

CORPORATE CARETAKING

When State Rep. Pat Farr expressed satisfaction that a bill had passed signaling that "Oregon is open for business," you might have thought the bill funded the repair of Oregon bridges, or education for the workforce, or adequate policing of our crowded highways. No, Farr was happy that he had voted for yet another round of tax breaks for corporations.

How likely are these monies to return to our state and contribute to the common good? According to the Legislative Revenue Office analysis, the bill Farr supported (HB 3813) is expected to produce 21 new jobs in Oregon at a cost of more than \$300,000 per job!

Farr sits on the House Revenue Committee. Is this committee's job raising revenue or giving it away? Farr has talked about his concern for workers who have a hard time finding and keeping family wage jobs in Lane County. There are many ways that state revenue might help working families and also signal that Oregon encourages socially responsible businesses to locate here.

I doubt so-called corporate incentives are the way to go. Farr needs to examine tax loopholes for additional funding rather than make such loopholes bigger and more numerous!

Erik Muller
Eugene

HUMAN DIGNITY

It will be a grand day when our society demands more respect for our sisters, daughters and mothers. The provocative imagery currently on two billboard ads for Bud Light along the Highway 105 freeway in Springfield is offensive to me as a father, brother and son.

Certainly, in this example and countless others, our communities can demand more positive imagery for citizens to reflect upon

other than the sexually exploitative depiction of women. Let's rewrite the script for human potential and demand the best for all of us.

Craig Satein
Eugene

THANKS, GEORGE

Thanks to President Bush's tax cut, our paycheck is a little fatter this month. We're pledging the increase to Howard Dean's campaign.

Ken and Priscilla Tollenaar
Eugene

PART OF THE SOLUTION?

Today I received a care package with a copy of *EW*, dated May 22, 2003.

I am grateful for the support I get as an individual soldier here in Mosul, Iraq with the Oregon National Guard. I was reading the letters to the editor, and I am not sure I understand all the facts and opinions expressed.

Here in Iraq the folks I have met so far seem friendly. My Army unit is an engineer battalion doing construction in the city. I am not sure what long-term goals the U.S. has for our official relationship with the good people of Iraq.

Please do not sit around weakly writing complaint letters. Try to offer some kind of solution. I am not at home watching the wheels turn, waiting for things to roll my way. I hope I am part of the new freedom of Iraq.

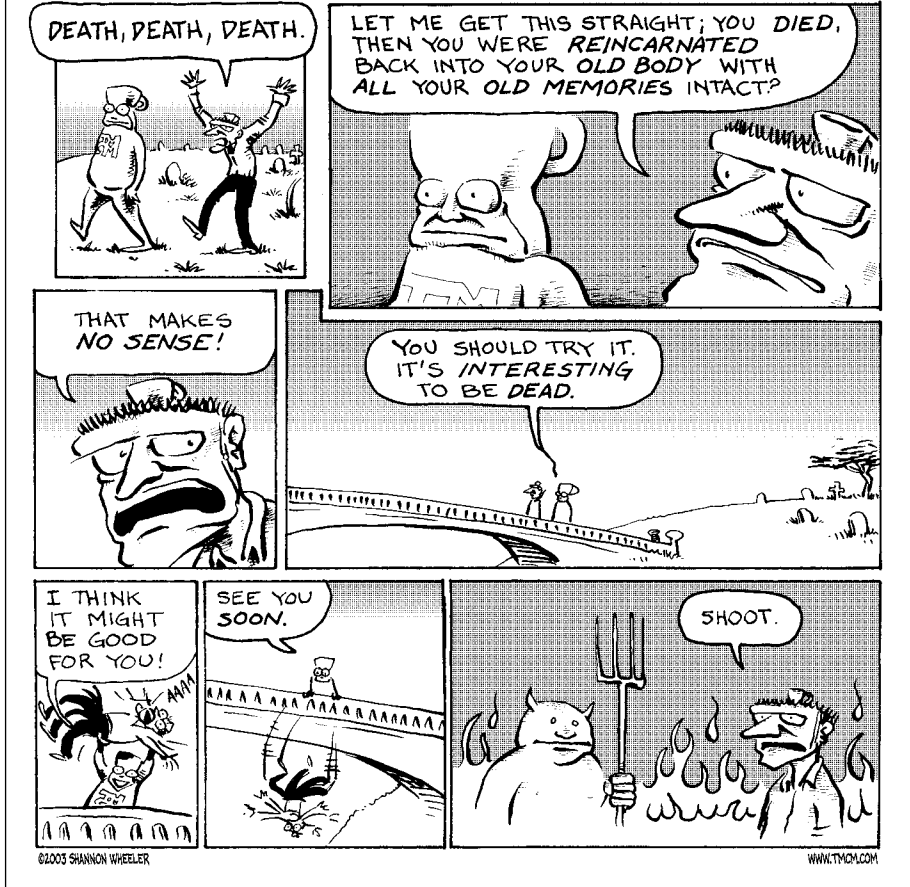
You can find out more about the Oregon National Guard's mission in Iraq on the Internet.

Michael Coker
Mosul, Iraq

CRIMINAL ATTIRE

A short note to Laci Stevens ("Just Want a Hoodie," Letters, 6/26). Clerks are supposed

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



to be keeping an eye on everyone, but you may be getting more than your share, yeah, because you look like you *could* be a professional shoplifter. Professional shoplifters often wear baggy clothing because they can put seven or eight items of clothing *under* them and have the theft not show. If this happened to you recently, it may not have anything to do with your facial piercings, but it may have a lot to do with your baggy clothing. Right now is one of the peak seasons for professional shoplifting. (Christmas season is another.)

Margaret Weller
Eugene

OPPORTUNITY FIRST

If you read sports sections, you probably have seen articles about women's sports and how the continued existence of their pro leagues is in jeopardy. However, perhaps the most shocking was the recent article in *The Oregonian* on NASCAR's new line of women's merchandise — hoping that fashion will bring in more women fans. All I can say is I'll start supporting NASCAR when men begin to support the WNBA, which needs the help much more.

To put it nicely, women's pro leagues are in serious trouble. They're losing fans, and with them, money and TV coverage. But per-

INSIDER BASEBALL BY TONY CORCORAN

Grinding Out Policy

Sometimes it's better to close the doors.

We only voted on one bill in the Senate on Friday, a memorial to a retired general. We are four weeks away from the longest legislative session in Oregon history and it ain't lookin' good. Senate President Peter Courtney, House Speaker Karen Minnis, and Governor Teddy, are "inching toward each other" in secret negotiations. Salem's *Statesman-Journal* headlines, July 9: "Progress in budget talks cited;" July 11: "Budget talk going nowhere."

As I left the Capitol on Friday afternoon, Pat Egan — the governor's legislative liaison, one of the few holdovers from the Kitzhaber regime, well trusted by Democrats and Republicans — tells me that negotiations are going well again. But Sunday night, as I write this, my caucus leader Kate Brown just phoned to tell me that negotiations have been suspended.

This highlights a debate we've had in the building about public meetings laws and secret negotiations and open vs. closed caucuses. The state's big newspapers have threatened to sue under Oregon's "open meetings" law to allow the press to cover these previously secret meetings. If you'll remember, the Senate Democrats opened their caucus to the press in the 2001 session; the other three caucuses remained closed. But we were totally disingenuous; when Senate Democrats wanted to caucus without the press in the room, we simply went to the governor's conference room or Kate's office. I had to chuckle when one of our Lane County "open caucus" proponents had to slither under a cubicle divider to avoid the press while leaving Kate's office. I, of course, being vertically challenged, didn't have to duck.

I opposed opening the caucus. There are some discussions that can't go on in front of reporters and TV cameras; like it or not, legislators make public policy in a political context. The two are never separated by more than six degrees. But I also question the value of having three leaders try to come to an agreement in secrecy, away from their own constituency. For example, Karen Minnis told Peter and Ted that



she had full authority to bargain on behalf of her caucus. The Senate Democrats told Peter Courtney explicitly that he did not have such authority. (We expect him to bring back proposals to our caucus and get a vote count.) So, in reality, neither the House Democrats nor the Senate Republicans are represented in this bargaining. Teddy, of course, as the executive branch, can bargain for himself.

E from a select group of 50 Salem insiders — lobbyists, staffers, reporters, and downstate legislators — to grade lawmakers on brains, integrity, diligence and clout. Senators Kurt Schrader and Kate Brown got excellent scores, which they deserve. In the House, Max Williams got the only "excellent" rating, well deserved. He's honest, bright, hard working — a moderate Republican, if there is such a thing — with a sense of humor. Max wants a tax reform package and he and three of his moderate colleagues — Ben Westlund, Rob Patridge, and Lane Shetterly — have at least started the discussion. Their first tax package involved imposing a statewide sales tax, cutting capital gains taxes, cutting the estate tax, a refundable earned income tax credit, and decreasing the income tax rates. My good friends at the Oregon Center for Public Policy point out that this proposal would raise taxes for the bottom fifth of Oregon households by \$227 a year; raise taxes for middle-income Oregonians by \$130 a year; and lower taxes for the richest 1 percent of Oregonians by \$20,957 a year.

Oops! But at least it's a start. Tim Nesbitt of the AFL-CIO actually believes we can come up with a sales tax package that treats working poor and middle-class folks fairly. But my point is: at least Max and the Usual Suspects, and Tim Nesbitt, deserve credit for trying. As reported in *The Oregonian*, Max quoted Winston Churchill on this matter: "It is better to fail in a noble effort than to perish by slow paralysis and windy agitation."

And believe me, the wind has been blowing hard lately in Salem. All the conservatives have to offer is Gary George's insulting "Tax Me More" fund.

And you wonder why there are two parties?

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