

Police should explain actions

OUR OPINION: The June 1 incident deserves investigation and police only look worse by hindering efforts

We've had it. We wanted to give Eugene police the benefit of the doubt. We considered the possibility that their actions in the June 1 "incident" were justified. We contemplated the possibility that when police refused to talk, it was an indication of long-standing problems with management. But now even police supervisors are refusing to talk, and we think it's ridiculous.

On June 1, mistakes were made. The biggest one was made by Vicki Elmer and the city, deciding to cut down the trees without adequate warning or room for comment. In her handling of this and later tree incidents, Elmer has made it clear that, for her, community response means we nod our heads while she tells us what to do.

This isn't the fault of police, who were put in the unfortunate position of protecting a poorly thought out city action from a group of justifiably irate protesters.

However, at this point things get very ugly.

It may be that the protest got out of hand. Many of the people involved have very strong opinions about trees and greenspaces and they tend to be very emotional about chainsaws. Frustrated by a situation where they had little power, the people on the scene probably lashed out with unreasonable force.

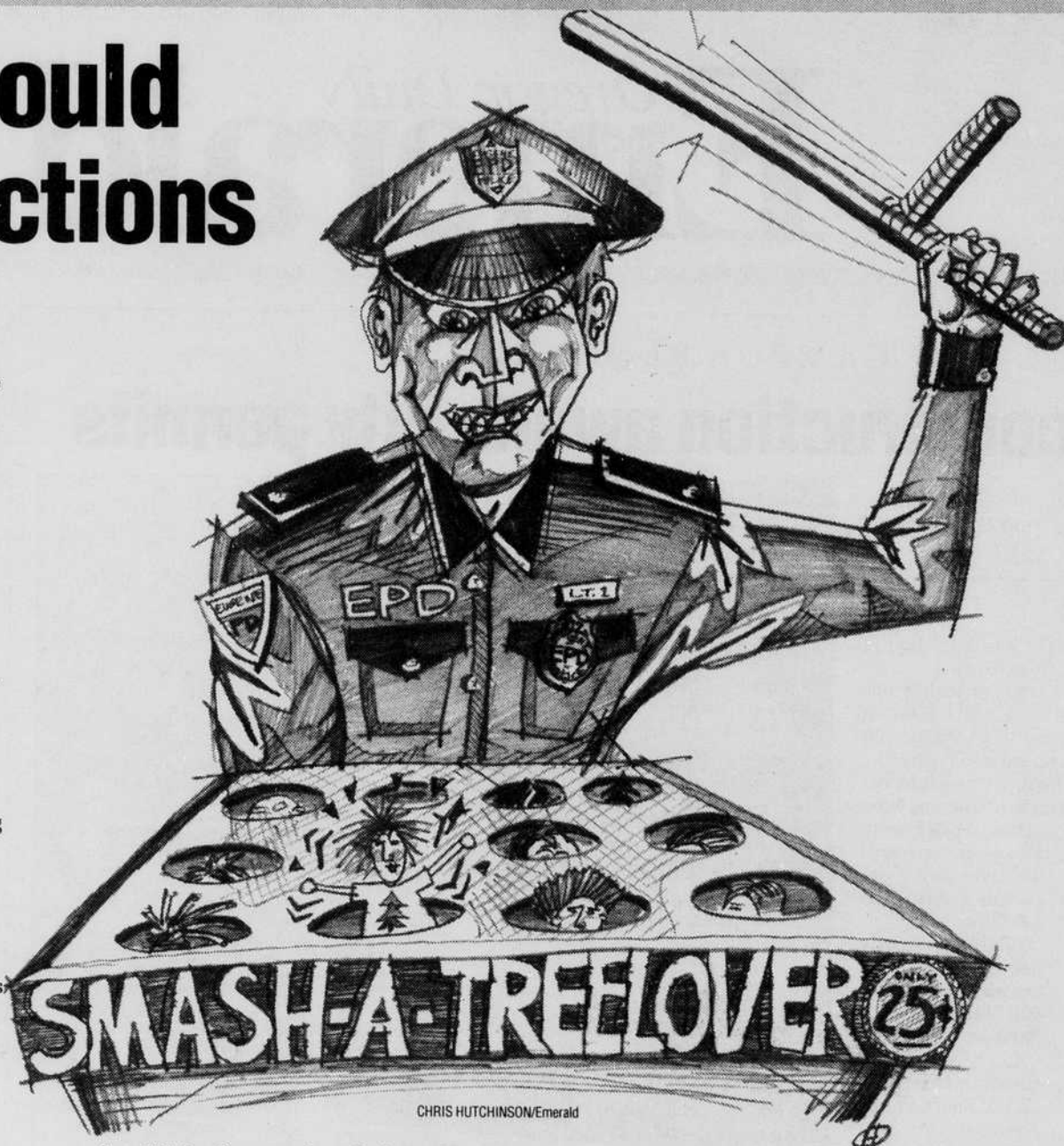
Unfortunately, the police lashed back.

By spraying protesters with mace and pepper spray and possibly using physical force the police made an even bigger mess out of the situation. Or so it seems.

Past experience with Eugene police and their relationship to the community makes it seem likely the police got a little carried away. We live in a town divided between a very radical element and a very traditional, socially conservative core. Police have usually defended that core.

This is not the only situation where police actions have seemed unreasonable. Earlier crack-downs on 13th Avenue have selected people for "attention" because of traits associated with an alternative lifestyle.

Many of these policies were initiated by the city, but when the city council closed the park on 14th Avenue and banned dogs and skateboards, the po-



lice didn't refuse to enforce the law. They didn't call the proposals "offensive" and "insulting." And they didn't blame the city. They appeared glad to have the increased power.

Now, however, when their actions are being challenged by an external investigation, they refuse to comment, complain about the investigation and blame Elmer and the city for their actions.

Police complain that the investigation is criminal in nature. Well, it should be. If accusations of police brutality are true, they deserve to be responded to in a legal manner. When the city arrests protesters, they are sent through the court system.

It's entirely possible the police are not at fault, or that their actions were justified and legal. And it is true the police and firefighters are not obligated to talk to investigators.

However, if police want to uphold their inno-

cence, they should be willing to talk to investigators. If the violent police response was called for, they ought to be able to explain why.

An effective relationship between the police and the community relies upon accountability. Citizens expect that, if they are held to the law, police will be as well. By refusing to talk to investigators, police are sending the message they are not bound by laws after all.

The June 1 protest stemmed from poor relations between the city and the community. We can expect further tension unless the police and the city prove willing to improve those relations by being open and answering questions posed to them.

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses may be sent to ode@oregon.uoregon.edu.

Quoted

"All kids are marketable."

Donna Miranda, who runs a child-modeling agency, on Sunday's Access Hollywood.

"We've moved from the fake that stands starkly inadequate before the real to the hyperfake — a fake so big, and so imbued with the hubris of our society, that it makes the merely real seem puny and yet serves as a 'real' symbol of a technology-addicted, gigantic-minded society."

Jon Spayde, writing in the July-August Utne Reader.

"Singles in science are meeting via Science Connection, a North America-wide social network for single science professionals and others who enjoy science or nature."

From an advertisement for a scientist-oriented dating service, in the August issue of Scientific American.

"Her truck didn't just penetrate the building. It went right inside."

Jackson County Fire District 3 Captain Tom Brookings, showing a keen grasp of the language, as quoted in the Monday Register-Guard.

Work to strengthen labor unions by supporting strike

We are frustrated by the strike by Teamsters against the United Parcel Service. Frustrated by hospital supplies that can't get where they need to go. Frustrated by the loss of business for many small companies that rely upon shipping. Most of all, we are frustrated because every day, we have to watch a bunch of smug people sit on television and tell all about how inevitable the situation was and how little they can do to resolve it.

It's high time someone got angry and did something. The management of UPS must suffer.

That's right. We wish the UPS strike didn't have to take place, and we blame management for the entire situation. Instead of focusing on the "suffering" caused by the strike and mixing in shots of angry union leaders — thus implicitly placing blame on the Teamsters — like the rest of the media, we think it is important to understand the crucial issues at play in this strike.

Above all else, we think it is important to

support labor. Business has only gotten bigger over the last couple decades, and increasingly powerful companies continue to abuse workers in the United States and abroad.

Unions represent a critical check against this oppression. The organization of labor might not be the key to socialist revolution, but it is certainly the most effective way for workers to ensure the system functions.

Labor can only be strong if people outside the company support unions, however. Instead of racing to sign on as scabs for UPS, other workers should think about what it takes to have a good relationship with your employer. If we don't support the Teamsters in their struggle against UPS, who will support us when we are abused by another big company, too wrapped up in profits to worry about its people?

Not only should we not go to work as temporary employees for UPS (should they begin hiring) but we should also uphold the picket lines. The U.S. Postal Service is

a viable alternative to the private shipping company. If you have to send something by mail, do so through some other company. Try to avoid using a non-union firm, of course.

Finally, President Clinton needs to let the strike take place. People who are calling for intervention are calling for the death of labor. Not only should the government stay out of negotiations, but Congress should have long ago passed a law preventing companies from hiring permanent replacements for striking workers.

The UPS strike is not just another opportunity to support labor, however. It also illustrates one of the worst practices in business today. The Teamsters are upset in part because of the high number of part-time workers on the payroll.

Part-time workers allow a company to pay fewer or no benefits to a large number of their workers. In addition, part-timers often have a harder time getting promotions, and are sometimes paid less. All this allows companies to make more money.

At UPS, 58 percent of the work force is part time. These workers are paid a base wage of only \$8 an hour, which hasn't been raised in 15 years. Worse, workers report the company is reluctant to advance workers to full-time positions.

The UPS strike illustrates a sad trend in America — the death of labor. Workers are losing benefits, being paid less to work harder. Real wages have dropped. An increasing number of jobs are part time, providing no benefits and inadequate pay. And, despite all this, people show little inclination to support one of the best ways to fight this, unions.

Supporting workers is crucial to checking the profit-oriented abuses of big business. The current strike is a perfect opportunity to show your support. Obey the picket lines. Blame management for the delays. And tell Clinton to stay out of the situation.

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