

Oregon and the Art Center see more rain than ever

✓ *It's raining, it's pouring, the old man is snoring*



Photo by Chad Pattenon

The Art Center was forced to cancel classes last Thursday because of the heavy rain.

by Jeff Kemp
Editing & Design Editor

Last Thursday, Oregon saw its heaviest rain ever. According to the National Weather Service, 4.77 inches of rain fell in Portland in a 48-hour period. Clackamas Community College saw even more than that. October has seen an outstanding 8.41 inches of rain and almost 8 of those came in the last seven days.

The downpour washed out Thursday's scheduled classes in the Art Center and closed some pathways in the Environmental Learning Center.

"We don't have a drainage system that can accommodate this kind of rain," said Carol Patterson, director of Plant Services.

Patterson had her personnel draining the Art Center around the clock last Thursday and Friday. Classes in the Art Center resumed after rigorous cleaning efforts by Plant Services were completed Friday morning. Sand bags were also used to ward off future flooding, but Patterson calls the project "ongoing".

"At this point there's really nothing we can do," Patterson explained.



Photo by Chad Pattenon

Flooding forced the closure of several pathways in the ELC.

Letter to the Editor: English instructor denounces vandalism

To the Editor:

Vandalism hurts property and people. Last Tuesday, the bumperstickers, proclaiming "No on 13," on 6 offices in the English department were ripped off between 4 and 5:30 p.m. The week before I called security for one of my student's whose car was bombarded with eggs for no ostensible reason other than the car had a "No on 13" sticker. These two incidents create a climate of intolerance. In a college, freedom of speech is especially precious, and we should respect the rights of students and faculty to speak and show their opinions.

When someone tries to silence my voice, I try to respond

with equal and opposite force: I speak out more vehemently and confidently. If someone wants to change my vote, then I invite them to talk with me, not try to intimidate me. Measure 13 in itself is an attempt to silence a group of people, to deny people their visibility and voice. If the person who threw eggs or stripped the bumper stickers is reading this letter, I hope that he or she knows that he or she helped me redouble my dedication to protecting the right of speech and the rights of under-represented peoples.

Sincerely,
Kate Gray
English Instructor

Labor disputes have no winners

by Eric Charles
Columnist

You know about the goings-on in our grocery stores. Need I remind you about the baseball strike, pending hockey lockout and nasty words being spoken in basketball? Labor disputes. You know how they get started: the workers' (usually represented by their unions) contracts expire, they negotiate for new contracts which may or may not appeal to management...and so it goes.

That's a major point of labor-management relations. What happens is labor and management ask something of each other. (To begin with, it's often labor provides products/services for management, and in turn management pays labor reasonable wages.) Sometimes that's not enough, so either side asks for something more; sometimes the other side may be reluctant to give it. When that occurs, usually there are a few steps before there is an actual strike. The situation may be settled in one of those steps. If nothing else works, though, the union may ask for a strike. Once the strike goes into effect, look out. Boycotts, ad campaigns sometimes as nasty or nastier than some political ads...you get the picture.

I wouldn't bring up the subject of labor disputes given what's going on, but I think nobody truly wins in them. You may get higher wages, a secure schedule, seniority and thus job security, but at what cost? (This column is about what I've seen about labor disputes generally, not about any specific labor dispute.)

Why nobody truly wins: the old physics law holds here: "For every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction." Let's say a union of workers was striking for higher wages. If the workers get higher wages, the prevalent belief is their standard of living will improve. Yet what happens, maybe not pronto but in the long

term, is these new higher wages will raise a business' labor costs and cut into that business' profit margin. In some industries, that profit margin is already low, hence a possible loss might result. So to maintain those profit margins and avoid a loss, the business may have to raise its prices to make up for the profits it would lose to the higher labor costs. The higher prices would negate whatever raise in standard of living striking workers would've expected in the long term. Thus, the real raise would be negligible. With those higher prices, the customers lose.

Also, since businesses usually profit by providing goods and services of reasonable quality at reasonable prices with excellent service, if a boycott comes along, that business may stand to lose massive amounts of revenue and customers. (It could be driven out of business, but that'd represent an extreme case.) So how will it make up for all that? Yup - raise prices. That business won't be the same again after getting a bad rap. Again, the customers lose.

If the pertinent issue is seniority (i.e. workers who've been with an employer for a longer period of time are less likely to be fired), job security is dictated by your tenure of work in a company. Don't get me wrong; seniority's worth getting, as it's a visible sign of company loyalty. But if companies are firing workers, that means more work to do for the ones still with jobs, and perhaps the remaining workers might suffer from stress. Also, someone who might've been very loyal to customers could be laid off and his/her replacement (if there is one) could be...let's just say it won't be quite the same again.

Concerning work hours, full-time workers usually work the same amount of hours each week, or an amount not too much different.

Sometimes labor unions ask that there not be part-time jobs. The role of the part-time worker, in my opinion, is to assist the full-time worker when demand is high for products/services. Also, part-time work can be useful to build a work ethic and experience, not to mention pay the bills or provide a little extra pocket money. (Besides, if employers truly wanted to cut labor costs, they would go where labor is less expensive, e.g. the Third World.)

Still on money: the United States has one of the highest standards of living in the world. And, from what I've seen, Americans pay less taxes than their European and Oriental counterparts. Thus, Americans have more take-home pay than these same counterparts. So why ask for more wages when you're paid more than a lot of people around the world already?!

Another point concerning labor disputes: unions have strike benefits for their members who don't show up for work because they're picketing. But the strike benefits union members receive for picketing are a fraction of what the same workers get paid for the job they usually do. So what happens? The union members lose their standard of living. If more than one union works in a particular business, and if one (or more) of these unions either goes on strike or honors the picket line and thus convinces its members to picket, those workers will receive strike benefits and lose their standard of living as well, since the strike benefits are a far cry from the regular wages.

To summarize: nobody wins in a labor dispute because higher wages mean higher labor costs; the business gets a bad rap because of boycotts, thus losing revenue and customer loyalty; job security can be dictated by quantity rather than quality; and since strike benefits are a fraction of wages, standards of living may drop.

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