

Thom: System can be fought from inside

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Eugene. There's such a huge double standard of perception of who is believable and who is not. I'll believe it when some guy with nice hair and great suit tells me things are going to hell, that only through immense distrust of foreign policy and domestic scientific issues will I find salvation in the throngs of government.

But when a 24-year old homeless guy, owning only a guitar case and a backpack of clothes, tells me I have to mistrust the government because it is destroying the environment and stealing land from the Native Americans, I think he's stone crazy and paranoid.

I listened last Monday night to some of Eugene's finest citizens rip into the Eugene City Council for the city's handling of some citizens during a protest. The police gassed and maced these protesters, some of them suspended from high in a grove of trees the city wanted to cut down. All the while, Mayor Jim Torrey watched.

Nobody will miss those trees. Maybe some squirrels will, but when the City Council first began making plans to build this parking structure two years ago, no one thought twice about it. Fifteen people showed up to talk about the structure. Few of

them were opposed, none of them vehemently.

But after protesters spit on police, after protesters knocked down a hurricane fence, after protesters were on private property for more than four hours, the police came in and asked people to leave. The protesters wouldn't. The police did their jobs and all hell broke loose. Complaints were imminent.

But there at the City Council meeting, there was no David Duchovny. There was no rational discourse and passionate distrust of the government.

There were only environmental wackos, the people for whom the felling of trees is a call to arms. There were only fascist anarchists and militant socialists. There was no one there who knew the history of the removal of the trees.

And I guess that's been my problem with this town from the very start - the knee-jerk reactions to anything considered politically incorrect.

Trees are falling? Chain yourself to the tree!

The University is tearing down a 50-year old family housing shack to build a nice family housing complex? Chain yourself to Amazon!

A company wants to build a factory in town to bring us jobs? Chain yourself to their bulldoz-

ers!
Symantec doesn't want nudity in front of its building? Strip yourself naked, smear yourself with mud and dance in front of their building! (Well, OK. That was pretty funny. I mean, c'mon. Naked hippies smeared with mud downtown, grunting and screaming like gorillas? Now that's humor.)

But what does it prove? Nothing. What does it do? Nothing.

That's why, and I'm really sad to say this, there really is some reason to participate politically in city management. If you say nothing, no one cares. If you never show up, no one cares. If the politicians don't know who you are or what you care about, they'll steal, lie and cheat to take what is yours.

So to all you Fox Mulders, you're on the right track. You're in the system fighting for what you know is right. Lobby. Participate. Take no prisoners.

To all you folks up in those trees, get a life. Take part. Get a clue. Fight the system within the system and you'll find, more often than not, that the truth is out there.

Thom Schoenborn is managing editor for the Emerald. His views do not necessarily represent those of the newspaper.



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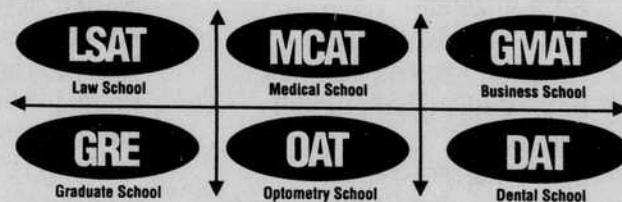
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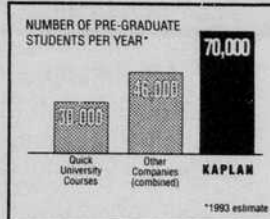
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