

Laws necessary for long-term survival

Ho, now wait just a minute!

We, in our infinite short-sighted wisdom, are about to commit what could be one of the biggest mistakes in our collective American life.

A movement recently begun by private landowners to challenge federal environmental restrictions on their property has gained enough momentum to pose a threat to the nation's laws protecting the environment.

The prime thrust of the movement is compensation for property owners who have been subject to environmental laws.

A South Carolina case like this one is now in the Supreme Court's lap, and a proposal requiring federal compensation for landowners passed the Senate last summer and is now in the House.

The movement has escalated to the point of effecting a "major change in how the government applies its environmental laws," said Erik Meyers, general counsel of the Environmental Law Institute. One example of the movement's effects are the 170 House co-sponsors now pushing for weaker wetlands restrictions.

First of all, why has some isolated movement posed such a threat to the nation's environmental law system? As always, one of the main reasons boils down to money. It's the big-time property owners — the timber, mining and large-scale agricultural interest for starters — who are behind the big push for law reforms.

Oh sure, there's the little guys too, but it's the bigwhigs who have the power of persuasion, enough power to persuade our government to either ease restrictions on their land, pay compensation should they not do so, or somehow, both.

Sad thing is that these powers that be are getting more and more Americans behind them, due largely to the failing economy. Who cares about the environment when timber workers, miners, farmers and other land laborers have to put food on the table?

Fact is, however, that we need to stop putting the environment last on the list when push comes to shove. Environmental regulations are usually the first things to get axed when things get uncomfortable, dying before other methods of fix-it are considered.

Those working with and/or owning land have long fought laws designed to prevent environmental desecration, seeing them as impositions from the enemy. These folks need to realize these laws not only save the "evil environment," but also work to keep their land's resources alive on a continuous basis. Where will resource-based jobs come from when there are no resources left? Protection of the environment also means protection of resource-related jobs.

Our use-it-all-today-worry-about-it-tomorrow philosophy will be our demise; it logically can work for just so long before it self-destructs. Property owners need to swallow environmental regulations, if not for "the environment's" sake, then for their own.



LETTERS

Stood up

In reference to Bob Weigel's letter "Bad Press" (ODE, Jan. 16):

Weigel's statements regarding apathy and unwillingness to communicate among anti-OCA individuals struck an ironic chord, given the circumstance which followed his letter.

On Friday, Jan. 17, one day after the letter, I, and many other concerned students, attended what was to be a free debate between Bruce McCain of the OCA and David Allen, representing the advocacy committee of the Gay and Lesbian Lawyers Association.

I noticed upon arrival the conspicuous absence of one of the central parties involved. At the last moment, McCain had relayed a message that he would be "staying late at court" and would not attend the debate.

The OCA has made a public policy of "bowing out" of debates and question/answer sessions for years. This comes as no shock. Even they seem to know that, under close scrutiny, their arguments and raging fundamentalist propaganda fall apart.

Weigel stated in his letter that the reasons people are unwilling to communicate fall into two categories — violent anger with no hope of changing other peoples' views through reason, and apathy and lack of a valid cause. Which one does the OCA fit into?

To quote Weigel, "Let's just make it public record, shall we?" McCain and the OCA both seem unwilling to do so.

Den Elms
Student

At risk

I am concerned about the University's policy on rape. In the early morning hours of Jan. 11, a University student was raped in the basement of her dorm.

The staff of the Hamilton Complex chose to withhold this information from their residents until Sunday evening, and the staff of the Bean Complex chose to not inform their residents at all.

As a student living in the

Bean Complex, I find this to be unacceptable. The first I heard of this incident was on the 11 o'clock news on Monday night. The resident director of the Bean Complex told her resident assistants not to bring the issue up with any students unless directly questioned.

I feel my safety was seriously endangered by the withholding of this information.

Perhaps the situation would have been a different one if the perpetrator had been immediately apprehended; the delay in getting the information out would not have caused the same potential problems. But in fact, the accused, Michael Patrick Ryan, was still at large, and raped another woman 38 hours later.

I realize that rape is a reality on a college campus, and every woman should use the utmost caution when walking, or being alone anywhere after dark. But had the residents been informed of this incident, we all would have been twice as cautious.

By keeping this information from us, the administration put every woman living in the residence halls at risk. I hope that there is no need, but in the future, I urge the University to find an efficient way to get this information out to their residents; our safety is at risk.

Elise Kocher
Student

Rip off

It is very discouraging for me to realize there are people in this city who have no regard for the personal property of others; that someone feels the right to walk up on a person's porch, pick out a mountain bike which suits his or her likes, and steal it.

I wonder if these people realize the bike they stole could have been someone's pride and joy — something a person may have put many hours of work and determination into to get it just perfect. And do they realize when the victimized person wakes up in the morning to find his or her bicycle gone, stolen, that more than just the bike has been taken away from him or her, but also the trust

that person had in the people of his or her community?

The other night my Cannondale was stolen from my porch. And I, like hundreds of other victimized people in Eugene, now have to face the reality that you can't trust your fellow brothers and sisters; that even a steel U-lock can't protect you from the greed and blatant disregard of those who feel it's their right to violate you.

It's a shame you can't trust the people with whom you share a community, and that you have to take higher precaution than just locking your bike to your house to ensure its security. But I guess it's a reality we all must face and learn to live with.

Bart Beattie
Anthropology

Just stuck

What does a rapist look like? Is it in the eyes? Or how about his choice of clothing or his haircut? If someone could give me an idea so I know who to look out for, I'd feel so much better.

In the meantime, I'm stuck in a fog and my untrained eyes can't pick out the rapist from a crowd of decent men to save my life. To save my life!

Yes, I'm wary. I have to be because even if I promise to relax and give up all my crazy notions that any man could rape me, my chances of sexual assault won't diminish. In fact, they would probably increase.

And if I were raped, would I get AIDS? Would I get pregnant? Would I be mentally and physically ruined for life? Maybe. So I'm stuck with worry. I'm not morally superior to men, I'm just stuck.

Well, if no one can give me a decent answer to my above questions, then I wish to God people would stop being angry at me for my fears about any man I don't know well enough to love, and that they would start redirecting their anger toward the people who truly deserve it. If rapists even deserve to be called people.

Lisa Harrell
Student

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