

Slow mail delivery won't solve deficits

You can forget all that stuff about rain and sleet and gloom of night not keeping letter carriers from their appointed rounds. If the U.S. Postal Service gets its way, starting next February those letter carriers will be able to take their own sweet time getting the mail out.

The Postal Service is considering reviewing the size of the areas in which it promises overnight delivery. It claims it's necessary to shrink these zones to increase the efficiency of mail delivery.

It's a good thing that the Postal Service is concerned with the efficiency of its operation, because there are problems. But the rate of delivery is not something the Postal Service should be tampering with — especially if it's considering taking longer for the mail to get there.

Currently, mail traveling between post offices within a 100 miles of each other is supposed to arrive overnight, and within 600 miles of each other in two days. Mail traveling longer distances is supposed to be there in three days. From the post office to your house is supposed to add no more than a day.

From the Postal Service's own estimates, it can deliver 89 percent of the mail in that time window. That's not a bad rate of success. It could be better, of course, but the operation level the Postal Service is at now says that they would be fixing something that isn't broken, to use the old saying.

So obviously, the promise of increased efficiency is a smoke screen the Postal Service is using to cut costs. These are indeed tough times for the Postal Service; it's facing huge deficits because of a costly automation system that hasn't worked up to expectations yet.

But there are other, better solutions to covering that deficit. And there are other, better solutions that won't offend mail customers.

The Postal Service is already considering a 5-cent hike in the price of a first class stamp to cover these deficits. The advisability of that is also debatable, but it's certainly a bad idea for the Postal Service to consider the 30 cent stamp at the same time they are contemplating slower delivery.

Offering reduced services at a higher price, as the Postal Service is threatening to do, is the kind of thing that will drive people away from using the mail, something that will only hurt the Postal Service in the end.

The Postal Service works in a crowded communications market these days. Only through better service — not lessened — will it be able to survive.



Pentagon's thinking dangerous and stupid

So this is how the Pentagon works. Create a research center, authorize a report, and then deny what the report says when it comes out.

Here's what happened. The Pentagon, seeking to improve its classified security personnel, created a research center in 1987 to discover what kinds of people make bad security risks. The Pentagon was particularly interested if gays in the military should be allowed to deal with classified information.

Simple enough, but the research people went a little far for the Pentagon's taste. Apparently, the researchers recommended the military rethink its stance toward homosexuals.

The report concluded there was no evidence homosexuals made a greater security risk than heterosexuals, and that the military's policy toward homosexuals in general was outdated and discriminatory.

The Pentagon has long said the presence of homosexuals in the military contribute to poor discipline and bad morale. The report said this kind of policy would very likely be

defeated in a serious court challenge.

Now, the Pentagon is saying the researchers went too far, and is refusing to accept the report's analysis.

What kind of junk is this? First of all, to think somebody would be a bad security risk because of his or her sexual preference is not only ludicrous, it's bigoted. Second, discriminating against homosexuals in the military just shows how archaic and stupid the Pentagon's thinking really is.

It's only a matter of time before a federal court orders the military to change its ways. By reforming now, the Pentagon can avoid a lot of hassle. Otherwise, they're just going to look absurd when they're ordered to scrap the policy.

The Pentagon has asked the researchers to prepare another report. The researchers, in effect, have told the military to drop dead.

Bravo.

It's about time the Pentagon, and the rest of the government, joined the 20th century and move toward equality for all.

Letters

So pleased

In response to Jennifer Ulum's letter (ODE, Oct. 19), written on behalf of Sacred Heart Hospital, let me say first that I am pleased to hear that my favorite parking structure will not be defiled by being made host to yet another McDonald's.

This news, welcome as it is, provides little consolation for those of us who fondly remember the warmth and hospitality offered by such establishments as Lennie's Nosh Bar and Poppi's Tavern, which were brushed aside like so much trash to make way for the cold pile of cement of which Ulum and her associates must be so proud.

Regarding her open invitation to "sincere" students to become acquainted with her institution and its priorities — if one's actions are, as I believe, the most reliable indicator of one's values (which should rationally determine one's priorities), then Sacred Heart's priorities are in little need of further exposition.

One must only take note of the hospital's dubious practice

of mass-marketing advertising (what, is there another hospital in town?), and its callous disregard for the character of the once-colorful West University neighborhood to be convinced that Sacred Heart's priorities are far from mirroring those of the community it claims to serve.

Steven Brence
Philosophy

Back of the bus

If Rosa Parks had subscribed to University President Myles Brand's idea that a protest should only happen when all those at the place of protest consider it "acceptable behavior," then she'd still be sitting at the back of the bus.

For six months, the University has been negotiating with the GTFF. GTFs arrived on campus this fall to discover that the University had not offered the health care and cost of living increase needed, and withdrew the option we had last year to have a monthly payroll deduction for health insurance. Clearly, GTFs are still riding at the back of the bus.

GTFFs attended the dedication

of the new science buildings to make the seriousness of our situation known. The GTFFs did not silence any speakers. In no way did we infringe upon anyone's freedom of speech.

I am disturbed by the *Register-Guard's* and Myles Brand's obsession with the etiquette of some of the people attending Sunday's dedication. This Emily Postian focus allowed them to ignore the honest concerns and issues raised by the protesters.

President Brand has made a step in the right direction by instituting a series of "open forums." Hopefully, as Brand's term progresses, he will begin to understand that this is a university community which does more than passively listen. This is a university community which deeply cares about issues of importance, and is not afraid to raise them.

Jeannie Thomas
GTF

How free

What good is free speech when power-hungry elected officials and greedy corporate executives

plug their ears and continue with their exploitation and slaughter of those trying to speak. And believe me, normal people as well as mother earth and her other inhabitants, are crying to be heard.

How free can speech be when consumed and homogenized by the thickening, addictive mass that is our business-controlled, high-tech news media? Witness the *Register-Guard's* incomplete coverage of the demonstration at the dedication of the new science buildings at the University.

They did not even mention protests by SETA and SCD against activities directly related to these new cathedrals of techno-obsession. Moreover, it appeared to some of us that the *Register-Guard* may have doctored their front page photograph to obscure the "pimp" in "Hatfield and Goldschmidt: \$

timber pimps" (changes the meaning, no?).

Hatfield and the timber industry are leading the slaughter of the Northwest's ancient forests and watersheds. Those forests are us, but without our voice. We all have a right to exist.

Our cries — our attempts at free speech, at gaining a fair hearing and judicial review at the presentation of objective environmental research, had been stifled, ignored and even mocked by some. The time has come, to paraphrase the poet Gary Snyder, to put an arrow into the heart of this economic and cultural monster. Our protests Sunday were but a guide for that arrow.

Earth First! (or we're history too.)

Jeff Goddard
Biology

Letters Policy

The *Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.