

SUVs OR EDUCATION?

When our Legislature began "handling" the fate of human services and children's programs, I was first amused, then dismayed, now furious. Every faction in Salem seems to want to finger-point and place blame instead of digging in and doing the dirty work. I can't believe there isn't full and resounding support for educational programs, especially.

My children are grown and out of the school system, but I can't help but be alarmed that children attending school right now are not receiving a varied and well balanced, adequate education. After all, in a few years I will be living, as a senior, under the laws they make as adults for our welfare. I want to make sure these people have a compassionate, intelligent educational experience.

The money is there! According to AFL-CIO information, Oregon hands out in tax benefits more than it collects. A lot of these tax breaks are given for worthy and honorable reasons that benefit all of society. For instance, it makes sense to provide tax breaks to promote home ownership. But, does it make sense to extend that benefit to vacation homes and mansions? Does it make sense to allow "writing off" all of the personal vehicles and SUVs that are technically owned by corporations? Couldn't people in the corporate world use smaller cars? Upon examination, there are many such "loopholes" that could be closed — to provide money for children!

I urge each person to write his or her state legislators. Let them know that there are people in their districts interested in children's educational programs. I've heard so often that the children are our future — let's make it a bright one.

*Linda Zimmerman
Eugene*

ANGRY GREEN GIANT

I think we would all agree that violence is an epidemic in our country. On June 20, a movie came out that epitomizes this sense of violence. This movie, "Hulk," depicts a man that, when provoked, turns green and violently rages against those who have done him "wrong." One of the primary audiences of this movie are young boys. This type of modeling is irresponsible and despicable. We, as parents, have a responsibility to not fund such endeavors and take a stand against this type of media. I call on all parents to realize that by supporting a hero who uses violence to solve problems, we are teaching them that volatility is the best technique when dealing with life stresses. We are training our boys to hide all their feelings with rage, learn to parent with violent discipline and possibly become future domestic abusers and rapists.

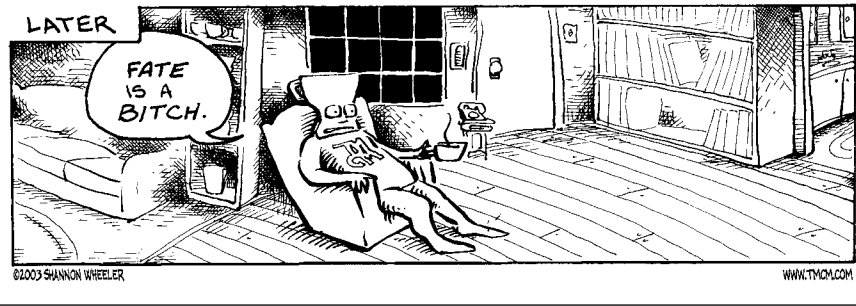
This movie is geared towards our youngest and most impressionable. Don't let them see the movie, don't buy the pajamas, don't buy the merchandise. Take time with your kids, monitor what goes into their lives. Teach them to verbalize their feelings, not use their fists. I guarantee you will be happy you did.

*Brian Ellis
Eugene*

DICK & DONALD SHOW

Rigorously reared in the "kinder, gentler" new world order of his dad, we find Bush Jr. using our military to satisfy a family vendetta. Most of our allies recoil in shock and awe as this trigger-happy Bible-thumper tests his infernal superpowers. Vacuous but lethal, he is the perfect frontman for that malignant Dick & Donald show. Oil and arms are their meal tickets in the private sector, while in the public sector their mission is providing a war that accelerates deficit spending. Our future (virtual) tax

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



dollars are promised to favored corporations now and our children will pay for our excesses later.

Ken Lay was probably on Cheney's secret energy committee, showing Dick how to do America, Enron style. Halliburton's no-bid contract to repair the Iraqi oil fields is just drippin' with conflicts of interest. These duplicitous poseurs were installed by a supreme clique of gavel swingers who grew impatient with our electoral procedures, and that's not democracy. This administration's collapse will be a cathar-

tic experience for America and a relief for the rest of the world.

*Chris N. Hallett
Eugene*

CASINO CONCERNS

Concerning the proposed casino near Florence being promoted by the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua and Siuslaw. I think it's important that we separate the demeaning community dis-service of casino gambling from the legitimate public debate surrounding

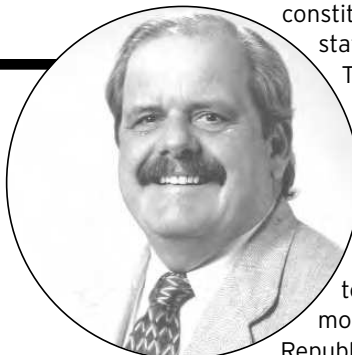
INSIDER BASEBALL BY TONY CORCORAN

You Talkin' to Me?
A fill-in-the-blanks as the session drags on.

Oregon has a "citizen" Legislature, we're not professional politicians; we meet six months (or so) out of every two years and go back to our "day jobs" when the session is over. Last Friday, we chose to freeze our wages at \$1,283 a month; it seemed only right since we proposed freezing the salaries and step increases for teachers and state workers. Oregon also has a tradition of legislators employing family — whether it's a spouse, a child, nieces or nephews, grandkids — as part of that citizen legislature. I had the rare pleasure of having my son, Simon, work with me this session for the first 5-1/2 months as my legislative assistant; he's now at the UO. When he asked me for the job last December, I had misgivings; my experience with the last four legislative assistants I've had and the personal grief they took because they worked for such an obstreperous blankety-blank. It was not always a pretty picture.

Think about it, having to react to the hits I take for taking on the corporations, the radical right no-tax-know-nothings, the Right-to-Lifers, and the folks who are trying to create an evangelical church-state. LA's tend to be defensive of their boss, and I've had to instruct each of them: That's not your job. Staff are to act as a conduit, a wall, a sieve — an office manager — making sure my schedule is updated and my bills are pulled for each of my four committees and the Senate floor. Their job is to arrange meetings, take notes in policy meetings when I'm not available, and keep me aware of what they're hearing in the halls of the Capitol. Above all, they are there to take care of constituent questions and concerns.

I've been blessed with incredible staff and interns. My in-district assistant Diana Chambers has been with me since the beginning — I inherited her from my predecessor in the House, Sam Dominy. I hesitate to call her an antique, but she's been around the process for the past 20 years. She could write a book on



constituent services; she knows every nook and cranny of the state bureaucracy. From Sean Smith, to Wayne Clark, to Tamara Brickman and Maija Gunderson, my Salem staff for the past four sessions were stars and they've all gone on to bigger and better things.

Simon handled his job well. Unlike his father, Simon is low-keyed, organized (sorta), quick on the uptake with a quiet sense of humor. He handled the PERS attacks against me pretty well, but I could tell he took it personally and he hated that part. His funniest, most frustrated moment came when a freshman

Republican member of the House called me a Big Fat P---- in front of a bunch of lobbyists in the hallway one day. Hint: "prince" is six letters, not five. The word got back to Simon, and he confronted me with what had happened:

"What are you gonna do about this stupid jerk? He can't get away with this." I thought for a second and said, "Make me an appointment with the young rookie, I'll go tell him it's not dignified to call people names like that in this building. That should only be done at Magoo's." Simon was outraged: "Make an appointment! Are you nuts? Why don't you hold a press conference and call him a p---k?" Hint: "punkinhead" doesn't end with a k. Needless to say, having grown up in the same household, Simon was not used to seeing a lot of maturity in the old man, so this one took him a few days to compute.

But what I really liked was steeping Simon in Salem's stew; he got exposed to all the issues out there in a short time period, and I think it was a huge eye-opener to him. He went from having opinions about issues to engaging the 600 registered lobbyists who could argue any side of those issues. Up close and personal, he got to see these lobbyists, these special interest groups, the other legislators — the good guys and the bad guys. Simon had an uncanny knack for distinguishing between them early on. I think the experience made him understand how Oregon's political process works. Bowling pins and all. That's an invaluable lesson.

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