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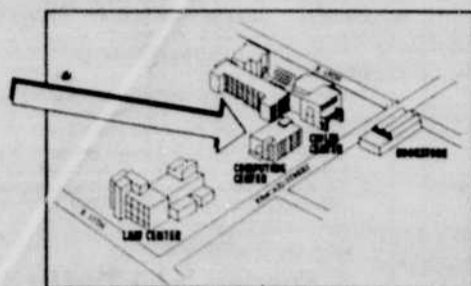
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Clinton hears concerns during backyard visit

□ Candidate listens
as timber workers talk
about losing jobs

By Rene DeCair
Emerald Associate Editor

With about 100 members of the press looking on, Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton made good on a promise he made earlier in the campaign to talk to timber workers about the difficulties they face.

In a meeting last week in the backyard of a retired Eugene timber worker, Clinton listened patiently to the grievances of timber families.

The same day, President Bush was in Medford also painting himself as a candidate who understands the workers' troubles. Bush said he wouldn't renew the Endangered Species Act unless it was rewritten to include the "human factor."

Meanwhile, at the home of Max and Leona Groesbeck, who live at 315 Vernal St., Clinton said in order to sustain the forests long-term, some jobs will be eliminated. Before his retirement, Max Groesbeck had worked for 40 years as a sawyer for the Rosboro mill in Springfield.

"The issue is not so much will jobs be lost," Clinton said. "Yes, they will."

He said the issue shouldn't be looked at in terms of jobs vs. owls, but in terms of what is best for everyone.

"My view is if we put the problem in terms of people or forests, we've lost before we start," he said.

Clinton said if elected he would hold a "summit" to deal with the problem and would try to get the timber debate out of the courts, where it hurts everyone by tying up timber sales.

"If I win this race," he said, "I'm determined to break this log jam."

But at the backyard brouhaha, the nine timber workers and their wives did most of the talking while Clinton listened and took notes.

Teresa Taylor, a saw operator from Georgia-Pacific Lebanite who said she's been laid off several times in the 16 years she's worked in the industry, told Clinton layoffs hurt everyone.

"We've had eight permanent mill closures," she said. "It's devastating our communities" and cheating the schools.

Not being able to cut the forests that are now tied up in lawsuits, she said, affects not only Oregon, but everyone.

"It's raising the prices on everybody's houses from coast to coast," Taylor said.

Darryl Middleton, head sawyer from Roseburg Forest Products in Dillard, emphasized the need for "multiple use" of the forests.

"I can relate to the people in Florida," he said. "Our people are losing their homes."

Middleton said he supports a bill introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives by Rep. Peter Defazio, D-Ore., that would set aside old-growth trees, change management practices in the industry and help train dislocated workers for new jobs.

Glenna and Frank Henderson from Eugene were among the few with a success story to tell.

Glenna Henderson said her husband was able to turn devastating job losses into a new, successful business with the help of a dislocated workers program.

"I think we're one of the lucky ones," she said. "I'm thrilled he's out of the mills."

There wasn't much dialogue in the 45-minute meeting, but Clinton did say he believes the answer to timber workers' problems is not to limit private companies' log exports overseas.

The issue, he said, is how to manage the forests long-term.

He didn't give specific answers on how to do that, but did say that if people are put out of work, they'll be compensated.

"If national policy puts you out of a job," he said, "national policy should put you back in one."



Birthright of Eugene

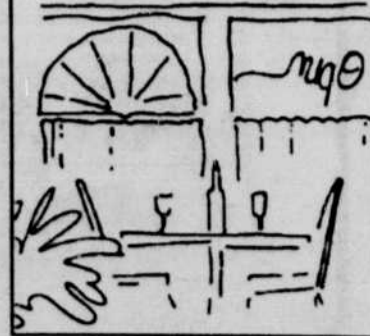
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