

Yes, you and your "righteous majority" have the right or privilege to be there, or as it says in the Constitution (which the left says is so recklessly thrown aside), "the right to peaceably assemble." But the police also have the right, the second gatherings go south, to step in and, as they say, "serve and protect."

James Ready
Springfield

CRITICAL OF CRITIC

It is time to say something! I've let this go on for too long. What of this so-called film critic of yours, Lois Wadsworth? If she's wise, this is an alias. I have always questioned why critics think they should exist. However, if a publication decides to have such a thing, how about a critic that writes well and knows what he or she is writing about? In the case of *EW*, both qualities are missing.

This is not about disagreeing with the opinion of the film subject. It's about reviews that read like book reports. If one doesn't know anything about the art of filmmaking, they can just write a bad synopsis of the plot, and as a bonus, give away the ending! This fills space. Then make up some absurd angle about the characters that no one understands. If the readers don't get it, that's OK because it might confuse them into thinking the "critic" knows something they don't. Therefore, it's profound. Also be sure to leave out anything about the making of the picture, as this might confuse things (and give away the fact that the writer doesn't know anything). Then, publish the review two weeks after the film's opening after everyone has already seen it!

I just love the boldface "BORING" in the review of *Phone Booth* in the 4/17 issue. Ms.

Wadsworth must be making a statement about herself! I do appreciate honesty in a person. (This is a *good* film by the way.) Isn't it time to hire someone who is knowledgeable about film making and is a competent writer?

Dub Taylor
Cottage Grove

PEOPLE'S PAPER

The part of *EW* I usually find the most fascinating is the Letters section. This past week, I checked out the "Web Letters" as well, and found that, with only one or two exceptions, they were just as well-written, cogent and valuable as the ones to which you allotted space in the print edition. I'd like to suggest that you print more of these letters, to help make the *Weekly* truly the "people's paper."

What should you cut to make room for this? While I appreciate the work and perspectives of Tony Corcoran and Tom Lininger, I hardly need to hear from them every week; once a month would be fine. The new "Music at the Clubs" format takes twice as much space and is much more difficult to read than the old grid-style calendar. By paring some of this fat, you'd have room to give more voice to diverse community members. On behalf of the many talented and passionate letter-writers who contribute to *EW* (or attempt to), thanks for considering this plea.

Chris Roth
Dexter

EDITOR'S NOTE: For the record, our new Clubs listings and photos actually take up the same space as the old grid. Also, Corcoran only writes when the Legislature is in session, and Lininger's days on the commission are numbered.

Right to Know

Why must we defend common sense?

The powerful lobby organization, Associated Oregon Industries (AOI), was not happy in 1996 when Eugene's citizens voted to grant themselves the right to find out what toxic chemicals are produced, stored, and dumped into their air and water by local manufacturers. Even then-Governor Kitzhaber, a physician, opined that only the state, not a local community, should grant that right.



In other words, Eugene shouldn't give workers at St. Vincent de Paul's facility on 7th and Seneca the ability to find out what chemicals are making some of them keep their office windows closed, and might be causing the headaches some experience at work. As it turns out, in 2002 Lanz Cabinet across the street released 60 tons of acetone and more than 18 tons of butyl acetate (along with 37 other chemicals) into the air St. Vincent de Paul's 80 workers breathe. Both acetone and butyl acetate are toxic to human nervous, gastrointestinal, and respiratory systems.

In 2002, 360 tons of 36 manufacturers' toxic chemicals filled the air breathed by residents in Lanz Cabinet's zip code (97402). By comparison, one ton was released in the air around the UO (i.e., zip code 97403)*. (However, the UO, a state institution that Eugene's law can't govern, has refused to voluntarily report its toxics use and releases. The city of Eugene, although not a manufacturer, voluntarily reports.)

At the behest of AOI and the Semiconductor Industry Association, the 1999 Legislature created Oregon Statute 453.370. This law made it virtually impossible for any other Oregon community to establish their right to know about local toxic exposures. The state law also capped program fees at \$2,000 per company for Eugene's program starting in 2004. This means, in order to cover costs of the program, small companies of 10 workers will annually pay as much as \$200 per full-time worker, while the largest companies (e.g., Hynix) will pay less than \$3 per worker. Currently, every manufacturer is paying \$13.92 per worker. The state law is also requiring that Eugene "provide an opportunity for written and oral public comment" on its program**, as if voting for it had not been comment enough.


I believe the right to know about toxic exposures should be recognized as a human right. But "rights" never exist as an indisputable fact, such as "There is a mountain here in front of us." Instead, human communities, with broad or constricted participation, decide which human rights they will grant or deny. Sometimes we even decide to recognize that other species have some rights, for instance, to not be purposefully driven extinct. President Bush's administration seems particularly focused on taking rights away, for instance diminishing the Bill of Rights via the PATRIOT Act, and eliminating the current requirement that the Forest Service insure the survival of native plant and animal species residing in national forests.

Communities (whether local, national, or international) define themselves by which and whose rights they acknowledge and deliver. A student's right to learn art as well as take math tests? A corporation's right to pollute ancient plants and animals with engineered genes? A child's right to play in a field free of land mines? A wolf's right to return to Oregon? A released felon's right to vote? A corporation's right to buy an election? A president's right to invade and occupy a country?

At the moment, there may be no more urgent task in front of each of us than to consider what rights our community, nation, and world should be delivering, to whom; and to gain, restore, and protect those rights. I suggest two particular guidelines: 1) prioritize rights for the most vulnerable humans, not the most powerful; and 2) consider the long-term rights of other species who, like us, call this planet home.

* The clever and user-friendly charts and right-to-know reports on www.ci.eugene.or.us/toxics provided the above information about Lanz Cabinet toxics, pollution by zip code, and health effects data.

** I do urge you to let the Toxics Board know on or before May 5 that you support Eugene's toxics reporting program. See news item, page 8. Mary O'Brien has worked as a public interest scientist for the past 21 years. She can be reached at mob@efn.org



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