

GROWING PAINS

Do you think communities should legally have the right to curb growth if it was the will of the voters? Currently, Oregon cities are required by law to accommodate anticipated growth. Every five years, cities have to assess their growth and availability of land inside the UGB, and make room for 20 years' worth of anticipated future growth. This law is the bread and butter for construction companies, real estate agents and others. If communities were able to stop growth, it would be a financial disaster for them.

But not everyone benefits from growth. It often hurts small businesses. It ends up costing existing residents more in taxes for additional services: schools, police and fire protection, roads, sewer lines, water treatment, etc. There's the loss of quality of life to communities from increased traffic, noise, and pollution, and a loss of natural land and open space, as well as an increase in resource consumption. Aren't we already consuming too much? Is it worth it?

Patrick Bronson
Eugene

SMUT SPARING

I have mixed feelings about the recent letters to the editor about sexually exploitive advertising in *EW*. Personally, I hate to see them, but at the same time I have never quite sorted out my feelings about journalistic freedom. However, those letters got me thinking. I am sure that if you were deluged with potential advertisers and had to pick your favorites, you would much rather run ads for local businesses! The economy has been tough for small businesses. Our business, the other contractors we work with, and the people we patronize, are all talking about ways to be creative in the current econ-

omy. It is tempting to save money by cutting our advertising budgets, but I think that it is more valuable to support our local business, and *EW*, by advertising with you. I have been around long enough to remember my shock when the *Willamette Valley Observer* went under. Then *What's Happening* started as a simple events schedule, but rapidly grew to be the insightful lifeline it is today. What would we do without you? I don't want to take you for granted. So Joe and I want to remind other local businesses to support *EW*, and just maybe you won't even need to run those smutty ads.

Cathy Boucher
Eugene

NAKED LUNCH

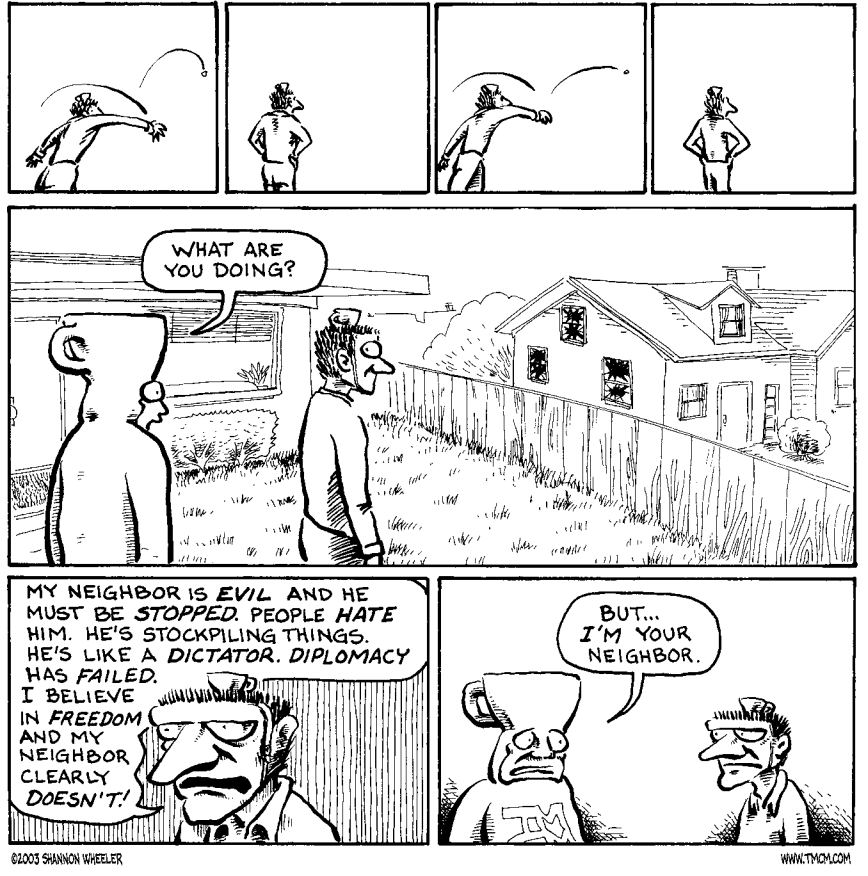
I love the CHOW! restaurant guide. I always look forward to each season's listings, articles and wonderful tidbits. However, I do have an opinion about the cover of the Spring edition. I am not a prude — far from it — but it's very unappetizing to me to see naked bodies on the front cover. I appreciate the artistic nature of the picture; however, I'd rather see flowers, or a restaurant, or people (dressed) having fun.

Chery Hunt
Eugene

FUELING WISDOM

Drilling in the pristine wilderness of the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge is not wise energy policy. The fact is we can save consumers billions of dollars while reducing our dependence on foreign oil, creating jobs and securing our energy future. It just takes a little of America's technological know-how to develop newer, cleaner sources of energy, and by making our cars, homes and appliances more energy efficient.

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



Increasing average fuel efficiency for new cars and light trucks to 39 miles per gallon over the next decade would save 51 billion barrels of oil over the next 50 years — more than 15 times the likely yield from the Arctic Refuge. This would save American consumers billions at the gas pump, while making our air healthier for our children to breathe. The amazing thing is that we can do this today, whereas even the oil industry admits it would take 10 long years before a drop of oil could be taken from the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

Congress can do so much more to encourage what is already happening in America's auto industry. Ford is planning to sell a hybrid model of its Escape SUV. Toyota and General Motors recently announced they are installing highly efficient hybrid engines in their SUVs as well. We need to get these powerful, safe, money-savers on the market sooner rather than later. And let's keep the drills and oil spills out of the wildlife-rich wilderness of the Arctic Refuge.

Kate Waterbury
Eugene

viewpoint BY TOM LININGER

Vice Squad

Where's the virtue in vice revenue?



Last month the Lane County Board of Commissioners passed a resolution acknowledging "Problem Gambling Awareness Week." We spoke solemnly about the social harms caused by gambling. We learned about the high rate of suicide attempts by gamblers.

Where did we hold this ceremony? In the same room where county commissioners meet to divide up nearly \$1 million in proceeds that we receive each year from state-sanctioned gambling.

The commissioners all voiced their concern for the 7,000 gambling addicts in Lane County, but let's be honest — it seems a little disingenuous when the farmer pets the pig who will be breakfast tomorrow. Our superego counsels mercy, but our id wants bacon.

Meanwhile, some legislators in Salem have proposed expanding state-sponsored gambling. The introduction of video slot machines might generate another \$80 million for state government. Oregon now offers more types of gambling than any other state except for Nevada. Any time our state is chasing Nevada for a record, we should be worried. (By the way, when will we catch up to Mississippi and Arkansas in funding our schools with conventional taxes?)

As you can tell, I'm no fan of state-sponsored gambling, but the subject that irks me most is our love-hate relationship with the tobacco industry. In the late

1990s, most states sued the tobacco companies for damages caused by cigarettes. This suit culminated in a nationwide settlement providing each state with a revenue stream that will continue indefinitely. Oregon gets about \$75 million a year from this settlement.

The catch is that our share of the settlement will grow or shrink depending on the earnings of the tobacco industry. In proportion to our success in discouraging kids from smoking, the tobacco industry will lose money, and the future payments to states will decrease. This settlement was a pretty shrewd move by the tobacco executives. They're daring the government to bite the hand that feeds it.

So far, the government isn't biting too hard. Last week Washington's Attorney General Christine Gregoire held a press conference urging a judge in Illinois to take it easy on the tobacco industry. The judge was trying to require that Phillip Morris (now known as Altria) pay a \$12 billion bond in order to appeal a defeat in a recent lawsuit. Gregoire argued that by requiring such a large bond, the Illinois judge "could deal a significant, unnecessary financial blow to the states" who have relied on Phillip Morris as their cash cow.

The Wall Street Journal observed that state governments "are poised to rescue the country's biggest cigarette maker in one of its darkest hours." Friends helping friends — kinda makes you misty-eyed, doesn't it? You almost forget that a few years ago, the states were arguing that the tobacco industry heartlessly caused thousands of deaths.

Our dependence on vice to fund our government has become an embarrassment. The next time the Board of County Commissioners elects a vice chair, we should assign that commissioner the duty befitting his title — monitoring the county's income derived from vice.

Tom Lininger is the county commissioner for the East Lane District, and is the former Chair of the Tobacco Settlement Advisory Task Force.



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