

THE NORTH
COAST



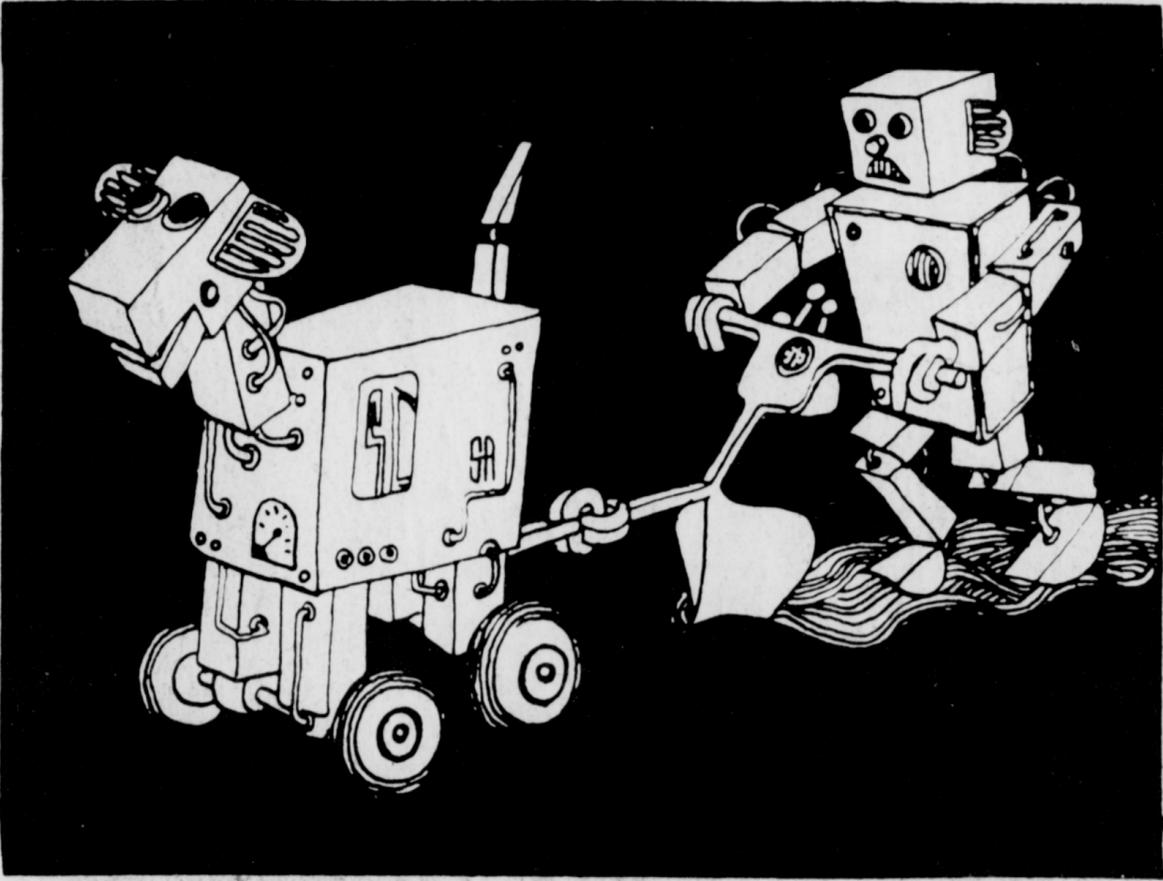
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In a dark time the eye begins to see.
- Theodore Roethke

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A VOICE RENEWED

by Michael Paul McCusker

Fifteen years ago on May 13 the headline over this article was the front page bannerline of Volume I, Number I of The North Coast Times Eagle, which was published weekly in Wheeler, Oregon, from 1971 to 1976. It was a good newspaper, irreverent and raffishly honest with the courage of an Androcles, seldom cowed by power brought against it. It perished wretchedly and in disgrace, terminally in debt and spiritually compromised. Its founder was a prickly dreamer who fought for justice. His successor was a charismatic crook who manipulated the

paper's reputation for honesty and poverty to defraud staff and contributors.

After its death a former staff writer, John MacCormack wrote a long epitaph. He described the Times Eagle as a "renegade Oregon weekly that for nearly five years rained a fiery, strange synthesis of populist journalism and outrage on a one hundred mile stretch of the North Coast from Astoria to Lincoln City. It was a paper that consumed two hundred staff members in less than three hundred issues, that championed the most arcane and libertarian of human endeavors, that would have been labeled Underground had it not been so far from conventional that Underground was a title too wishywashy to apply. It was a publication that strove to be so 'honest and independent' that it frightened away advertisers by the carload. It was a paper that lived a hand to

mouth, day to day existence, that was waylaid at each turn by adversaries both real and imagined, that was fueled by an odd combination of heady idealism and skitterish paranoia and that collapsed under the weight of its own pervasive ineptitude."

Any attempt to understand the history of the first Times Eagle must begin with its founder, first publisher and editor, Robert Stanley Need, who came to the Oregon coast from the U. S. Air Force and the Viet Nam War. His name was its own metaphor. His great need was to speak out against the lies and deceptions that most people accept or accommodate as truths. He and another Viet Nam veteran started the Times Eagle in the spring of 1971, and almost immediately the newspaper was in hot water. Need began receiving threats to his health and his partner, who had a family, took them seriously and withdrew from the paper.

Need published the Times Eagle for four years until another friend he had asked for help betrayed him and forced him out. During those years he developed one of the finest, most honest newspapers in the country. The Times Eagle never made much money, never enough to pay the volunteer staff or the rent, and its readership never exceeded five thousand but they lived all over the world. He took great risks. He was not afraid of being considered a traitor or a fool and he never played it safe. He was a raw independent who believed passionately in the First Amendment. He was assisted by a revolving staff, mostly young and idealistic, who virtually slaved under his caustic editorial tyranny and left only when their brains burned out or their bodies demanded nourishment. More than once he was left alone to get the newspaper out on the street by himself. Finally he too burned out and a year after he was ruthlessly shoved aside the old Eagle died.

He was an intense, erratic man whose psychological makeup was indistinguishable from his personal identification with the Times Eagle. He was responsible for its best and worst just



THE STEADY ERADICATION OF THE WORLD'S TROPICAL RAIN FORESTS, WHICH ARE BEING DESTROYED AT A RATE OF ONE HUNDRED ACRES EACH MINUTE, THREATENS TO RID THE NORTHERN HEMISPHERE OF MOST OF ITS BIRDS.

EACH SPRING FEWER BIRDS RETURN FROM THE SOUTH. ONE HUNDRED AND SEVENTY BIRD SPECIES OF NORTH AMERICA ALONE ARE THREATENED WITH EXTINCTION. THE RAIN FORESTS ARE HOSTS TO HALF OF ALL BIRD LIFE. BETWEEN TWENTY AND THIRTY MILLION BIRDS FLY SOUTH EACH AUTUMN, WHICH IS THE MOST EXTENSIVE AND OLDEST MIGRATION OF ANIMALS ON EARTH.

IF THE DEFORESTATION CONTINUES UNCHECKED FUTURE SPRINGS WILL GO UNSUNG.

- MPMc

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