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# Local stutterers organize council to talk over their problems

Talking over their problem is solving a major problem for some local adults—stuttering.

The Bryan Council of Stutterers was organized through the interest and efforts of Lee Reeves, a second-year A&M veterinary student, working closely with Mrs. Joann Bourgeois, a speech therapist and doctoral student in educational psychology.

"Dissolving the cloud of shame, ignorance and apathy that envelops the problem of stuttering is

our first concern," Reeves noted. Ultimate goals of the group include prevention and cure of the speech disorder, which is estimated to effect at least one per cent of the total population.

Most of the Council members are also involved in individual speech therapy, but that is not a requirement for membership. Non-stutterers, particularly family members, speech therapists and psychologists, are also involved in Council activities.

"Accepting stuttering as something you do rather than something that happens to you is the major step in therapy," Mrs. Bourgeois emphasized. "Freely discussing the problem is vital, because stuttering is like an iceberg—the major part lies beneath the surface as fear and guilt feelings. Exposing it to the 'sunlight' of public view has major therapeutic effects."

"Stuttering isn't ever cured in the medical sense of the word,"

Mrs. Bourgeois continued. "The goal is to learn to modify your speech and eventually to become your own therapist. The habit of struggling, hesitating and repeating in speech has been learned during childhood, so the stutterer must learn to modify his behavior and acquire new speaking patterns."

Discussion is the focal point of the Council of Stutterers. Each member talks about successes and failures with his speech during

the previous week.

Barbara Kiel, a 19-year old medical technology student at Blinn Jr. College asked a question in one of her classes—almost a first for her.

"I had some blocks," Barbara told the group, "but I think I'll try it again soon." She usually struggles with the question on her own or sees the professor by himself.

Predictions for the next week are also made. "I'm going to work

on voluntary stuttering," Dudelin Thompson, Council president, promised. This theory of 'negative practice' is based on elimination of maladaptive behavior by consciously practicing that behavior.

"I'd like to see you ask a question in class," Reeves told Dude, who is also a second year vet student.

"Soon," was the reply. Council members make it a policy not to put pressure on each other, so the matter was dropped.

"More pressure is the last thing we need," Reeves explained.

In addition to regular meetings, the Council has appeared on four television programs and has talked to local civic organizations. Tapes and letters are exchanged with similar groups in Washington, D.C., Ohio, Florida, New York, South Carolina, Pakistan and Sudan.

"The beautiful thing about our efforts to increase public understanding and concern for stuttering," Mrs. Bourgeois said, "is that in doing these things, Council members are working on their own speech problems, too. Voluntarily facing their feared situations is so much of the battle."

The group is working toward establishment of speech therapy services at A&M for students with communication problems.

"The administration seems interested," Reeves said. "We're encouraged."

Physicians in the Bryan-College Station area are the focus of a current campaign. Council members are visiting the physicians to explain the organization's purposes and to encourage referrals of other stutterers.

Talking it over may well be the answer.

## Pay Board may adopt tight regulations

WASHINGTON (AP)—The Pay Board Tuesday proposed to scrap its present rules on merit pay and adopt tight new regulations that would apply alike to union contracts and nonunion pay practices.

Under the proposal, merit raises would not count against the board's 5.5-per-cent wage guideline provided they were paid in accordance with an existing formal plan that met strict standards.

The proposed new rules are more liberal than present regulations in that they would treat nonunion merit plans the same as those written into union contracts.

However, they also contain a strict new provision that would prohibit new or renewed merit plans from pushing the average of all a firm's pay raises up more than 7 per cent a year.

The public will be given a 10-day period to comment on the merit-pay proposals before they are put in final binding form.

The complicated rules were adopted by a vote of 11 to 1 after more than a week of debate. Business member Robert Bassett, who had argued for a more-flexible plan to accommodate the informal merit-pay practices of small businessmen, cast the sole negative vote. Chairman George H. Boldt abstained as did business member Leonard F. McCollum and public member Neil H. Jacoby.

The proposed rules spell out tight conditions that would allow firms to continue giving merit raises, which are raises to reward an individual employee's performance, without regard to the board's rule limiting pay hikes generally to 5.5 per cent a year.

To qualify, the firm must have a formal plan for granting merit raises. The plan must be written in a union contract or some other form, but must have clearly defined pay ranges that apply to specific jobs, must spell out clear standards for granting merit raises within those ranges, and must have a system of administrative control.

Existing plans—those in effect last Nov. 13—may continue, subject to review and possible revocation by the Pay Board.

Firms with no formal merit-pay plans that meet the board's criteria still may pay merit raises provided the average of all raises doesn't exceed 5.5 per cent a year. This limit can be raised to a top of 7 per cent if the firm can qualify for exceptions on grounds spelled out earlier by the Pay Board.

The board has said it will grant exceptions allowing for up to 7 per cent a year in raises for firms that can prove a need to attract or hold new employees, for pay practices that have historically been pegged to another firm's pay scale in a tandem relationship and in cases where recent raises have been below 7 per cent a year.

Under the board's present rules, merit pay is not counted against pay guidelines only if it is paid in accordance with a union contract containing pay ranges. The board decided to review this policy when it was criticized as discriminating against nonunion pay practices.

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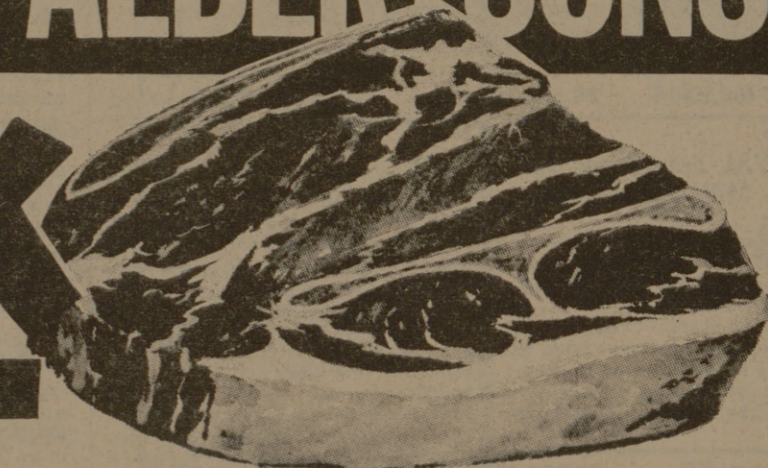
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