

Burn practice must be put out—slowly

Eight months later, the 24-car pile-up on Interstate 5 that left seven people dead is still a grisly memory. And the tragedy of it has added to the already overcharged issue of field burning.

On Aug. 3, 1988, a field burn outside of Albany sparked a wildfire that sent thick black clouds of smoke over the freeway. When the smoke descended and blocked visibility, a tragic chain reaction of accidents occurred.

On April 12, 1989, at the state capitol, some of the survivors of this accident met with the farmers and landowners who depend upon field burning for their economic survival. The two groups discussed — in sometimes highly emotional tones — the future of the practice.

Grass seed growers say they need field burning to cheaply rid their lands of waste straw and to control insects and plant diseases that cannot be tamed any other way. Opponents of field burning claim that the thick smoke clouding the air every fall is an aesthetic blight and that field burning poses dangers to the atmosphere and to people's respiratory health.

Before the I-5 accident, field burn supporters insisted that there was no direct proof that the practice endangered health. No longer can they make that claim. Clearly, the benefits of field burning do not outweigh the value of human health and human lives. And so, field burning must make way. The practice must be ended. But when?

Sen. Grattan Kerans, D-Eugene, has introduced a bill that would ban the practice, right now, once and for all. The benefits of quitting now are easy to see, but Kerans' ban would present the farmers whose livelihoods depend on the practice with an immediate economic shock and an unbearable burden.

For that reason, we endorse Gov. Neil Goldschmidt's more practical proposal. The governor is calling on legislators to set a date when field burning would be ended while taking action now to control the problem.

Under the governor's plan, the current 250,000-acre allowance for field burning would be cut in half. The fees charged to grass seed growers who burn would be raised and the money would be invested in research to find alternatives to field burning.

This plan would make field burning less attractive to farmers without putting an extreme burden on them, and the state and the grass seed growers could work together for the benefit of all. It is an excellent compromise.

Lives should never again be lost for such a pathetic cause as field burning. But the lives that depend on the practice now must be given the chance to adjust to a future without it.

Wood stove tax doesn't solve problem of pollution

The Senate Agriculture and Natural Resources subcommittee spent an afternoon earlier this week engaged in a foolish endeavor.

The panel has endorsed a bill to impose a \$20 annual tax on wood stoves in areas of the state where air pollution levels exceed federal standards.

The 55,000 offending stoves are located in Eugene, Springfield, Medford, Klamath Falls, Grants Pass and La Grande. Taxing them all would raise about \$1.1 million annually to help finance a program that would offer financial incentives to stove owners who switch to other energy sources or to cleaner-burning stoves.

The financial incentives program, on the whole, is a good idea. But the money should be aimed in other directions.

Wood stoves are not the only factor of poor air quality in any given area. In fact, wood stoves probably don't create as much pollution as do cars, lumber mills and other factories.

If it's necessary to impose this tax, then the proceeds should be used to assess the bigger picture — and the problems of both industry and automobiles.

This tax also seems to us to be an unfair burden on wood stove owners. What about all of the homes in these communities with fireplaces?

And what about people — including poor college students — who move into or rent a home furnished with a wood stove? Why should these people pay taxes on an appliance they may not have even wanted in the first place? What about wood stoves that are used purely as decoration?

Legislators clearly have failed to realize that singling out one group of polluters is a neither effective nor fair solution to the problem. Wood stoves and their owners can't be held economically responsible for a situation for which we are all partially to blame.



Letters

Vocal minority

Question: Are you part of what the abortion lobby calls the "vocal minority"? Do you really support Roe vs. Wade? Answer yes or no to whether abortion should be allowed in the following cases:

1) A woman who has decided she only wants one child (a boy) becomes pregnant. A test shows she's carrying a female baby. Should the woman be permitted to abort the child and try again?

2) A couple attending graduate school finds the woman is pregnant. This could postpone her completion of a master's program. Well?

3) An unmarried 16-year-old becomes pregnant. Her upper-class parents want to maintain their "model family" image in the community. They fear this could threaten their image so they demand their daughter get an abortion. She doesn't want to, but fears the threats of her parents. How about it?

4) A couple with two teenage children discover that the mother's now pregnant. This could alter their middle-age lifestyle plans.

5) A woman is offered a promotion that will require a great deal of time, but will provide an attractive salary. However, she discovers she's pregnant.

If you answered no to any of these situations then you really aren't a supporter of Roe vs. Wade because this ruling allows abortion no matter what the reason is. Abortion does occur for reasons like those listed here — with more frequency than one might suspect; certainly a lot more often than for justifiable reasons (those cases in which a woman might experience a health risk).

Michael Cross
Graduate

Free speech

As ASUO presidential candidates, it is our responsibility to clarify any of our viewpoints that may have been represented. In response to the ODE article about the ASUO presidential debate at the EMU (ODE, April 13), the Kaniewski/McRae position of equal opportunity for free speech through

welcoming differing viewpoints to be expressed on campus was presented as if we support these groups, such as the Central Intelligence Agency. This could not be further from the truth.

The Kaniewski/McRae team would like to have all groups allowed their First Amendment right of free speech, thus encouraging students who disagree with a particular group's viewpoint to go educate those who are uninformed and/or protest these groups.

We would rather have Oliver North speak on campus and the students protest his actions, thus showing stringent opposition to this buffoon, than not give those uneducated as to the crimes of this man any opportunity to learn.

As students, we require a balanced education. As citizens, we demand equal opportunity and free speech.

Joe Kaniewski
Earl McRae
ASUO presidential
vice presidential candidates

Basic ideal

"That government is the strongest of which every man feels himself a part," Thomas Jefferson, 1807. This is the basic ideal of government set forth by our founding fathers when they created this great nation. Although this has not yet occurred, the ideal still exists that any person can participate in this government, no matter his or her background.

We feel that Jefferson, in his wisdom, would want any system of government to allow the governed to have a part in their destiny. No one should be compelled to follow the will of a few; any person should be free to act.

As well, Jefferson would have wanted any person to feel free to act in the process of voting. In the United States, as well as the University, only a few choose to exercise Jefferson's ideal.

This is a travesty of this great privilege. People of this nation and the University should be the first to run to voting booths. Many times in history, there have been attempts to circumvent this right. While we have it, it is imperative that we use it.

Joe Kaniewski and Earl McRae represent the Jeffersonian ideal. They feel the government that is best is the one that represents all. To them, a strong government includes not only the politically active, but Greeks, foreign students, dorm residents, minorities and all other misrepresented groups. "We stand today on the edge of a new frontier" John F. Kennedy, 1960.

John Spiegel
Chris Rianda
Students

Holt for EMU

With the student election fast approaching, it is important to keep one thing in mind: Your right to vote is precious. When the time comes, exercise that right.

And when you vote, consider Bob Holt for the two-year EMU Board seat.

As Director of Men Against Rape, Holt has proven himself as an inspired activist, a quiet listener and a competent leader. His work with that organization has helped them achieve a state of activity and recognition unparalleled since their inception.

Bob Holt will bring to the EMU Board a voice dedicated to responding to the needs of a growing student population. As the increasing number of students puts greater and greater demands on our buildings, this candidate will be there — listening, caring and responding.

So when the time comes, cast your vote. Let your voice be heard. And remember Bob Holt for the EMU Board.

Donald E. Arney
Journalism

Letters Policy

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified.