuters and retirees who grew up somewhere else. In our year-round population, we have four or five times more lawyers than lobstermen.

In February, 1992, the secessionists distributed Peaks Island Budget Options, purporting to show what it would cost us as an independent town to provide the same services we receive now from Portland. In March, 1992, I analyzed this budget in a letter for publication in the secessionist newspaper, Casco Bay Enterprise. It was not printed because of its length.

After disagreeing with some of the assumptions in their budget, and adjusting for omitted and incomplete costs, I concluded that there would be virtually no tax savings if an independent Peaks provided the same level of services.

In September, 1992, again in response to a request from Russ Edwards, I wrote to Casco Bay Enterprise, this time pointing out the disparity between what the City spends on our services and the lesser amount it collects in Peaks property taxes. I urged the secessionists to cease their efforts to seek a divorce from Portland, before City officials reacted to this rejection by making it more difficult for the rest of us to continue to request and receive the unique services necessary for our Island neighborhood. This letter has not yet been published. (For free copies of the secessionists budget and these letters, call 766-2811)

I consider myself a fiscal conservative and try to be pragmatic in approaching political issues. A year and a half ago the secessionists cried that by separating from Portland we could save 50% on our property taxes and still enjoy the same services. That certainly caught my attention. However, I was skeptical - since their "research committee" had announced this conclusion before doing research. Since that time, numbers have been identified and analyzed. Many people who were originally attracted to the secession movement by the prospect of tax savings have now realized that this is impossible for Peaks without cutting services.

Personally, I fear that the voters of an independent town with our recent history and demographics will demand even more services.

Gene Taylor
Q. Why a Special Island Tax District?
Peaks Island is only one of 14 remaining year-round island communities located off the coast of Maine. As such, we are part of a proud, but fragile, Maine tradition.

Philip Conkling, director of the Island Institute, writes, "In only a few places on earth are there archipelagos as extraordinary as the 3,000 islands off the coast of Maine. Preserving coastal Maine's natural heritage is inextricably linked to maintaining the social and economic framework which has helped sustain its distinctive landscape."

The islands of Casco Bay are unique not only because they are islands, but also because they are the only islands in Maine that are politically under the jurisdiction of an urban municipality.

A Special Island Tax District would allow the City of Portland to set a separate lower tax rate for the Casco Bay Islands.

While normal tax rate for Maine island communities ranges between $5 - $10 per thousand, the Casco Bay island are facing a tax rate of $26 per thousand. This extraordinarily high island tax rate is a direct threat to our island communities.

Q. What islands should be included in a Special Island Tax District?
A Special Island Tax District should apply to those Portland islands in Casco Bay with year-round communities. An island is considered to have a year-round community if it supports a school. Peaks, Long, and Cliff Island fall into this category. These are the communities most severely threatened by the current tax situation.

Q. Will a separate island tax district mean that main-
An Act to Authorize Special Property Tax Districts
Legislative Document No. 959

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:
Sec. 1. 36 MRSA c. 105, sub-c II-C is enacted to read:

SUBCHAPTER II-C
SPECIAL PROPERTY TAX DISTRICTS

§595. Municipalities authorized to create special property tax districts.

1. Special property tax districts authorized. A municipality that has geographically isolated islands may establish a special property tax district or district for those islands, or any one of them, by a vote of the municipality’s legislative body and may also establish a lower property tax rate to be applied to the assessed property within the district than the rate that is applied to mainland property. For the purposes of this section, “geographically isolated” means not connected to the mainland in a manner that allows motor vehicular access by bridge.

2. Time of voting. The vote establishing or dissolving a special property tax district must be taken at least 60 days before the beginning of the municipal fiscal year in which it is to go into effect.

3. Tax rate. The tax rate established for property within the district must be set on a percentage basis and must be at least 50% of the rate established for all other property within the municipality. Once established, the rate remains in effect unless altered by a vote of the municipality’s legislative body taken at least 60 days before the beginning of the municipal fiscal year in which it is to go into effect.

STATEMENT OF FACT

Several municipalities have islands that are not connected to the mainland. Providing municipal services to these islands is often expensive and difficult and as a result, the services actually provided are often less than those received on the mainland. This bill allows a municipality’s legislative body to create a special property tax district for islands and set a lower property tax rate to recognize the lower level of municipal services.

Presented by Representative ADAMS of Portland
Cosponsored by Representative SKOGLUND of St. George, Senator PINGREE of Knox

This bill was submitted by the Casco Bay Island Development Association (CBIDA). A hearing is scheduled for April 15 at 1:30 pm in room 221 at the State House in Augusta. For further information contact Virginia Fisher at 772-3616.
The Right To Vote

I have more than a little confusion and concern about the position the Unionists have taken concerning our right to vote on self government.

Before I go any further I must, in all fairness, acknowledge that a great number of those opposing self government believe that the only resolution to the differences within our community is to have the opportunity to vote on this issue.

The Unionist report in the April issue of the "Peaks Island Star" that "Union does not oppose the right to vote." They then go on to say "The right to vote has always been there." That is not consistent with the facts. The right to vote on this issue is not there and never will be, unless the referendum bill for self government is passed by the legislature. This bill seeks to do two things. It will give us the right to vote on self government and it seeks to insure that no one is penalized should we decide to become The Town of Peaks Island.

Additional statements by the Unionists to the effect that they should read the bill then decide if it's a good bill and that many are opposed to the bill because they have been opposed to self government from the beginning seem to contradict their position of support for the right to vote.

The issue is clear enough. If you support the right to vote you must support the bill. If you oppose the bill you are opposing our right to vote. Remember, the only way we can vote to resolve this highly controversial issue once and for all is to support the bill which will give us the right to vote next November.

Again I recognize that many members of the opposition are not comfortable with the apparent inconsistencies in their organization's position. It is my hope that their viewpoint will prevail and the Unionists will formally support the bill, a bill that some of them helped to draft. Only then can we rest assured they support our right to vote.

Russ Edwards

What is Your Opinion?

continued from page 1

work in doing surveys, compiling facts/figures and holding open informational meetings. We must give them credit for the endless hours given and are still giving to our community. Now renamed the Peaks Island Research Committee they continue to get information to the people in preparation of putting the question of secession to referendum in November.

Hopefully a public hearing on the proposed bill will be held in Portland where we may all voice our concerns and opinions.

If secession comes many will not be able to remain on the island. Moves will have to be made - houses will have to be sold - lives will be uprooted and the changes will be greater in regards to our childrens' schooling.

As a separate town they will no longer have the Portland Connection with all the mini social and cultural "perks" so beneficial to our offspring who are already geographically isolated.

They truly need the Portland Connections and when you come right down to it - so do we all!

Marjorie Erico

A Place Within Ourselves

Ever so seldom we tread at a place in our lives where freedom of expression and community ties come into conflict, and hide our love and loyalty for our neighbors and friends. A place in our lives where we fail to remember the important and precious purpose we share amongst ourselves. And converge on that which divides not that which binds.

A place in our lives were the spiral of doubt conveys us into the abyss of suspicion and perfidy. A place where the overcast of trepidation shades us from the daylight of fact spawning the weeds of self-regard.

Yet:

There is a place in our lives where the winds of moral interests sweep away the clouds permitting the seeds of unity and loyalty to surmount the pernicious growths, to nurture the soil where, forever, love and kindness flourish. Here!

A place within ourselves.

Norm Proulx

April/May 1993
Waste Oil

continued from page 1

the note that he has assigned Paul Neihoff, Materials Engineer, the task of reviewing options concerning motor oil disposal on Peaks Island.

"As soon as Paul has completed his review and assessment, he will be back in touch with you," says Mr. Flaherty. In the meantime, if you have a quart of oil that you can't get to St. John Street in Portland, (Alan Auto) for recycling, don't dump it on the ground! Pack it in a jug in an outside shed till better days. Or, the best of the other alternatives may be to pack it out with your trash where it will eventually be burnt in the waste to energy plant. Call me if you'd like a complete list of mainland Waste Oil Disposal Locations.

Jenny Yasai

Just Showing Off?

Congratulations Jamie "Polar Bear" Feeney for your record breaking swim.

Our Sponsors

25% discount with this coupon

Peaks Island Paintings
By Mary Lavendier

Studio hours by appointment
Call 766-2371

ISLAND HOME

Bulletin Board

Responsible family with two children, no pets, seek year round rental. Mark and Melissa 766-5771

Barter: One old word processor for 6 hours garden help. Jenny Yasi 766-2604

New Age Household Hint

Your crystals are living beings. Keep them in distilled water with rock salt.

Recipes

Cajun Chili

3 cups dried beans (kidney, pinto or navy)
1 1/2 lbs meat (thick London Broil) chopped
optional: assorted leftovers sausage, hamburger, etc., as desired.
(2) 16 oz. cans whole tomatoes
(2) 8 oz. cans tomato sauce
To taste:
chopped onions
chopped green peppers
chopped red pepper
chopped mushrooms
white wine
Seasonings:
1/8 tsp. black pepper
1/8 tsp. white pepper
3/4 tsp. hot red pepper (cayenne)
1 1/2 tsp. chile con carne spices
5/8 tsp. thyme
1/2 tsp. oregano
1/8 tsp. cumin
garlic powder - sprinkling.

Soak beans overnight. Simmer in same water 2 hours. Drain. Mix together all ingredients. Simmer all day on low heat. Adjust seasonings, and liquid to taste during cooking process.

Baked Squash

Split and scoop squash, place face down in deep baking dish. Add two and one half cups water, one cup rice. Add a little garlic, thyme, seasoning. Place in 375 oven for 40 minutes, check and add more water if necessary. Serve with beans and gravy. Make gravy with tahini and soy sauce and water, poured over some fried mushroom with ginger and garlic.

Billie Johnston
Jazz/Tap Classes
766-2651

Island Herbalist
7 Central Ave.
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April/May 1993