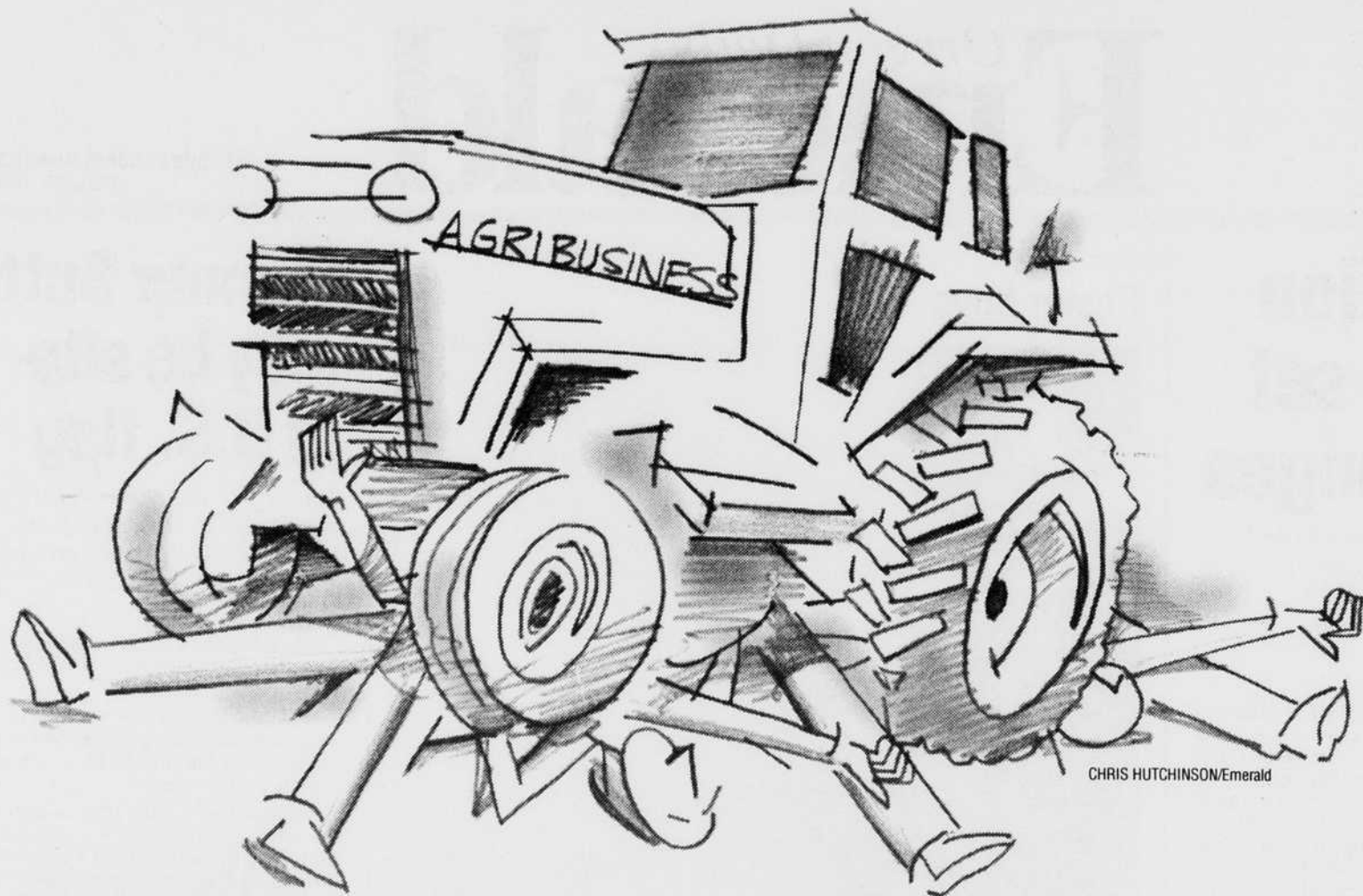


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CHRIS HUTCHINSON/Emerald

Thumbs



TO CONTINUED ANTI-MISSILE DEFENSE RESEARCH:

In late April, the administration granted Boeing a \$1.6 billion contract to develop an anti-missile system. In 2000, Clinton will decide whether to implement the system, which could mean at least \$3 billion for the Seattle-based aerospace company. Given that earlier anti-missile programs have performed miserably, spending almost \$2 billion to develop another that might not even be used seems absurd. Worse, if the program is implemented, it would represent a serious threat to global security. Such programs could easily be converted into space-based weapons systems, could potentially misfire and could cause malfunctions of land-based weapons tracking systems, leading to accidental firings of nuclear weapons.

CORRECTIONS

In "Cinco de Mayo is celebration of tradition" (ODE, May 5), MEChA should have been referred to as a Chicano student organization.

In "Protesters say bills exploit farm workers" (ODE, April 4), Amy Casso is the co-director of MEChA.

In "Next year's ASUO plans for changes" (ODE May 6), the ASUO Executive coordinator will be replaced next year by an Executive organizer.

The Emerald regrets these errors.

Plowing down migrant workers

AN EMERALD EDITORIAL

A new proposal for 'guest workers' would lower wages and hurt all farm workers

Guest worker. Has there ever been a more troublesome phrase in the history of U.S. immigration policy? Immigrants of all nationalities have faced racist slurs and insults for generations, but the new language of migrant labor masks all that hatred behind smiling pro-agribusiness rhetoric.

Guest worker programs are nothing new. In the 1980s and 1990s, Congress passed legislation that allowed tens of thousands of immigrants into the United States solely for the purpose of working as farm laborers.

Nor are the justifications for such proposals new: labor shortages. Business leaders, who remain convinced that because they don't want to work in the fields no American does, complain that farms face a labor shortage.

What is new is the latest bill to allow 40,000 "guest workers" into the United States. The bill, advo-

cated by Oregon Rep. Bob Smith in the U.S. House and Oregon Sen. Gordon Smith in the Senate, has drawn little media attention.

It has, however, drawn the wrath of alert politicians, farm labor activists and Latino groups. Some of these groups rallied last Friday in downtown Eugene to protest the proposal.

The bill is, admittedly, small in scale. Unfortunately, because it is being touted as a pilot program, it has the potential to quietly slip into something much larger after the two-year test run is over.

There are a number of reasons that people such as state Sen. Susan Castillo, state Rep. Tony Corcoran and a spokesman for U.S. Rep. Peter DeFazio showed up at the rally to speak against the bill. Foremost is the way it tilts the scale against farm labor and in favor of agribusiness.

As Mark Stricherz pointed out in the May 11 issue of *The Nation*, many of the areas considered for guest worker programs have high levels of unemployment, often reaching into the double digits. While those unemployed may be unwilling to work for the paltry

wages farm owners hope to pay immigrants, local laborers would certainly take a job that provides reasonable compensation.

Of course, reasonable compensation has never been the goal of most business owners. Importing farm labor, just like the proposed importation of high-tech workers that has received more recent media attention, is simply a way to flood the labor market and keep profit margins high.

There are other problems with the bill that would further damage workers, both immigrants and locals. As Stricherz notes, the bill would not guarantee workers housing, full-time work or even a set contract.

By not ensuring housing, the bill would draw migrant workers away from their families and into communities already full of laborers unable to afford housing, leading to homelessness and a drain on the area's social services. (Of course, with federal repeal of most services for even legal aliens, many immigrants may simply starve or die from disease.)

The lack of a guarantee of full-time work could allow agribusi-

ness to push wages even lower. By inviting hundreds of workers north and then making them compete for a far smaller number of jobs, growers can select only the most obedient workers — rejecting those who might report labor abuses or attempt to join a union.

By not having a clear contract, workers are at even greater risk of abuse and mistreatment by farm owners. Workers with a thin paper trail vanish back south easily when they don't behave or challenge poor labor practices. They also have a hard time holding growers to verbal agreements that recruited the workers in the first place.

Anyone who is concerned about the fair treatment of workers, both in the United States and elsewhere, should worry about many of the provisions of the guest worker proposal. By flooding the labor market and crippling worker protections, agribusiness — like many other types of corporations — will increase its profit margins at the cost of the communities it ought to be a part of.

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

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Bartel best choice

The citizens of Eugene pride themselves on being liberal and progressive. Evidence of this is everywhere around town, from recycling programs to tree plantings. Simply put, Eugene is a unique city.

Therefore, it shouldn't be surprising that a unique city such as Eugene has its own water and electric utility. What is surprising is that nobody really seems to pay attention to the actions

of the Eugene Water and Electric Board. In an area so concerned with the environment, it is ironic that the elected board that deals with many environmental issues is also the one that generates the least attention.

I write today to say that in the upcoming primary election, one candidate for the board stands out. If you live in the South Eugene/campus area, I urge you to vote for Peter Bartel. Bartel has been a Eugene small-business owner for

15 years, in addition to serving on the Lane County Budget Committee and as an aide to former County Commissioner Jerry Rust. But above anything else, Bartel is a long-time Eugene area resident who cares about the community.

In the May election, vote for dedication, responsibility and commitment. Vote Peter Bartel for EWEB.

Robert Ackley
 Bartel Campaign Volunteer