

Legislature, voters of different minds

Last Tuesday's election — and subsequent maneuverings by the Oregon Legislature — proves there is a vast difference in perspective in Oregon.

The past week has highlighted just how big a difference there is between voters' minds and those of their duly-elected representatives.

Case in point: The Oregon Citizens Alliance sponsored six local anti-gay measures throughout the state trying to accomplish at a city and county level what it failed to do in the 1992 election with Measure 9.

All passed.

Despite this, the Legislature is continuing in its attempt to pass some sort of gay rights legislation. The most recent example is a bill passed by the House Judiciary Committee last week that would forbid local governments from passing measures that "singles out citizens or groups of citizens" because of sexual orientation.

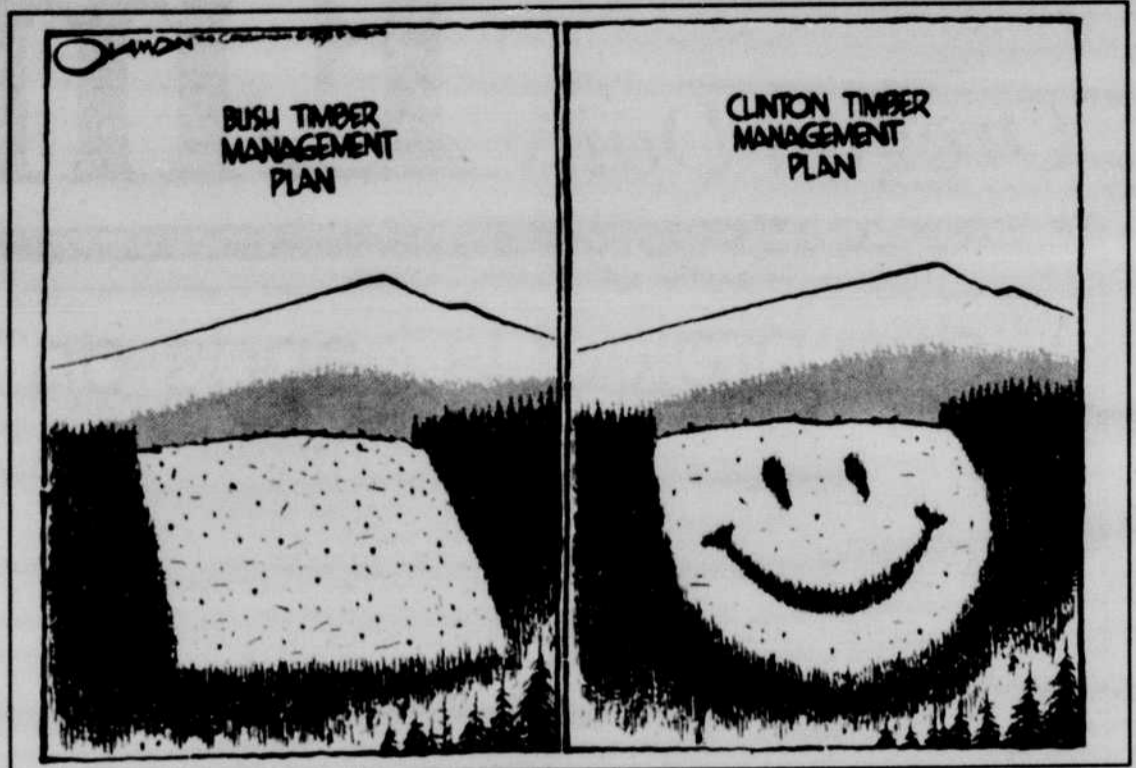
While it is unfair to judge a state on the actions of a few zealous local bigots, the difference between the two sides means Oregon is shaping up to have yet another pitched battle over gay rights.

A more concrete example of voter-representative discrepancy occurred in the local property tax levies overwhelmingly trashed by voters and the sales tax measure approved by the Oregon House Friday. Obviously, the representatives aren't listening to the voters, or the voters aren't paying attention to the fine print of the candidates come legislature election time. The sales tax measure passed 39-21 — nowhere near unanimous, but a large enough margin nonetheless. It does not take a political genius to figure out the chasm between Oregon's government and citizens is growing ever wider.

Despite the overwhelming need for new revenue, it is apparent Oregon voters are unaware or obstinate about the need for change. The mantra of "cut spending, not raise taxes" is a wonderful progressive in theory, but while citizens wait for the Legislature and executive branches to take up the knife, Oregon lurches ever closer to financial oblivion.

Sales tax proposals aren't too successful when they go in front of the voters. If recent election patterns are accurate forecasters, the House plan is destined to become number nine.

The logical progression of things will see the sales tax proposal going down to a thumping defeat this fall. Finger-pointing and accusations will follow and public schools will begin shutting down with alarming frequency.



OPINION

A forest compromise? Get real



An old political adage is that if you come up with a compromise plan everybody hates, you must be doing something right.

President Clinton must hope this is the case. The alternative — that people have a legitimate reason to hate the idea — could well be the crushing blow to an administration daily gaining notoriety for political setbacks, blunderings and screwups.

Clinton's forest plan, unveiled Thursday, has done little to ease the friction between loggers and environmentalists. Both sides are still moaning. Pacific Northwest congressmen are squealing, and just about everyone has an opinion — mostly negative.

Even before the gala opening, the plan was drawing crossfire. Clinton chose to draft the proposal in secrecy. With only vague details leaking out, opponents began to snipe at the plan. Thursday did nothing to blunt the criticism.

Opponents of the president — old and new — are lining up. You can assume Sen. Bob Dole (Carnivore, Kansas) is sharpening his utensils for another serving of Roast Bill. By the time the plan has been digested, pulled apart and spit back out, Clinton's popularity rating will nosedive from abysmal to oh-my-God-what-do-we-do-now.

To those doomsayers, I say: Lay off.

That's right. Me, who has criticized Clinton for everything from his political views to his saxophone playing, genealogy to hairstyles, is backing Bill in this case.

I won't debate the particulars of the plan — like most of the population, I don't fully fathom them. In fact, the specifics have very little to do with the criticism.

In a world where truth is subjective, here is a sad, cold fact: No matter what Clinton came up with, people were going to be unhappy.

Bill was searching for a compromise between folks who don't want one. Environmentalists seek a world where no trees are cut down, while the timber industry won't be completely satisfied until it again has free rein over Northwest forests, like it did in the Reagan era.

When both sides of an issue staunchly refuse to back down and piously proclaim themselves on the side of angels, compromise not only becomes untenable, but laughable.

A Soloman Bill ain't. Put in the unwinnable position of having to reach an accord where none could exist, Clinton did the best he could.

Opponents on both sides will claim presidential neglect and produce their own versions of a "compromise." It will be as if Clinton has never opened his mouth. A be-damned situation if ever one existed.

Facts of the situation: Logging cannot continue at present levels, nor can environmentalists

be completely satisfied. Oregon, for better or worse, is inexorably tied to the timber industry. To try and cold-turkey the state from its logging fix would rip apart the economy like a tornado.

Gov. Barbara Roberts, whose approval of the plan didn't even reach the tepid level, said Oregon had a "stable" economy that could lobby the drastic cut in logging the Clinton plan would create. After a comment like that, one wonders if Barbara has moseyed out of her office lately, or perhaps, Salem exists on a more ethereal plane than the rest of the state.

Be advised, Oregon's economy is going to suffer. Timber jobs will be lost, and the cost of replacing those jobs or retraining the workers is going to be substantial.

Clinton must have known he was going to take heat for the compromise; it's in his job description. But faulting him for doing so, or crafting the plan behind closed doors is ridiculous. Sure, if Clinton had chosen to do the plan publicly, things would have been different. For one thing, the date on this column would be July 6, 2047.

So Bill, here's a friendly bit of advice: Ignore the criticisms. You did the best you could in a dreadful situation. Trying to compromise between entrenched foes is impossible. You were elected to make the tough decisions, and you did so. Finally.

Take a bow, Bill. You done good.

Don Peters is a columnist for the Emerald.

Oregon Daily Emerald

P.O. BOX 3159 EUGENE OREGON 97403

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published daily Monday through Friday during the school year and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co. Inc., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices at Suite 300 of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

The Emerald is private property. The unlawful removal or use of papers is prosecutable by law.

Editor: Pat Malach

Photo Editor: Anthony Forney

Associate Editors: Ed Carson, Martin Fisher, Scot Clemens

Night Editor: Pat Malach

General Manager: Judy Riedl

Production Manager: Michele Ross

Advertising Director: Mark Walter

Advertising: Frelime Bell, Jeremy Mason, Van V. O'Bryan II, Angie Windheim, Patrick Wong

Classified: Becky Merchant, Manager

Business: Kathy Carbone, Supervisor

Production: Ingrid White, Production Coordinator, Stacy Mitchell, Jennifer Roland

Newsroom 346-5511 Display Advertising 346-3712

Business Office 346-5512 Classified Advertising 346-4343

