

Brewhaha

Beer tax faces opposition.



I loved the headline in *The Oregonian* editorial April 28: "Beer is the Answer." Hear, hear! Now what was the question?

The Oregonian was considering various means for raising revenue in Oregon, and the newspaper endorsed a proposal to increase the beer tax (among other options). By raising this tax a few cents, the state could generate about \$100 million in new revenue, along with \$28 million in federal matching funds. This money would be used for alcohol and drug treatment, mental health treatment and law enforcement. Oregon's beer tax is now the third lowest in the nation, and it hasn't been increased since 1977.

Last week Commissioner Bobby Green and I attended a press conference in Salem to promote the proposed increase in the beer tax. Every speaker began by answering the question, "Where were you in 1977?" Bobby said that at this time in 1977, he had just graduated from UO and was about to marry: "Beer and wine never tasted so good." Bobby eloquently explained why Lane County needs the revenue that a higher beer tax would generate. He pointed out that hundreds of county residents have been denied treatment for alcohol dependency, drug addiction and mental illness over the last year. (I'm glad that I wasn't on the speaker list, because in 1977, I was an 11-year-old kid who wore bell-bottom jeans, worshipped Farah Fawcett Majors, and loitered at the disco-skating rink.)

The press conference ended with a speech by Sen. Bill Morrisette, who co-authored the proposal to increase the beer tax. Bill is a masterful legislator. He's tried to increase the beer tax in prior sessions, and this time he improved the odds by assembling a group of moderate legislators — a "mod squad," in Salem parlance — to endorse the proposal. No one should be surprised by Bill's poise in front of the TV cameras: This is the guy who upstaged Charlton Heston with his cameo in Michael Moore's latest movie, *Bowling for Columbine*, which won an Academy Award.

The beer lobby strenuously opposes the tax increase. To hear the lobbyists talk, you'd think that we're treating Joe Six-Pack like Joe Camel. But this tax doesn't aim to punish beer drinkers or change behavior. The tax just seeks to recover some of the costs that alcohol abuse imposes on the rest of society. I'm sure there are a few zealots chanting "Give me cheap beer or give me death," but a poll in Oregon showed that 80 percent of the respondents would support this tax increase. The major newspapers, including *The Register-Guard*, are also backing the proposal.

The beer lobbyists say that the new tax would force the closure of some small breweries in Oregon. I'm not sure why Oregon's small breweries require the third-lowest tax rate in the nation to survive. In any event, proponents of the new beer tax are considering the possibility of reducing the tax for small producers. And when I hear the suggestion that Budweiser needs a lower tax in Oregon than in 46 other states, I can't help but say, "WASSSSUP?!!!" (That's a reference to a Budweiser ad that appeared virtually every 10 minutes on sports broadcasts last year. The advertising budgets for big breweries make me confident that they're not on the verge of closing if Oregon imposes the same beer tax that other states have imposed.)

I'll do my best to hold local breweries harmless by increasing my consumption of Oregon microbrews once the new beer tax takes effect. And if the mis-sus complains, I'll say I'm just doing my part for mental health.

Tom Lininger is the county commissioner for the East Lane District.

or monthly fees and receive fresh fish. The fishing boat operators get an economic safety net. This works quite well for some family organic farms in the Willamette Valley.

*Denny Guehler
Eugene*

world to view the creative ideas that are being implemented. To strike a blow for the worlds forests, support sustainable agriculture and forestry and urban and family planning.

*Monty Wilson
Blue River*

BRING IT ON

I would like to begin by thanking *EW* for its nice cover article on BRING Recycling (5/29). The chair with all the tools shown was one of my chairs. It was a pleasant surprise to see it in print, thanks.

As someone who volunteers, shops at and donates to BRING. I wish to say that I totally support BRING and all the wonderful things it provides for this community. I also support wholeheartedly the ideals and vision of those presently leading BRING. I greatly look forward to their future relocation in Glenwood, the plans are quite exciting and work on the first building has begun.

Charging minimal fees for your products sounds nice, until you realize even a non-profit needs funds to pay its employees and provide benefits, as well as supply educational programs. In my opinion, to undercharge for nice reused materials is to devalue it, which is exactly the wrong message to send. Deconstructing lumber entails disassembly, denailing, cleaning, sorting and stocking. All these value added costs have to be added to the retail cost to allow BRING to continue financially.

I see reuse being done on many different levels, neighbor to neighbor, dumpster-diving or non-profits such as St. Vincent dePaul, BRING and MECCA (through reused art supplies), to mention a few.

I would like to thank all those who contribute so much to make BRING what it is and to ask those who are less familiar with BRING to pick up a newsletter or talk with someone about what BRING is and what it will be in the future. I will be helping at the BRING booth at the Country Fair, stop by and visit and talk about reuse and voluntary simplicity circles with me.

*Tim Boyden
Eugene*

BOOKSTORE STRUGGLE

Bobbie Willis' article (6/12) on the establishment of a union by the staff at Mother Kali's Books was welcome, but incomplete in important ways. A fuller picture would have resulted had she not only spoken to current bookshop personnel but taken the time to interview the former staff and manager who advocated for a change throughout a long and painful struggle with a one-person board and who were eventually replaced with the current bookshop manager and staff. (One worker chose to remain outside the conflict.) While the former staff's experiences were and remain silenced, it was their as yet unreported struggle that resulted in the current staff's privilege of being heard by the community and their ability to unionize with the approval of a new board.

Willis' erroneous description of a "wildcat strike" by the former workers during the "height of the September textbook rush" distorts events that should have been researched. By simply repeating this version of the story, Willis has unwittingly but harmfully fed accusations of irresponsibility that were leveled at the time by the board and the community itself against the workers and against manager Tova Stabin, whose forced removal without grounds was only one of several major issues the staff was protesting.

Willis is correct, however, that "restitution" has not yet been made to any of the people whose positions are now held by the current staff and manager and who paid with their jobs and reputations for the changes that the store so proudly announces now.

*Ellen Rifkin
Eugene*

CALL TO (LOCK) ARMS

These are days when it seems sanity has left us. Many Americans live afraid of tomorrow. Our civic neurosis is maintained by being kept living in a constant state of color-coded mental emergency. The besieged mind retreats into thinking only of base human needs: safety and security. Leaders who promise to provide and protect these needs are then revered.

However, it is during times like these that enormous change is possible. Humans are only willing to change if they are uncomfortable, and, for one reason or another, most Americans are not at all comfortable with what they see happening to their country.

We're discovering that more security does not make us more secure. We're realizing that respect garnered out of fear is not admiration. We're remembering that in all human history, war has never really brought the promised peace. And, as always, we're hoping for someone else to come along and make it all better. But there is no one else.

Our nation is at the intersection of restoration and decline. It is up to each of us to restore America to its founding ideals. It is up to all of the many divergent progressive interest groups that collectively represent the majority of Americans. It is up to all of us who have rested satisfied in being right while those in power have remained busy being in control. It is time to coalesce else we remain powerless to stop the decline. It is time for us to take back America.

*Todd Huffman, MD
Eugene*

RENEWABLE FORESTS

Quality Northwest federal forests are being conserved through preservation, restrictive environmental regulations, sound science and evolving forest management that uses natural disturbance regimes, diverse rotations and, above all, a veneration for all forest values.

Forests are among the most renewable resources on earth. The use of wood encourages the growing of trees and that assures that forestlands will not be converted to other uses. Ninety percent of the deforestation occurring in the world is from urban and agricultural expansion.

Forests are not inert, they are born, they grow and they die. Agents of forest change include fire, insects, disease, wind and, yes, humans. If forests are not paved over or converted to farmlands, they will regenerate as they did following the last Ice Age.

Forests, depending on resource objective, may be grown on extended rotations to achieve an array of objectives. To maximize biological diversity, grow and harvest a forest — in lieu of hemp.

Large tracts of wildlands and old growth forests should be cherished as an important part of our culture. Large tracts of well managed biologically diverse forests that provide amenities and commodities should also be cherished.

Step beyond the evangelistic rhetoric by visiting the most productive resilient forests in the

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