

Hyundai strips Eugene community bare

OUR OPINION: Hyundai needs to accept that as a part of the Eugene community it does not have the right to be exempt from the community's rules

Yes, Hyundai could bring thousands of jobs to the Eugene area. Yes, plant construction, if it is ever finished, could dump \$1.4 billion worth of construction contracts into the community. And yes, if Hyundai leaves, Eugene could look bad in the eyes of businesses throughout the world.

Nevertheless, sometimes we just wish it would go away.

Communities in America and throughout the world compete regularly to attract big companies like Hyundai and the benefits they supposedly bring to an area. The logic is that, for all the tax breaks and environmental leniency, the company still contributes more than it snaps up in perks and profits.

However, some towns seem to have lost track of that logic, going to such extremes to attract businesses they end up destroying the welfare of the people they are trying to help.

Hyundai has apparently decided Eugene is just such an forgetful town. Their ongoing tantrum put many a 2-year-old to shame: Hyundai wants the city to overlook wetlands regulations; Hyundai wants Eugene to swallow millions in lost revenue; Hyundai wants the city to ignore the will of the voters and throw out the toxins bill. Hyundai, Hyundai, Hyundai!

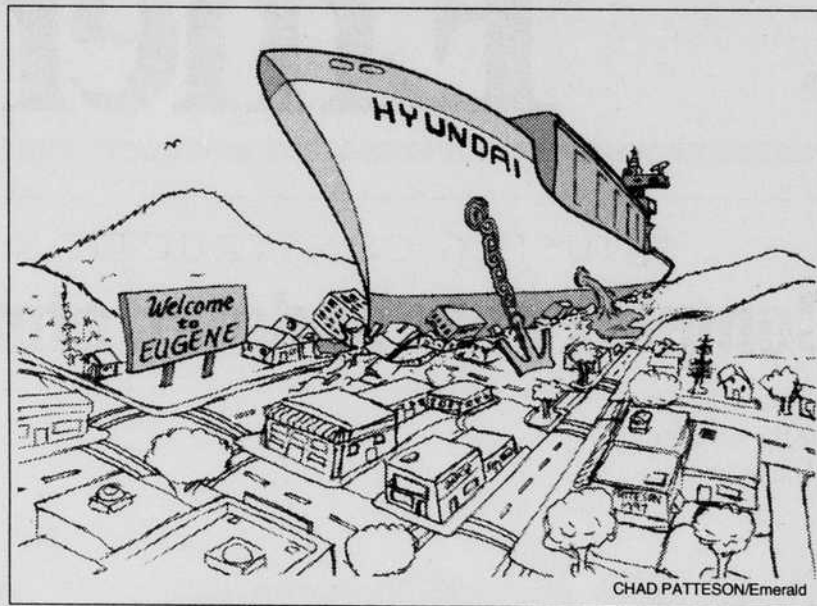
The tax issue is likely to remain unresolved for a long time. The city wants companies to give money directly to needed community services in exchange for property tax breaks. Hyundai, like most companies, seems to care little for the community in which it settles, and would prefer to keep the money to pad its pockets.

Unfortunately, many people in Lane County are all too willing to help provide the padding. Paying off corporations with tax breaks has become a time honored practice, and if Eugene doesn't keep up, its economy could fall behind.

Even if you accept the growing notion that the corporation ought to come ahead of the community, Hyundai's insistence on dismantling or ignoring environmental legislation clearly goes too far. Giving money to companies to convince them to come to your town is merely unfair. Letting them ignore the law once they get there is offensive.

Admirably, the city council has thus far stood behind the toxic reporting law, which is opposed both by Hyundai and by lobbyists working the Legislature. Hyundai fears the law, which would require them to report the use and release of toxic substances and which could impose fines, would impinge upon their operations. Well, that would seem to be the point.

Environmental laws that restrict companies from using and releasing toxic chemicals are not written to accommodate big business. They are meant to stop the ongoing assault on the environment by corporations. If the city allowed Hyundai immunity



from the legislation, it would subvert the entire point of such protective measures.

Sadly, the city has seemed more willing to cave into Hyundai pressures regarding wetlands protections. Part of the company's building site was declared a restoration wetland, effectively blocking construction on that part of the property. This would halt Phase Three of the plant (Phase One has nearly been completed; Phase Two is currently on hold).

After Hyundai went whining to the city, it agreed to reconsider the designation and to look for ways Hyundai could continue with their plans. One hopes the city would boldly defend the community from outside interests — in this instance they seem to be thinking about cav-

ing in.

There was a time when companies considered themselves an integral part of the community they resided in, realizing their workers needed good schools, quality services and a healthy environment. Sadly, that day appears to have passed.

Instead, corporate operations have become a sort of figurative strip mining, where companies move in, strip a community of capital and labor and pay little, leaving behind an environmentally destructive legacy. This cannot continue to happen, and it certainly shouldn't be encouraged by local governments and civic leaders.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board.

Supreme Court session ends with controversial decisions

OUR OPINION: The decisions handed down by the court deal with issues that have been causing many debates

Recently, the Supreme Court has released decisions on several major issues. There is no easy way to evaluate their verdicts. While we may agree or disagree with the political results of the choices, Constitutional law is not about politics — in theory. Bearing in mind that legal complexities may preclude the Court from making the socially "correct" choice, here is our take on four of these decisions.

Sex offender law

In another in a long series of concessions to the forces of state control and police power, the Court voted 5-4 to allow a Kansas law permitting sexual offenders to be imprisoned beyond their term.

The law mandates that offenders can be held indefinitely after serving their time in prison if they are believed likely to commit future offenses. While we admire the purpose of the law — to get people likely to continue to commit horrible crimes off the streets — we cannot approve of the method.

Not only does extended prison time represent a questionable solution to the problem of sex crimes, but its use under the Kansas law represents a form of double jeopardy — punishing a person twice for the same crime.

If states truly believe they can and should keep violent sex offenders in jail forever, they should simply pass longer sentences for the crimes in question. Submitting prisoners to extended punishment after a sentence has been doled out and served clearly destroys the legal process in-

tended to ensure the rights of all involved parties.

Communications Decency Act

In a stunning affirmation of common sense, the Court voted 7-2 to strike down the act, finding it violated First Amendment protection of free speech. Even the two dissenting judges agreed the act was flawed as written, but they argued it could be amended to fit within legal boundaries.

The law, which mandated no "indecent" material be posted on-line where children could find it, clearly overstepped both societal needs and legal precedent. The Court has earlier found restrictions on obscene material to be legitimate but has repeatedly struck down blanket restrictions on indecent speech.

This most recent decision and the precedents it was founded on clearly uphold the needs of a healthy democracy. The mantra of civil liberties groups like the ACLU has always been that all speech, especially those sentiments we hate most, must be protected in order to ensure the so-called "marketplace of ideas." We agree.

Assisted suicide

While those of us in the newsroom cannot even agree on the desirability of doctor-assisted suicide or its harsher sibling euthanasia, we do agree with most of the courts decision on the matter. The court upheld bans of assisted suicide by New York and Washington states in a 9-0 decision.

The decision appeals to the largely dead

notion of federalism: those things not legally dictated by the Constitution are remanded to the states. While this doctrine has become increasingly irrelevant, in the case of such a controversial subject, it is worth returning to.

By remanding to the states the ability to block or perhaps permit assisted suicide, the court has in essence told communities they need to reach some sort of moral and legal consensus on the difficult issue. Now it is up to states to determine if their citizens would like the "right" to die. Oregon's voters already spoke once, although the legislature seems determined to make us do so again.

If the people of a particular state or locality decide they want a right the court did not find within the Constitution, all they should have to do is demand it.

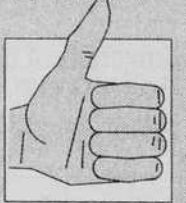
Paula Jones

The court found that President Clinton can and should go to court to respond to a lawsuit by Jones accusing him of sexual harassment. Regardless of the merits of the suit, Clinton should be held accountable for his actions.

The President is not above the law, and he is particularly not above the civil courts. While the system should make every effort to accommodate Clinton's busy schedule, he should not be able to avoid court for reasons of political expediency or personal convenience.

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All thumbs



GAY PRIDE PARADE

While it didn't have the color and flair of huge marches in cities like New York and San Francisco, Sunday's parade was a good chance for Eugene's homosexual community to remind people they have every right to be here and be open.

POLICE PROBE

In an era when police brutality is on the rise, it is important that claims of abuse are handled seriously and effectively. We don't know if the Eugene police acted appropriately when they used tear gas to break up a downtown protest, but the odds an internal investigation would have reached a fair conclusion seem slim.



TIMBER TAX BREAK

The Oregon House passed a measure Tuesday that would give a \$25 million per year property tax break to timber owners. Not only is the measure another form of corporate welfare for an industry that thrives on government generosity, but it would continue a trend of unfairly shifting the tax burden onto the individual.

CONGRESSIONAL TAX CUTS

While some of the breaks passed by the house Thursday are admirable — like \$1,500 credits for college tuition — too many of them unfairly benefit the wealthy. Cuts in estate taxes and capital gains taxes are most useful to those with a lot of money to invest. Cuts in the taxes of small corporations pander to clever accounting.