

COPS OUT OF CONTROL

After reading Ben Fogelson's Commentary (4/17), I was once again appalled by the behavior of the Eugene Police Department.

And then, five days later, I was witness to an even more ridiculous display of officer overkill and waste of public money by the EPD.

Following an Earth Day rally calling for the cancellation of the Clark/Fall Creek timber sale, 10 citizens on bicycles decided to leave the Federal Building and peacefully ride over to visit the new urban tree-sit at the base of Skinners Butte, just a few short blocks away.

They never made it.

After turning onto 4th Avenue off High Street, the law-abiding bicyclists were surrounded by 30 police cruisers and motorcycles. The 10 bicyclists were all cited with disorderly conduct and two were arrested. They were harassed, intimidated, and threatened with arrest unless they supplied their Social Security numbers. According to a local attorney I consulted, an officer demanding a person's Social Security number is against the law. Ironic.

The Eugene Police Department is out of control!

A local woman elder walking by the scene couldn't have summed it up better: "Why don't they [the EPD] go solve a crime?"

*Leeanne Siart
Eugene*

EDITOR'S NOTE: See story and photo in EW last week.

HEART POLITICS

We've seen in Iraq the awesome effectiveness of U.S. military power in destroying enemy forces — a testimony to American problem-solving ingenuity. I feel no sense of

triumph, only grief and frustration. The times we live in and the needs of people and the planet are crying out for us to use our ingenuity and resources in service to life and the human heart.

With the \$30 million that's Eugene's initial share of the costs for this war, we could restore city and school programs to what they were before all the cuts of the last few years.

With the \$100 billion or more cost of destroying and rebuilding Iraq, we could extend health insurance to three million Americans for a decade. For 10 percent of our annual military budget, according to U.N. estimates, we could provide food, clean water, sanitation, basic health care and basic education for all those in need in the disadvantaged world.

It's time to stop wasting resources on fear-driven agendas, and look around the world to see what needs doing and pitch in. We could become a world leader in the inevitable growth sector of alternative energy, in environmental restoration know-how, in low-resource-use housing, in hydrogen-based transportation. If I were governor, or city manager, those are the kinds of businesses I would try to foster here.

We could initiate talks on ending world trade in offensive weapons systems. We could challenge the world to match us in solving basic needs among the disadvantaged. If we did these things, we'd create so much goodwill, we could let our military budget wither away and still have greater security than we do now. We need a politics from the heart. We don't have time to waste.

*Michael Wherley
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SMITH'S AGENDA

We all are aware of the atrocities suffered



by the native peoples of this land. Many of us agree that reparations are in order, especially when it comes to issues of land. What many of us may not be aware of however is that Senator Smith is wanting to transfer 62,000 acres of forest in the Siuslaw National Forest to the BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs).

The credibility of the BIA is highly questionable. In 2000-2001 they illegally clear-cut ancient forests in the Chu-aw-Clau-she Timber Sale under the premise that their sovereignty

outweighed their legal obligations to sound forest management.

This may seem like a heartfelt motion, but it is not as good as it seems. If this land "gift" takes place, it means many things. Representing a sovereign nation, the BIA would not have to offer access to the public, follow environmental regulations outlined in the Northwest Forest Plan, or continue the successful attempts at salmon and forest restoration taking place in the Siuslaw. There is also

viewpoint BY GREG McLAUHLAN

Will White Bird Fly?

Cuts threaten essential services to county's most vulnerable.

Imagine this: You dial 911 and get a recording "we're sorry, 911 only accepts calls from 8-5, please call back during normal business hours. We accept Visa, Mastercard, and American Express." Far fetched? Not if you're one of the thousands of homeless, mentally ill or medically indigent Lane County residents who use the services at White Bird Clinic every year. White Bird is their 911.

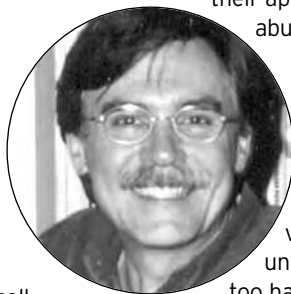
When these folks call 911, they get patched into the White Bird crisis line. When Lane County Mental Health closes at 5 pm, their phone message says "call White Bird." Hundreds of psychologists, sheriffs and other professionals reach for White Bird in their Rolodexes every year.

When my friend Norman Riddle called and said White Bird was in trouble, I knew it was serious. Norman, a member of the Klamath Nation, has been a counselor at White Bird for the last 14 years. Norman is usually unflappable. He's seen just about every kind of crisis imaginable, and in his community activism he takes a philosophical view, tempered by the knowledge that change takes time and that you always need to have a sense of humor. Norman was worried, a bad sign.

White Bird's services are threatened by the same state budget axe that is chopping away at schools and human services. And the Legislature and Governor so far are unwilling to consider replacement revenue sources to make up for losses caused by the slow economy and an unbalanced tax system. White Bird's 24-hour crisis line could lose a third or more of its funding, forcing it to lay off staff and limit its hours.

We're on the way to becoming a society where even life-and-death emergency services are only available to those with insurance or the ability to pay. It's called rationing by social class.

I met Wren Arrington and Jose Alvarez at White Bird's converted bungalow in the West Campus neighborhood. With four other staffers and a dozen trained volunteers,



they provide counseling to people in need of immediate help 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Arrington says they're prepared to handle almost anything — "sometimes people call and are suicidal, with the gun on their lap; others are having a mental health crisis and they've lost their meds, or maybe a housing crisis and they just lost their apartment. Some have eating disorders, or are sexual assault or child abuse victims".

They often get 30-40 calls per day, plus walk-ins. Their job is to intervene in those critical minutes that can make all the difference. Among their many cases in the last several weeks was the mom whose son had overdosed on pills and booze; they looked up the needed medical information on the Internet while getting the Cahoots van to take her son to the hospital. Two persons called saying they were on the verge of cutting themselves to provide some distraction from their unbearable emotional pain. A developmentally disabled man said it was too hard to come out of his home to deal with day-to-day living needs, and needed help.

You want to see living saints? They're right here in Eugene. But White Bird staff would be the last to call attention to what they're doing. They often put in 50 hours a week (getting paid for 40) — it's a labor of love and the kind of job that's hard to leave when things get busy. And given all the talk about providing public services more efficiently, with trained volunteers helping them on the phones 24 hours a day "the public gets a lot of bang for its buck" says Arrington.

On the wall in White Bird's living-room style front room is a large inscription: "White Bird is a collective environment organized to enable people to gain control of their social, emotional, and physical well-being." Maybe we should carve it in stone above the entrance to the state Capitol, substituting "Oregon" for White Bird. A reminder of what government is for.

Give our governor and legislators a call, and tell them it is simply unacceptable for those most in need to dial 911 — and get a recording.

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