

Citizen involvement doesn't stop at the voting booth



As the fight over Ballot Measure 9 grips the state's attention, action on the basic problems driving Oregon's descent into socio-economic oblivion remains painfully inadequate.

It is not a pretty picture — Oregon's days as a resource-dependent economy are limited, the promotion of "high-tech" industry has largely failed, our schools and universities are being stripped and shut down, and the most basic human services are, or soon will be, on the chopping block.

Politically, the scene is little better — from the fascist Oregon Citizens Alliance to the dramatic rise in hate crimes to the dismal lack of funding for education and human services.

This desperate situation (all the more desperate because so many continue to ignore it) is not without hope. Defeating Measure 9, supporting Measure 7 and helping the Democrats recapture the Oregon House are the best opportunities in the upcoming election.

This election at best represents only the chance for a few

feeble steps toward some solutions. Democracy is not about spending a few minutes in a voting booth; it is about debate, action and education.

Democracy has never been a gift — what we have now was won through militant political struggle that, without exception, took place outside "the proper channels."

This election is important, but we need to look at the class forces that shape our politics. Oregon is a largely "middle-class" state; the degree of success achieved by the OCA serves as a barometer not just of the power of the Christian right nationally, but of the likelihood that upstanding middle-class folks will turn right — and not left — in times of social and economic crisis.

As jobs get fewer and worse, as the lack of social services further squeezes the poor, as education budgets are hacked and as insecurity grows more pervasive and profound, society will become unglued, leading to more OCA-style politics.

Current No on 9 efforts have done little to erode the OCA's support among the threatened resource-dependent working class and their communities. Because of No on 9's basically defensive posture, the right is poised to score big by winning over "fear-of-falling" suburbanites scared of losing what's left of the American Dream.

For the present, they see the OCA as too crude, but just as Pat Buchanan articulated the fascist agenda better than David Duke, it is likely that a political force will soon emerge to win these pleasant suburbanites over to the ultra-right. Ross Perot's campaign clearly marks the appeal of can-do authoritarianism to the middle class.

It is critical to prop up the economy to forestall a middle class turn to the right, and the best way we can help out in this election is to support the struggle for revenue replacement and tax justice embodied in Measure 7, which would split the property tax rolls between homes and commercial property; businesses would pay their fair share and homeowners would get real tax relief, promised but not delivered by Measure 5.

Since 1990, as many homeowners saw their property taxes increase, big commercial interests like utilities, railroads and banks received million-dollar tax breaks. Despite the "stop the tax" crowd's incessant fab-

rications about victimized small businessmen and poor, elderly, apartment-dwelling grandmothers, Measure 7 will in fact help both small businesses and renters.

The former will benefit from a healthier economy spurred by education and social service expenditures, and the latter from a renter's rebate program like the one abolished in the last legislative session.

By restoring about 60 percent of the revenue lost by 1990's Measure 5, Measure 7 would allow for the exercise of some elementary economic good sense. The Oregon Legislature could maintain and enhance existing social services, which, when combined with fewer taxes on poor and working people, would effectively boost consumer spending at the most important part of the economy — the bottom.

We know there will be more investment in a state with a reasonable tax structure that supports a quality educational system and social services; if one doubts the proposition, look at

those states with the lowest tax burdens and the lowest levels of social spending, like Arkansas, where the top industries are chicken processing and toxic waste.

The struggle for tax justice, embodied in Measure 7, goes hand-in-hand with the fight against Measure 9. If we are to defeat the OCA right, we need to provide a degree of social and economic security that is impossible without fair taxation.

Our responsibility does not end on Election Day. The defeat of Measure 9 or the victory of Measure 7, as with any progressive electoral victory, represents just the beginning.

If we wish to change Oregon, we have to build social movements that seek empowerment first, not vague notions of electing more Democrats to office. Only then can we reassert control over our schools, our neighborhoods and communities, and our workplaces — that is where we can find democracy on Election Day and every day after. That is where we will ultimately win or lose the struggle for social justice.

Jason W. Moore writes a monthly column for the Emerald.

LETTERS

But what if ...

The answer to all of the measures we are to vote on is, "Peace means respect for the rights of all."

No ifs, ands, or buts.

Joy Halliwell
Library

Rest assured

I'm sure that Oregon's homosexual citizens will breathe a sigh of relief now that Allen James, biologist, has assured them that their jobs, businesses

and lives are safe from Ballot Measure 9 (ODE, Oct. 26).

Qualified attorneys may duck for cover when asked to predict how the courts will interpret the murkier phrases of the measure, but now that James has given his opinion, gay people everywhere can rest assured they won't be hurt by Measure 9.

Aside from debatable issues of life, liberty and property, the undeniable core of Measure 9 is the requirement that all public schools (including the University) teach that homosexuality is "abnormal, wrong, unnatural

and perverse."

There is not the slightest scientific evidence to support this proposition, which many believe is bigoted and immoral in itself.

Regardless of your religious beliefs or your personal feelings about homosexuality, do you really want the schools to be held hostage by a curriculum that seems to come straight from the Old Testament book of Leviticus? Or shall academic freedom prevail? Please vote no on 9.

Jerry Russell
Psychology

Rare jewel

In late July of this year, our family took a leisurely evening canoe trip through Alton Baker Park with a visiting guest from a Palo Alto high tech computer firm.

We saw beavers, nutria, herons and a water snake. We were as excited and awestruck as our friend, who exclaimed, "What a rare jewel — a place like this right in the middle of town."

We are an avid soccer family

with two kids playing year-round soccer.

However, we believe soccer fields are best located elsewhere.

Please preserve our city's jewel, Alton Baker Park. Vote yes on Ballot Measure 20-01.

Ginnie Lo
Professor
Paul Nicholson
Eugene City Council
and two co-signers

WARREN MILLERS

STEEPER

AND

DEEPER

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Waste is a luxury we can't afford.

Every two days each dorm resident wastes an average of \$1 worth of food. It doesn't take a math major to figure out that's a lot of waste.

Once you've scraped that little bit of food you didn't eat in the garbage can, it becomes garbage. That's the same as scraping money into the garbage. In other words, you have the power to save the waste or create more garbage.

And garbage is a total loss. It is costly to handle and it wastes the limited resources that produced the food. When those resources are wasted, food costs more and you pay more.

You can stop this waste by serving only what you will eat. Look at conserving food like adding to your savings account.

The waste you save, you can take to the bank.

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