

LOVE'S LABOR LOANED

As a former professional stage manager and member of Actor's Equity, I would like to offer my perspective on the issues raised in "To Pay or Not to Pay" (New, 5/8). I do not doubt that Willamette Repertory Theatre (WRT) is financially strapped due to the current economic crisis. This fact does not release them from their legal and ethical responsibility to honor their contracts, whether with union or non-union actors or workers of any profession. Mr. Brandt says he "feels bad" about WRT's inability to follow through on these signed contracts, and Mr. Boyd assures us that they are not trying to "screw anybody." That's good to know. However, it is telling that WRT admits to hiring more non-union actors because they are cheaper. It appears there is the added advantage of it being easier to break their contracts.

Salary is not the only difference between union and non-union actors. Union contracts protect actors from abusive scheduling while providing for health insurance and retirement benefits. And the benefit works both ways. A union actor has a contractual obligation to perform to a certain standard. If they fail to meet this obligation they can be fined and sanctioned by the union. If WRT makes a habit of paying their actors late, they may find themselves scrambling to replace a non-union actor on opening night; after all, if WRT is not obligated to follow through with a contractual deadline, why should actors be so obliged?

Semi-professional actors such as Mr. Shaw perform a service for the public and the theater company with which they work. They deserve to be paid in a timely manner for this service. For almost 10 years I worked in union and non-union theater venues. I saw firsthand the value of union protection in the

face of artistic excess and fiscal mismanagement. I encourage Mr. Shaw and his colleagues to join Actor's Equity and receive the full protection and benefits of a union contract. In addition, I hope the Willamette Repertory Theatre will end this practice of balancing their budget on the backs of the very performers who are bringing in their audience.

Claire Syrett
Eugene

GIVE BACK FORESTS

I was saddened to read Ray Cole's letter in your May 8 issue. In it, he suggests that Sen. Gordon Smith's drive to return national forest land to the tribes of the Coos and Lower Umpqua is basically a sham.

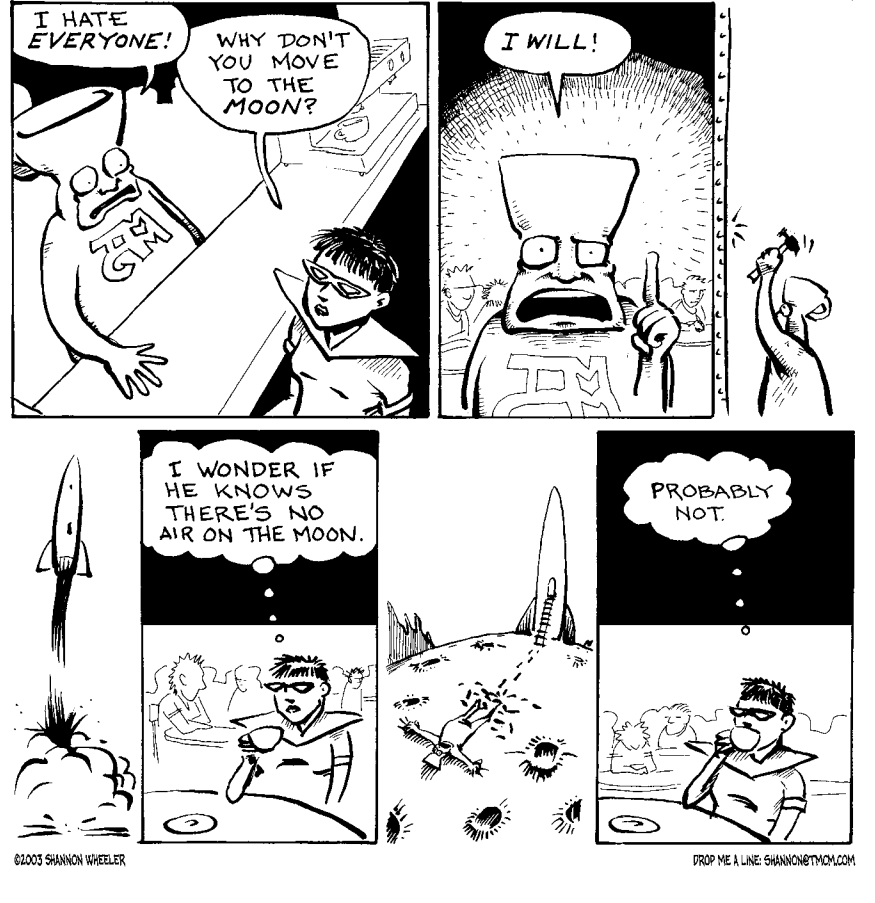
There's more to the story here than timber sales. Cole fails to mention that this land was stolen from the tribes in a blatant lawless action by the United States. Smith is trying to right a past wrong and return this land to the people who have been a part of it for thousands of years. Cole suggests that the tribes cannot be trusted to care for the land that we stole from them!

Although it's not comfortable to admit, we must acknowledge that large swaths of our national forests were illegally taken from native peoples by force or by broken treaty. Our government's policies have destroyed native culture and thrown native peoples off their own land. If we are to be a nation that respects the rule of law then we must admit our mistakes and make corrective action.

The next time you ponder this issue, try another approach. Would you be opposed if the property in question was looted art from World War II being returned to its rightful owners? Of course not. Then what's the difference here?

I am not a Republican, and I did not vote

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



for Smith. However, I must give credit where it is due and admit that he is doing the right thing.

Chuck Fee
Eugene

STOP OBJECTIFICATION

Like many others, I do find that the objectification of women in media is harmful, frightening many a child into becoming a young woman who is too afraid to be all she can be, you know? And sticks up for her own

ideas, dreams and what is true for her.

In the May 8 EW, these things objectify women, in my eye and mind: the picture of folk musician Dar Williams on the top of page 27, the Hot Body Club ad on page 30 and the Silver Dollar Club ad on page 31. The last two objectify through the photos and through the nature of the business advertised. The group of ads on the bottom of page 39 do not seem to me to objectify through the images, but definitely through the nature of the business advertised.

INSIDER BASEBALL BY TONY CORCORAN



SARS and Lars

One is a deadly virus.

Unfortunately, you've become the poster child of what the states are going through. Oregon has been known as a place that always aimed for a high quality of public service and education and environment, and to see what has happened now is very dispiriting because of where it's happened.

— David Broder, Washington Post Columnist (Register-Guard)

After five sessions, I've come to appreciate the ritual surrounding the May 15th presentation of the revised revenue forecast by Dr. Tom Potiowsky, our state economist. Although the ethnic neighborhoods of Salem surround the capitol with surnames like Kulongoski and Potiowsky and Prozanski, an occasional Irishman can sneak in.

Hearing Room A is packed with lobbyists and citizens, paparazzi, TV cameras, and clicking Canons. The House Revenue Committee invites the Senate Revenue Committee over for a joint presentation. The lights are dimmed, candles are lit, and in walks His Eminence, the state economist, wearing robes and a wizard hat that looks from a distance like a dunce cap. His chief executioner, Michael Kennedy, another economist in a Darth Vader costume, trails Potiowsky flinging rose pedals.

I'm so busy soaking in the pomp and circumstance that I miss Dr. Tom's allusion, in one of his geopolitical incantations, to a new variable in the mix: "Did you say Lars or SARS?" I asked. "They are synonymous," the witch doctor explained "One is a deadly virus which lives in sewers and kills the hosts — it can devour an entire state — and it's spread by mouth. The other is an infectious respiratory disease."

Seriously, it was pretty amazing to hear SARS listed for the first time in a revenue forecast as a factor. Another new word we heard for the first time was "deflation" — the opposite of inflation — the phenomenon of downward-spiraling prices and wages that Japan's been dealing with for the last decade. For the first time in my five sessions, deflation is discussed as a possibility.

Overall, the forecast is devastating: We're an additional \$60 million short for this biennium — with only June left until the '03-'05 biennium starts July 1. For the next biennium we take an additional \$650 million drop, this on top of the \$1.1 billion we've cut already since the last regular session. This is called the "close of session" forecast, the one upon which we base the next biennium budget. Dr. Tom boldly predicts that in 26 months the general fund will have \$9.8 billion — when he did this little exercise exactly two years ago, he thought we'd have \$11.5 billion. If he underestimates the future by 2 percent, the kicker kicks in; if he overestimates, we have a hole in our budget. Since his prediction calls for very slow growth for the next two years in Oregon's economy — and even though we're technically down \$3.1 billion from providing the same level of services we proposed in July of 2001 — we could still have a kicker.

The building is in shock; House Republicans are freaking out. They've been in control of the Oregon House since 1991; they've been warned repeatedly that we are over-dependent on the income tax, and that an economic downturn would be disastrous. But they're still trying to buy their last margarita as the Titanic goes down. Even the governor, who's been quiet until now, says, "I think there is consensus in the building that there will be additional revenue." The speaker, however, was in "virtual hiding" — whatever that means — and refused to meet with reporters to answer questions or to comment on her caucus' willingness to allow revenue-raising bills, or to allow measures that cut tax breaks, out of House Revenue. According to the Oregon Constitution, revenue bills can only originate in the House.

Meanwhile, Republicans from both chambers are nervously approaching their Democratic colleagues asking us to "give us your number." In other words, what is your bottom line for accepting the budget cuts we'd have to consider if we don't raise enough revenue? My response is simple, I'm not voting on a budget that cuts any lower than we cut when we left here after the second Special Session. I want to restore what we've cut since — whether it's K-12, community colleges and higher ed, public safety or human services.

I tell the Republicans very calmly: no, I'm not giving you a "number," I'm telling you what services I won't leave the building without. This could be a long summer.

Sen. Tony Corcoran of Cottage Grove represents portions of Lane and Douglas counties in Senate District 4, which includes the UO area. He can be reached at sen.tonycorcoran@state.or.us