

Ballot Measure 20-01 makes good sense

Coalitions are notoriously transitory things. Often, they are short-lived, pooling resources for just a simple, one-time task.

Cooperation is the best — and most times, the only — way to get things done. And one coalition, bringing together such groups as Oregon Guides & Packers and the Oregon Rivers Council, to name just a few, is doing something right.

By cooperating, the varied interests have collectively put forth a county ballot measure that would protect the McKenzie River for future generations.

Bravo.

Measure 20-01, the McKenzie River Water Quality and Recreation ordinance, seeks to clarify some of the vague county statutes on developing riverfront property. The way the law reads now, county commissioners have far too much leeway on what zoning variances they can approve.

The McKenzie is, as of now, a tranquil place, good for fishing, boating, rafting or just plain sight-seeing. But backers of the ordinance say that won't be the case unless strict rules are set down to regulate further expansion. The McKenzie could go the way of other Oregon rivers — damned up to a trickle, a virtual quagmire with little aesthetic value.

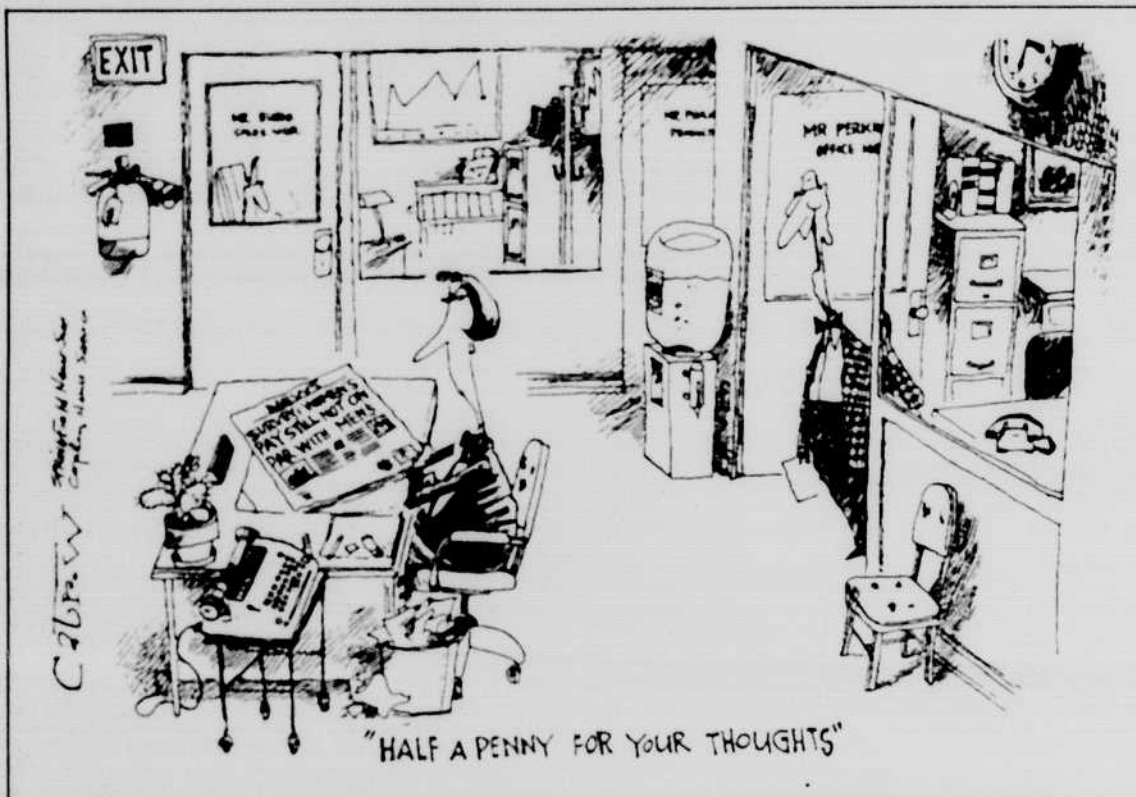
The measure would prohibit development — or clearing more vegetation than a 25-foot wide strip — within 25 feet of the river in residential zones, and 50 feet in other places. In addition, pesticide and fertilizer use would be restricted within 100 feet of the river. Dams, boat docks, vehicular bridges, mining and water quality guides also fall under the plan.

Backers of the ordinance are acting to preserve the quality of the McKenzie before it becomes a problematic issue. By setting strict guidelines now, it can be hoped further development of the riverfront can be controlled. In this way, everybody involved — the business sector, homeowners, environmentalists and recreational users — can all enjoy the river and get something out of the measure.

The plan is neither too restrictive nor too lax. The ordinance truly seeks to do what is best for the river, and most convenient for people.

It's not often groups take the initiative and fix a problem before it becomes one. This plan would do just that. In the upcoming May primary, vote yes on Measure 20-01.

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COMMENTARY

Teachings solve human dilemma

By Richard Beswick

I am a Christian, and I like the Buddha. Here was a man who took a long look at the human condition. He would not settle for less than an all-out exploration of his own identity, and he would not buy into the illusions of the world.

Having rejected every religious path available to his place and time (India, sixth century B.C.), he preferred death to ignorance. In the end, enlightenment came to him that resulted in a teaching of non-attachment to the world and a commendable ethical system.

As a Christian, there are many things I respect about Mohammed. He surveyed the hodgepodge beliefs of his day and came to the realization that God is a unity, a being who is perfect and personal. Armed with this knowledge, Mohammed insisted upon a reform and unification of social and family life that reflected the cohesive and single-minded will of Allah. The Islamic view of unity creates a different social structure than the pluralistic society Americans are used to. However, I do view Islam with a qualified respect.

As a follower of Jesus, I find Native American spirituality intriguing and, at times, heroic. To respect nature as our common and congenial sister, and to take no more than one needs to survive are virtues I wish to adopt. Native American humor, art and courage are all rooted in their world view. The worship of the spirits of nature and the reverence paid to an all-pervasive Great Spirit is a structure different from that of the Bible. The Native American culture adds richness to the total fabric of American society.

I could go on and tell you what I tell about other religions and cultures, but by now you must have guessed I am going to tell you why I am a follower of Jesus instead of a Buddhist, Muslim, Animist or anything else. So I will get to the point.

There is something wrong with life. There is something wrong with me. This planet of beauty and wildness is being destroyed, and the voices

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raised in protest are still in the small minority. It has really never been much different except now we have vast powers of technology that magnify our alienation with nature.

I tried to make the last two sentences as eloquent as my poor skill would allow so that you would regard me as a sincere person. However, I am one of the culprits. How often am I able to live up to my own idealism — either in the way I deal with the world or in the ways I treat people? Not often, so I look for a solution.

It would be easier if I could just pull the covers of existentialism, nihilism or mere apathy over my head and get on with living until I die. But there is something about life I continue to love deeply. I know that my romantic ideals of beauty and love and hope for change in my own character are not, in the end, impossible.

I am not looking for a new mythology, psychology or scientific panacea. These have always failed. What I want is real hope. Something tells me there is a God and that he is willing to be straight with us.

Jesus is God landing right on the money. I do not mean Christianity is the answer, still less the church. It is the Jesus of the first four books of the New Testament that lives out the kind of life that is reflected by a blueprint deep in my soul.

a potentiality that was never realized. Here was a man real to the core, passionate about people without doing harm, a lover of nature and a man who overcame death itself.

Look where you will, there not another person, religion or philosophy that goes about solving the human dilemma the way Jesus did. Earlier I admitted I have contributed to that dilemma. That was not a journalistic ploy.

I am not a fan of debilitating psychological guilt. Unfortunately, there is enough real guilt in my life and the world at large to be a very great weight. What God did was allow Jesus to take on that weight by dying for us. I cannot explain how that works exactly. It has something to do with the total lack of guilt in his own life.

For many it is either nonsense or blasphemy to attribute a perfect life and an equality with God to a mere man. However, nothing less would really change this world around. Anything short of the life of Christ would not convince me my life could retain the hope for paradise that lies buried deep beneath the years.

This week, some campus ministries have planned events to express Jesus to the community. This may be done with a mixture of eloquent thoughtfulness and tired platitudes. Behind the words and events lives a magnificent invisible God who will be willing to talk straight with you.

Why don't you take one of these Christians aside and ask some questions? Most of them I know will be glad to talk with you.

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