

Officials augment land exploitation

The blithe misconception indulged in by many Eugene area residents — a belief that Lane County has its land-use future firmly lodged in safe hands — is about to suffer a bitter demise.

Several recent events have forced themselves onto a stubborn and self-satisfied public consciousness, warning us that our hold on a socially and environmentally sound system of planning remains tenuous indeed.

These events include Gov. Vic Atiyeh's proposed elimination of boundary commissions, the inauguration of Lane County commissioners clearly opposed to an enlightened planning and zoning process and these officials' appointment of like-minded persons to the county's planning commission.

That these latter two groups — the commissioners and their planning board designees — have both financial and political interests in a policy of accelerated land "development" only increases our premonition of environmental and aesthetic disaster.

This impending crisis for land use alternative pits the twin pressures of population growth and a well-financed, vocal coalition of commercial interests against the apparently remote and unorganized interests of the general public: the overwhelming numerical majority of us who either own no property or own property that is not profitably affected by peripheral urban growth.

As such, the "crisis" reflects a chronic politico-economic dilemma for Lane County, Oregon and the rest of the country, involving the status, allocation and utilization of land in a society for which the polarization into landed and landless elements becomes increasingly pronounced.

As Frank Zappa has observed: "You can't go home again; home is a motel."

For a variety of reasons, however, the mutual interests of those of us with little or no property remains much fuzzier than that of the small group who stand to profit by a *laissez faire* approach to land use. The attitudes obstructing a heightened awareness of the collective interests of an unpropertied class include the American dream of land-owning, or at least home-owning, and a growing malaise with government, particularly regulatory agencies.

But let us return from the theoretical to the actual:

● In his first budget proposal since becoming governor, Atiyeh eliminated funding for several boundary commissions, including Lane County's, established before the Oregon Land Conservation and Development Commission (LCDC), that monitor and evaluate local proposals for urban growth.

These boundary commissions serve as referees for that touchy interface between

city and country, a metaphorical free-fire zone where the big guns are the financial power and professional skills of realtors, realty companies and the land-owning individuals and corporate groups seeking to benefit from official land-use policies.

(A certain section of this latter group has assumed for itself a categorical title — "Developers" — that is as self-serving and deceptive as that taken by America's war machine: The Department of Defense. In practical and functional terms, these "developers," their profit-seeking clients and their allies in official posts, are nothing more than land speculators and exploiters, in the most perjorative sense of those words.)

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The governor implies that the boundary boards' review and enforcement operations would be better exercised by the LCDC, a suggestion of doubtful merit that Atiyeh himself opposed while a state senator. The forte of LCDC remains statewide policy guidance, not local adjudication, and turning the state agency's cumbersome machinery toward local disputes could well lead to an eventual, *de facto* control of the planning process by local officials receptive to vested interests.

● Nowhere is this last point better illustrated than in Lane County's Board of Commissioners, where former Springfield Mayor Vance Freeman and real-estate-rich Archie Weinstein lead a new majority of "development" boosters. These two officials have long opposed both LCDC and its

philosophy of a restrained, publically directed — as opposed to commercially motivated — approach to urban expansion and land management.

● Last Wednesday, the commissioners hastened to effect their November "mandate" from the voters by appointing four men with real estate and property-"development" backgrounds to the Lane County Planning Commission: Dennis Cuddeback, Clark Roeder, Gene James and Gary Sutley. These appointments were approved over the opposition of two commissioners, including Jerry Rust, who objected to their selection without formal interviews or any but the sketchiest of biographical information being provided.

A state law prohibits appointment of more than two planning commission members who are engaged principally in real estate and development or are members of corporations that buy, sell or develop real estate. Since only Sutley lists himself as a realtor, the commissioners may well avoid violating the letter, though not the spirit, of this law.

The county's legal counsel is preparing an opinion on the validity of the appointments. But, whatever the outcome of these particular appointments, the intention of the board has become clear.

Officials like Freeman and Weinstein, in arguing against State intrusion into disposition of "private" property, reveal considerable hypocrisy in their *laissez faire* pleas. After all, only the legal and administrative apparatus of that State ensures the continued "private" status of that property, defending through the machinery of police power and the courts the opportunities of speculators and exploiters to make profits off their hypocrisy on a largely landless

populace by playing on our native suspicion of government and the traditional dream of every American to own his own plot of ground. The fact that population growth and changes in agricultural practices have reduced that dream to a bit of unproductive square-footage in suburbia seems not to have lessened the power of this largely spurious appeal.

Consequently, we become passive partners in policies that suit the interests of neither the landless majority nor the bulk of productive property-owners: the farmers who find their fields steadily eroded by unrestrained urban growth.

The developments discussed above loom ominously over two landuse policy decisions now facing Lane County: the choice among urban-growth alternatives for Eugene's Metropolitan General Plan, which will define the area of residential, industrial and residential growth for the next decades (and, consequently, the efficiency of land utilization within that area); a proposal before the Lane Council of Governments for a uniform annexation policy within the county, placing the burden on the cities instead of the "developers."

If recent development augur the local defeat of a fragilely established principle prescribing land-use planning for the common good, opponents of uninhibited land exploitation will probably rely on legal assaults against poor planning decisions on a case-by-case basis. But this recourse required a financial support that, in the long run, may not be forthcoming from a group as diffuse and unself-conscious as the landless.

For us in Eugene, the source and solution of the problem lies partly in the political realm, where those of us without interest or access to exploitative land have been finessed with a classic gerrymander: the majority of the board of commissioners are elected from districts composed predominantly of nonurban citizens, while the largely land-less voters are locked up in two Eugene districts.

This isolates us electorally from that sizable portion of potential rural support-producing farmers and growth-resistant country dwellers, who together with Eugene's progressive voters probably represent a countywide majority. That situation contrasts sharply with our state legislative apportionment by which nearby districts are divided up so that slices of Eugene are mixed with larger but less-populated sections of rural Lane County.

A partial solution could come with an initiative petition requiring a restructuring of commissioner-district boundaries along the lines of legislative districts. The natural corollary to this restructuring lies in the formation of a socially and economically conscious coalition to oppose the perversion of land policies in the political arena.

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Emerald doesn't 'inform'

The following letter was mistakenly printed in a garbled form in Friday's Emerald and, subsequently, is being re-published.

Jock Hatfield's article in the 1-19-79 issue of the Emerald serves only to further ignorance concerning the methods and purposes of higher learning and to pander to people who don't wish to or don't know how to use their mind.

Rather than go through the article in detail, let me simply point out that Mr. Hatfield has neglected to mention possibly the most important reason for the thesis defense. It is not only to give the audience an opportunity to learn what someone has been doing and to offer criticism of that work, but it is an invaluable experience for the person presenting the talk.

The process of education involves not only carrying out a piece of work, but also communicating that work, both in writing and orally. I have found that the vast majority of undergraduate students on campus are not aware of what graduate work is all about — what people actually do, why they do it, etc.

Rather than being a medium to explain to the campus community the kinds of intellectual activities which go on here, the Emerald chooses to publish articles such as Hatfield's. Why doesn't the Emerald interview graduate students to find out what graduate studies are and what the defense is for? Why doesn't the Emerald publish articles describing the research activities being done at the University?

The reason, I'm afraid, is that the Emerald seeks to entertain rather than to inform.

Ira Herskowitz
associate professor, biology

'Inconsequential as a dog'

Your use of Associated Press releases regarding non-local affairs is understandable; an Emerald reporter simply could not have been on hand. However, I found the Jan. 19 AP story concerning the man who had just completed a cross-country walk to be most objectionable.

We are informed that he was "accompanied by his wife, Barbara, whom he met and married in New Orleans" as if she were as inconsequential as a dog trotting along beside him. (No offense to dogs, mind you.) The man states "this

walk is not just for US, it's for all the people who have befriended us along the way."

This woman then has walked approximately 3,000 miles! When, oh when, will woman achieve status (and receive credit) as individuals rather than as accessories?

Erica Dorfman
freshman, dance

letters policy

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