

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Writing a letter to the editor is a wonderfully effective way of reaching thousands of newspaper readers about almost any political issue. Equally important, politicians keep a close watch on letters to the editor to monitor public opinion, and this directly affects the actions they will take. Furthermore, each newspaper gauges its readership's interest in various topics by reviewing letters to the editor, including those it does not print, and this, over time, affects what topics the newspaper actually covers. Editorial boards in particular keep a close watch on letters to the editor in determining topics on which to editorialize, and letters referring to current, printed editorials are especially noted to sense the climate of public opinion.

We've made the point that letters don't have to be published to have an effect. Still, publication is best and certainly reaches the maximum number of people. Here are a few rules to help assure that your letter will be selected:

- Use a hook. Always refer to and comment on an article or editorial that already appeared in the paper.
- Keep it short. Look at the letters published in the newspaper to which you're writing and stay within that length.
- Be emotive. Show that you care about and believe in what you are writing. If you're moved

or angry, get that on paper. Being funny, while harder to do, is also a big plus.

— Have a clear point and make it. Have someone else read your letter to check you on this one.

— Include an interesting fact or argument. Pick one that may be new to readers. The provocative and/or controversial is by no means out of the question.

— Be legible, and include your name, address and phone number to enable the editors to verify your letter. Your letter should be mailed to "Letters to the Editor" at your newspaper's address. National newspapers or national, regional or local magazines are fair game too, just remember you have to have a hook — some reference to an item previously published.

If you can get some friends to write to the same paper you have on the same subject, especially if this occurs over time with increasing numbers, it looks to the editors like a movement is emerging. And it is!

— CARLA COLE

Carla Cole writes for IN CONTEXT. She adapted this article from educational materials produced by RESULTS, a hunger lobbying group.

32 Don't buy third-world products. Especially plantation crops like coffee, cocoa and bananas that displace food production for local people, unless you know they were bought directly from small farmers.

33 Spend less money. The less you spend, the less you need to make and the more time you have available to talk, read, campaign, etc.

34 Earn less money. The less you earn, the lower your tax rate, and the less you support things like nuclear weapons programs.

35 Earn a lot less money. Many people arrange their lives so that they can live simply and pay no taxes at all, which has obvious political advantages (but might not endear you to taxpayers).

36 Earn more money, but live simply and give away the surplus cash to efforts to promote a sane and livable world.

37 Give away your inheritance. If you come into money, use it to support efforts to create change for the better. Or invest your money, live off the interest, and devote yourself to volunteer work.

38 Reclaim your inheritance. National forests, the airwaves, public parks — all of these belong to you. What would you like to do with them?

39 Use a condom. For lots of reasons. Protecting yourself from AIDS, reducing population, and reducing the chances of an unwanted birth are all profoundly political acts.

40 Adopt a politician. Write a monthly letter to your representative, senator or president. Invite a school board member to lunch. Sometimes making friends is the most politically effective thing you can do.

41 Eat lower on the food chain. Food is the most under-recognized confluence of the personal and political. Eating less meat will positively impact everything from your health to public land management.

42 Fly an Earth flag. National borders are human inventions, but the planet isn't. Pledge yourself to the service of your planet, bioregion, and community.

43 Write to foreign governments. Let them know that you care about what they do, and hold them to the same standards of human decency as you would hold your own government.

44 Write to your own government. Let them know you care about what they do, and hold them to the same standards of human decency as you would a foreign government.

45 Get rid of your television set. Spend the time you save on political activities. This is easily the most radical item on the list, as it involves permanently unplugging yourself from the national propaganda campaign we call advertising.

46 Watch television — critically. If you don't want to pull the plug (or want to plug back in), tune in with discrimination. You can learn wonderful things from TV and use it as a tool for political education, or you can pollute your brain and get drowned in propaganda. It's up to you.

47 Buy a share of stock. This entitles you to attend a company's annual meeting of stockholders, vote, and voice your opinion. Praise or chastise the company's directors, as appropriate.

48 Don't get mad, get involved. If you don't like something, work with others to try to change it. If you can't change the big things, change the small ones. Politics is not someone or something "out there" — it's something we create together.

49 Expect success. When you approach a problem expecting failure or defeat, you will be defensive, and that is more likely to generate opposition than if you demonstrate an expectation of cooperative problem-solving.

50 Don't worry, be happy. No, we're not kidding. "Worry" comes from an old Anglo-Saxon word meaning to choke, strangle, injure, or violate. Worrying doesn't do much political good. "Happy" — which comes from the same root as "happen" — is a state of mind. It's not about denying our problems, but deciding to do something about them with a creative mind, a compassionate heart, and a courageous spirit. Easy choice, right?

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1235 S. HEMLOCK
Cannon Beach
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PORCUPINE'S LOG

BY LARRY BARROWS

I found Porcupine hiding in the hollow of a huge log, muttering to himself. I asked him why. Porcupine said:

I watched it all and tried to stop it but I couldn't.

I saw the piece of sky hit Chicken Little. It just grazed his head. He was lucky, then his luck ran out.

He just looked at that piece of sky, then he yelled, the sky is falling! The sky is falling! Then he looked at me and said, what'll we do?

I expected it sooner or later, and sure enough. I told Chicken Little we had to do something, but we needed a plan. Think about it, be careful. Be very careful.

Chicken Little said, you were right Porkey Quarkey. I'm going to tell the others. I said, no, wait! But he ran off. Big mistake. I could only watch it happen.

You know the rest, up to a point. Chicken Little ran into Henny Penny and they ran to Cocky Locky, and then Ducky Daddles and Goosey Poosey and Turkey Lurkey and all and all.

I tried to catch up with them, but they moved too fast. I saw the signs and smelled the smells. Footprints, feathers, and stampeding off. Things were getting dangerous.

You see, it was Piggy Biggy making the sky fall. He's rooting too far under the big trees that hold up the sky. He's ruined too many. I said the sky could fall.

Piggy Biggy threw his weight around, got me back for saying so. I won't go into that, just that after he got done nobody believed me anymore about anything.

When I got to where they met up with Turkey Lurkey, it was a nightmare. Feathers everywhere, and pigprints all over the place. I could see what happened.

They were all telling Turkey Lurkey. They didn't see Piggy Biggy behind the big tree. He lumbered out and got near them.

I know Piggy Biggy, how he works. Probably acted scared, said, gosh, Porkey Quarkey was right. This is serious. All the time talking softer and softer. Probably said, we've got to put our heads together and set this right. Listen here, I've got an idea.

They all leaned in, put their heads together. One bite, he got them all. All six bloody heads laid there in a half circle. No bodies, and a single set of pigprints led away.

I followed them, right to Foxy Woxy's den. There they were. My six friends. And no Piggy Biggy.

I went back, heart-heavy, grieving. The heads were gone, and all signs wiped out. I went back more. The piece of sky was gone.

Piggy Biggy put out that story about the acorn falling on Chicken Little and them going to see the King and running into Foxy Woxy, who tricked them into his den. Ridiculous. They'd never go near Foxy Woxy, much less his very den.

But the creatures swallowed it whole. Seems they well know how smart they are and how stupid everybody else is. So it was easy to get them to believe a foolish story like that.

One of these days, it's going to be more than a bit of sky hits more than just one head. But don't look up. You could go blind.

Larry Barrows lives in Astoria. "Porcupine's Log" is from his "Stories Told Me."



Uriah's St. Diablo Jellies