

Earthquake should jolt Oregon awake

Geologists said it would happen. And it did ... sort of.

Last Thursday, Oregon was jolted by an earthquake that measured as high as 5.7 on the Richter scale. The epicenter was 12 miles southeast of Woodburn, but people felt it as far north as Seattle and as far south as Roseburg.

This was not, however, the quake geologists are predicting. Scientists have been saying for years that Oregon will get hit with a quake of magnitude 8.0 or 9.0 on the Richter scale. As the Juan de Fuca plate slides beneath the North American plate, tension will build and cause a gigantic shifting of land masses, experts say. The end result will be giant tidal waves, crumbled buildings and large death tolls.

In contrast, Thursday's quake was centered underneath the seemingly harmless Mount Angel fault. Although a number of people felt the quake, no deaths occurred. Even at a generously estimated 5.7, the quake was not large by California standards. It was relatively minor, with minimal strength.

Despite this, it caused at least \$5 million worth of damage. The rotunda on the state capitol building cracked, part of the roof of Molalla Union High School collapsed, a bridge near Dayton dropped more than six inches, and several homes in the Woodburn area received extensive structural damage.

If a relatively minor quake can cause major problems, the threat of a major earthquake should cause Oregon to finally sit up and take notice. Granted, newspapers have reported earthquake rumors before, but earthquakes have always been considered the least of Oregon's worries. Now perhaps people will understand that Northwest earthquakes aren't just a figment of someone's imagination. They are real and need to be addressed.

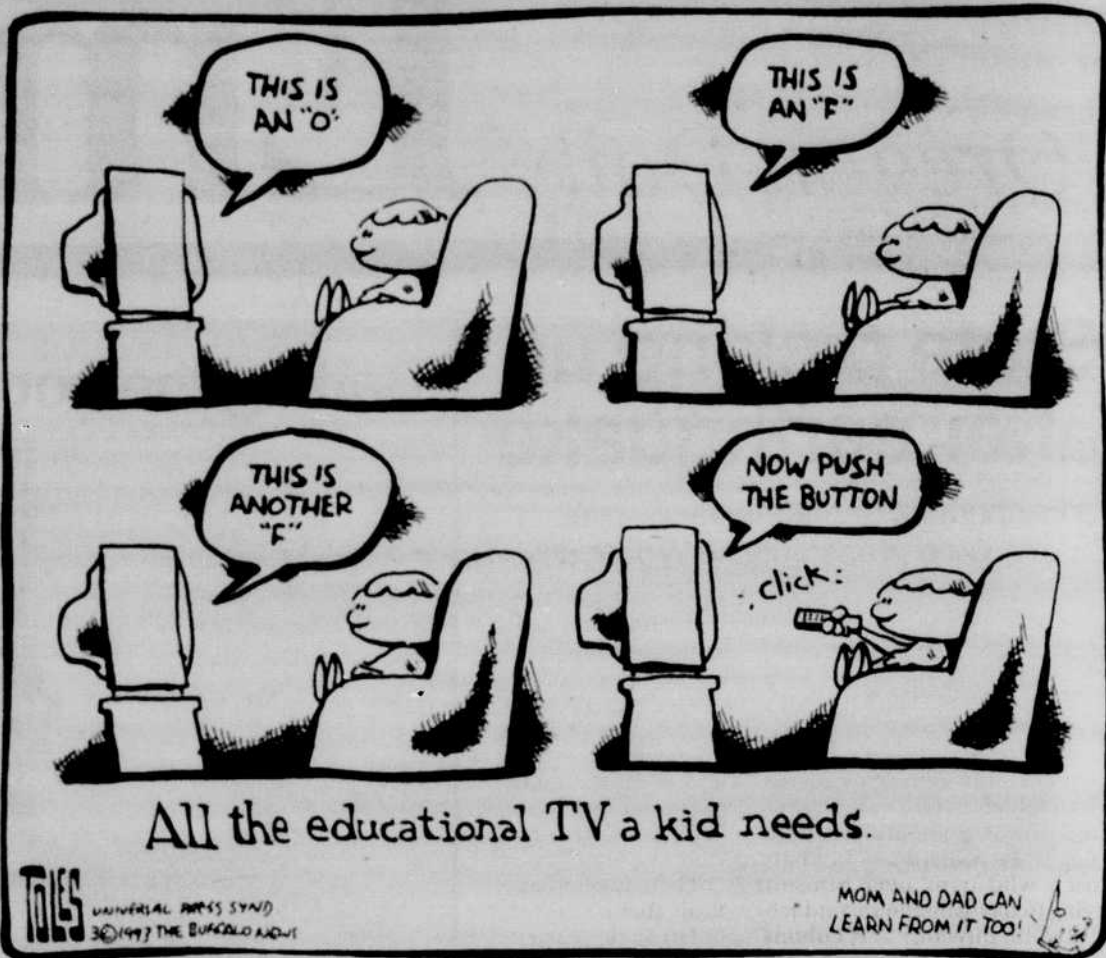
Legislators need to pass tough building standards similar to the ones in California. New bridges, highways and buildings could be constructed with stronger reinforcements, and larger buildings could be built on rollers to absorb the shock — a common trick in Los Angeles.

These precautions could minimize damage before a quake actually occurs — a preferable alternative to cleaning up in a quake's aftermath.

Unfortunately, Oregon is already behind in efforts to polish earthquake standards. And the state's budget crunch doesn't allow for much money to reinforce older buildings.

Therefore, the Legislature shouldn't necessarily mandate reinforcement of pre-existing buildings, although businesses and homeowners with good sense would do it anyway. Bridges and other government-owned property, however, should be reinforced if possible.

It's time to play it safe. A magnitude 8.0 earthquake will not just damage bridges but destroy them. Entire buildings will crumble, not just receive a few plaster cracks. The very least Oregon can do is improve standards for forthcoming construction. If an earthquake hits as late as 50 years from now, at least a few people will be prepared — unlike today.



LETTERS

Clarifying

I am writing in response to the "Officials say levy ignores issues" article in the March 15 *Emerald*. While Vegar Stokset's story accurately depicts portions of our interview, several misrepresentations appear in the text.

In the first instance, I suggested it was speculative to assume the crime rate would increase if the levy failed. More offenders can be managed in the community, providing the right mix of supervision, sanctions and services are available.

As such, I support the wide array of programs the serial levy funds. My observations, as related to Stokset, focused on the inability of higher-risk offenders to access the full spectrum of programs.

Nonetheless, the corrections programs contained in the levy package are essential in maintaining a range of services and sanctions to manage offenders in the community. However, I firmly believe we need to re-examine how and with whom these resources are employed.

The question is not whether levy-funded programs are needed; they are. The debate centers around which offender population these programs serve. It is extremely important to accurately portray issues concerning the public safety serial levy; the article falls short in this respect.

David M. Koch
Department of Corrections

Peace Corps

I read with special interest the article titled "Peace Corps offers cultural education" in the Jan. 7 *Emerald*.

What reverberated most true to my heart was the comment by Laura Streichert: "You can't really know what it's going to be like until you go. The whole experience is so personal. You won't know how you'll react to the situation until you get there."

And isn't that true of life in general?

Yes, you'll learn about culture, America's as well as others', by service in the Peace Corps.

But I'm also learning a hell of a lot about myself, about how well I can withhold judgment, where my limits are and how I can excel, exceeding what I thought were limits.

I teach science to eighth-graders. And I love it. Even when they are a bunch of little brats. Kids will be kids, in Botswana or America. Some will do their homework, and others will tell you the goats ate it.

People are people, worldwide. We are definitely all from the same stock, all of the same blood.

And now I know that my University education was worthwhile. Because I would not be here without it.

Peter Kinsey, PCV
Botswana

Generalization

I have read and reread Professor Ron Rousseve's commentary of March 12 many times. I can certainly empathize with his position because the atrocities committed in the name of religion certainly need to be addressed.

However, I'm afraid his commentary failed to do so in any salient or cohesive manner. Although his assertions certainly point to some important areas of exploration, he offers none of the support or evidence such conclusions would need, especially considering the nature of his sweeping generalizations.

I also would be forced to question the motivation behind the convoluted language he used to state his position. This language, it seems to me, is used to distract the reader from clearly understanding what he is trying to communicate. This only has the effect of intellectually intimidating some readers, who will simply agree or disagree out

of frustration rather than clear comprehension.

Also, I'm not sure he realizes the implications of his ideas concerning "intellectual partitioning" and "cognitive compartmentalization." Unfortunately, the manner in which he states these terms ultimately leads to the conclusion that religious beliefs are the result of mental incompetence or genetic/environmental deficiency. I doubt such an argument could realistically be made.

He is correct in speculating that "disciplined rational scrutiny undermines religious mythology." I'm sorry, but his commentary does not meet these qualifications, perhaps because of limited space in which to write. If this is the case, I would enjoy reading a more fleshed-out version. Until then, I must remain extremely doubtful as to the validity of his position.

Kurt Landre
Music Composition

Natural evil

I am not quite certain of the purpose of Ron Rousseve's rambling and rather disjointed commentary in your issue of Friday, March 12. He seems to be opposed to uncritical acquiescence, especially where religion is concerned. He also seems to favor scientific validation.

I agree with both positions in general. But I have to point out that his reasoning seems rather flawed when he begins to discuss "natural evil" in the world, which he defines as "innocent victims" being annihilated by volcanoes, earthquakes, etc.

May I humbly point out that despite his belief in the "reality" of this "evil," I believe it would be difficult to prove (scientifically, of course) a moral motivation on the part of a cyclone.

Yours in cognitive reconciliation.

Trey Imfeld
Eugene

Emerald

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