

# Thanks, But No Thanks



Oregon refuses federal aid in the midst of a budget crisis.

**A**s a kid, I was always perplexed by the saying, "You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make him drink." Why wouldn't a thirsty horse want to drink? Is the horse stupid? Hey Mr. Ed, lose the 'tude: You need water to live. It's the pond or the glue factory. You choose.

Oregon confronts a similar choice as it decides whether to accept millions of dollars in aid that the federal government has offered to the states. This aid could be used for a variety of purposes, such as the improvement of public health programs or the acquisition of open space. The money, of course, derives from federal taxes that Oregonians pay like all other U.S. citizens. So the question is simple: Should Oregonians take back our money when the feds offer it?

There can't be any doubt that Oregon needs the money. The Oregon Legislature is so hard up for cash that the little gold man on top of the Capitol building had better watch his back. The Legislature has raided all sorts of one-time funding sources, and would be looting Oregon's rainy day fund if we were one of the 47 states that have one. State officials are checking for nickels under the cushions of every couch. Despite exhausting our resources this session, Oregon still needed to kick 150,000 people off the Oregon Health Plan, reduce our school year to the shortest in the nation, and slash the number of state police to half the total we had in 1980.

**S**o how did the Legislature respond when the feds offered to give us back some of our tax money? Amazingly, Oregon turned down the federal aid. The co-chairs of the House and Senate Ways and Means Committees decided that the federal money was a Trojan horse. One of these legislators said Oregon must be careful not "to get hooked by the lure of federal funds, establish the local bureaucracy, then the federal funds run dry." In other words, we shouldn't accept any money because of the risk that we might end up with no money. Interesting logic. That's like burning down your house to avoid the risk that your house might catch fire.

Because Oregon's Legislature takes this unusual view, the federal grant money that Oregonians paid for with our federal taxes will actually go the other 49 states. Anyone still wondering why our state has one of the worst budget shortfalls in the U.S.?

As a county commissioner, I'm aware of the harmful consequences to Lane County that will result from the Legislature's decision to forego federal grant money. For example, the Ways and Means Committee withheld authorization for state health officials to seek federal grants that could have provided \$1.6 million in funding to help children afflicted with whooping cough. Right now nearly half of the Oregon children with whooping cough live in Lane County. The federal grant could have provided Lane County with \$160,000 to \$180,000 per year to hire new staff at Lane County's public health clinics over a one- to five-year period. Without the grant money, a large number of children could suffer a painful, preventable illness. I'm starting to understand how the relief workers in Uganda felt when Idi Amin prohibited them from receiving international aid for starving children.

**O**n Tuesday, July 22, I learned from State Rep. Bob Ackerman (D-Eugene) that our Lane County delegation in the Legislature has persuaded the Ways and Means Co-Chairs to reverse their decision on the whooping cough grant. That's great news. I'm glad we have a few thirsty horses in Salem. But I'm still worried about the state's overall position on federal aid. If we have to coerce legislative leaders to accept a grant that would save children from disease, we can't be optimistic that the budget crisis will end any time soon.

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

## NOT THE FIRST

The Archaeological Channel International and Video Festival recently running at the MacDonald Theatre (an ambitious project, to be sure) was touted by the Archaeological Legacy Institute's (founded, 1999) founder and president, Richard Pettigrew, as North America's first archaeological film festival. That is not quite accurate. Actually there is precedence here in Eugene. The Archaeological Institute of America (AIA), Eugene Society, has sponsored in the past at least two archaeological film festivals, the last in 1988. It included films on Easter Island, the 17th century Warship Wasa, the Sutton Hoo Ship Burial, the Chaco Legacy and the ancient tombs at Xian, China. Each of these films was discussed by university scholars, experts in their fields. In fact, the AIA has practicing archaeologists sent each year by the national office to all of the 102 local societies (two others in Oregon besides Eugene).

The AIA is North America's oldest (founded, 1879) and largest (9,000 members) organization devoted to the world of archaeology. For those interested in finding out more, they can call the local secretary, Ted Booth (683-0831) or the new president, Prof. Steven Shoemaker (346-4998).

In any case, I hope that many local Eugeneans attended the recent festival, since the films and commentaries were certainly educational and stimulating.

*Dean McKenzie  
past president, AIA  
Eugene Society*

## BUSH'S INEPTITUDE

All over town I've seen "Bush lied, people died." The need for armed aggression regardless of the end result must be weighed with deliberate earnest. The tragic events of 9/11 cannot and should not be minimized. At the same time, however, to use those deaths as a springboard to measure your place in history is despicable and disregards the very thing the president says he stands for.

Not only did he create a fear of all things near-eastern, but his homeland debacle has injured our constitution. His need for blood has put our troops in harm's way while he lacks a specific plan and definable goals. While the war was waged as war should be, there seemed to be no way out, and this continues as our troops are being picked off one by one.

Using Korea and Vietnam as models of an indecisive and paranoid "high noon"

mentality, the current Bush's arrogance is being guided by greed and ineptitude in other policy areas. This game that is all too real is being played by someone who is above all the harm he has created. In addition, the home front has been given impossible criteria for homeland security without the funding to pay for them. Finally, all the money that has been spent in the Gulf could have been spent here at home to save lives instead of taking them.

Let us all urge the current administration to get out now and hammer out a realistic, achievable plan with all deliberate haste. Our lives and our integrity depend on it.

*George G. Brooks  
Eugene*

## FRONT-YARD GARDENS

An open letter to UO officials: As a UO graduate student, citizen of Eugene and avid gardener, I was appalled to read the recent *Eugene Weekly* article (7/10) about the illogical, arrogant and simply bewildering manner in which the UO recently saw fit to deal with student and gardener John Boosinger.

Although I have not seen Mr. Boosinger's garden and certainly cannot comment on its aesthetic appeal or lack thereof, it is well known that lawn maintenance is one of the most resource-draining land uses known to civilization, and virtually any other use at all would be a preferable alternative. The increasing presence of front-lawn vegetable gardens in Eugene is in my opinion something we should, as a city, be proud of, and something we, as a university, should foster and not suppress.

Under whose authority do you suppose yourselves to have been acting when declaring vegetables to be illegal plant types, unfit for public viewing? May I suggest that, if you truly have the public image of the Villard neighborhood in mind, begin by planting more vegetation, making the households less dependent on public resources, and working with your tenants in the process, instead of dealing in such senseless, counterproductive nastiness as this.

*Mark Post  
UO Ph.D. candidate*

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