

## One company fuels dreams for the future

**OUR OPINION:** Investing in America's young people today means fewer problems tomorrow

Not all dead-end jobs suck.

Not all bosses see your education as some sort of unbearable barrier to their neatly constructed shift schedules.

And not all people older than 30 whine about "kids today" and do nothing.

A Junction City company actually cares about its teenage employees and their future.

No, The Gap isn't opening another store.

It's Jerry Brown's Texaco stations.

The company requires its gas station attendants to maintain passing grades and cuts their work schedules if the employees' "B's slip to "D's. Managers make sure that the student's job does not interfere with his or her school work or extracurricular activities.

Wait. It gets better.

Since 1990, the company has been socking money away for its employees' college educations. For each dollar that an employee deposits into a "hands-off" college-fund account, the company adds 50 cents. So, by the time Johnny Pump Jockey graduates from high school, he has enough cash stashed to take the bite off student starvation.

In a year categorized by education cuts and a Republican plan to make college loans harder to get and even harder to repay, Jerry Brown Co.'s commitment to the next generation is nothing short of astounding. But its mission is not altogether altruistic.

The two gas stations run by the company actually gain more than they give up.

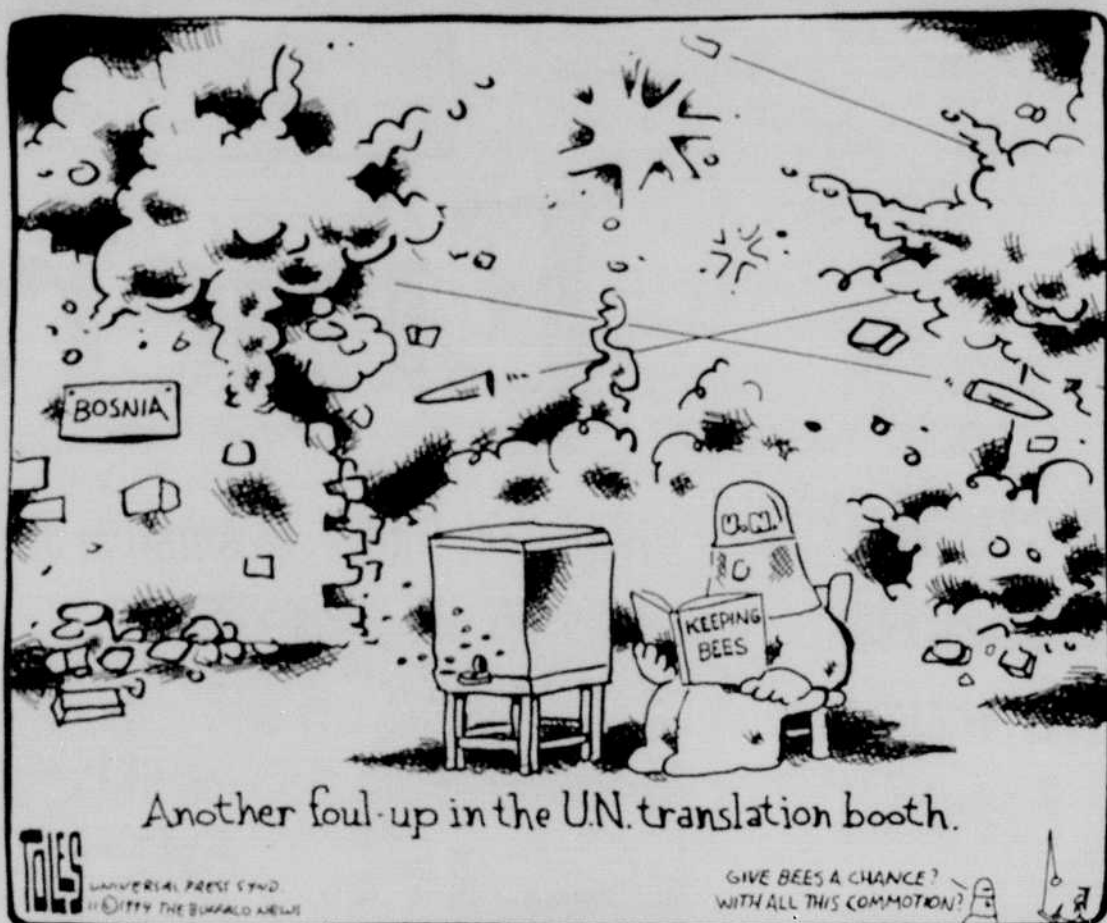
By being a partner in their employees' futures, the stations build a business staffed by happy, dedicated workers who go the extra mile for their company and their customers. Turn over is lower, internal theft is unheard of, and the community rewards the company's dedication with full-tanks and frequent visits.

In addition, young people who believe they have a bright future (a rare enough phenomenon in modern America) are less likely to engage in graffiti spraying, drag racing, shoplifting and other types of mid-adolescent mischief that can destroy communities. Amazing as it sounds, money, time and attention paid to teenagers keeps them on the straight and narrow.

Meanwhile, our prisons are overflowing, and Oregon has just approved the construction of four new juvenile prisons costing more than \$22 million dollars. Jerry Brown Co., has invested less than \$30,000 in its program, and you can bet that none of its current or ex-employees will be taking up residence in any of those new cells.

For all the talk about investing in America's children, few companies seem willing to walk the walk. Most establishments treat their employees like temporary space-fillers. Not surprisingly, that's how those employees feel.

If the state of the nation is to improve, we must make and keep a promise to the next generation: Your future matters to us because it matters to America.



## War: What is it good for? Well, lots

On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 the guns that had been tearing Europe apart for more than four years fell silent. The armies, like exhausted boxers at the end of a long and brutal prize fight, staggered home and peace was declared.

In Europe, victors and vanquished celebrated their survival of some of the most hideous man-made destruction the world had ever seen. In America, celebrations took on an air of triumph, and a national holiday — Armistice Day, was created.

Unlike Memorial Day, which honors all who have died in America's wars, Armistice day celebrated the living — the warriors and the veterans. November 11 was a day for honoring those who served in the military. Millions of veterans would put on their old uniforms and march proudly down the main streets of the nation's cities and towns.

The horrors of World War II exceeded those of World War I, and often exceeded people's ability to accept how brutal we can be toward each other. Even though the war demonstrated new highs (or lows) of "man's inhumanity to man," the final victory increased the fervor for celebrating military prowess. Though Armistice Day was eventually renamed Veterans' Day, it remained an important national holiday — on a par with Memorial Day, the 4th of July and Thanksgiving.

And then came Viet Nam. In Viet Nam the military committed the unpardonable sin: It lost. Not only did it lose, it lost to an enemy that seemed at first to be insignificant. The Tet offensive of 1968 was not only a major turning point in the war, it was a major turning point in America's love affair with the military. Within a few years, Veterans' Day ceased to be widely celebrated, and today we hardly notice its passing.

Today many Americans distrust our military leaders and consider military service only as a way to get job training or money for college. The Cold War has ended, and any government actions that may put American soldiers' lives at risk are met with hailstorms of protest.

The desire for peace has become so automatic that anyone suggesting that war might have an up side would be laughed at. So let me see if I can give you a few good chuckles.

History shows us that peace is a time for recovering from the last war while preparing for the next. Along with the certainties of death and taxes is the certainty that another war is just around the corner. Something inside us rebels at that thought. We want to believe that reason can prevail, that humans can evolve and that lasting

peace can be established. Yeah, right.

The horrors of war go beyond the hideous and the obscene. Clear images of rape, torture, death and mutilation are refreshed nightly on TV, and yet we continue to war on each other. Why?

Well, war is one of nature's tools for thinning the herd. As a species, we are far too successful for our biosphere. If we don't limit our reproduction to a level Earth can sustain, nature will do it for us. Increased competition for ever-scarcer resources will be increasingly resolved with violence. Current examples include the genocide in Rwanda, Bosnia, Tibet and East Timor.

War is also useful in acquiring desired resources like land, food, oil and slaves. America was repeatedly divided and conquered by force beginning with the second wave of immigrants coming over the land bridge from Asia — so was the rest of the world.

Cro-Magnons may have debated the ethics of exterminating Neanderthals, but they did it anyway. And Bosnians kill Serbs who kill Croats who kill Bosnians, all of them hoping to keep or gain a bit of land. The victors may not fare well, but the vanquished, if they survive at all, suck hind teat.

If it's possible to gain resources by waging war, then losing a war is a sure-fire way to lose them. If attacked, failure to adequately respond is usually a one-way ticket to oblivion. Sometimes fear of attack is enough to promote a preemptive first strike, and so the line between aggressor and victim is lost.

Finally, waging war can be an incredible adrenaline high. Some of the most meaningful memories are those of combat. Horrible conditions can provoke a sense of triumph simply because they were survived. Many combat veterans never again achieve the same sense of aliveness that comes with being around when the smoke clears.

Instead of denigrating warriors and war, we should recognize that war is inevitable. Like it or not, we, as a nation, will one day look to our military to protect us. Instead of minimizing Veterans' Day, we should restore its full honors and recognize that the desire and willingness to wage war is buried deep within our hearts. The need to wage war is coming even if we cannot or will not see it, and in the end, it is far better to be a militant victor than a pacifist victim.

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### Oregon Daily Emerald

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