

ROTTEN PROCESS

Alan Pittman's enlightening series on Centennial's renaming (6/26 & 7/3) solidified my feeling that while it is better that David Kelly and Bonny Bettman are on Eugene's City Council rather than their opponents, I wish there were more councilors with Betty Taylor's independence.

Because he'd like to be mayor, Kelly tries to make nice with the council's conservative bloc. Pittman points out that Kelly called Mayor Torrey's contact with Gang of Niner and MLK renaming opponent Bob Mylencek "probably inappropriate," but since it revived the renaming, Kelly didn't care.

The only faction Bettman made nice with were the very conservative local African-American "leaders," the same group, Pittman notes, that had opposed anyone who questioned Hyundai/Hynix locating here. Bettman once did, but she's changed. Now she shuns Taylor for having the backbone to object to a flawed renaming. Bettman e-mailed Taylor, saying that she'll "never be able to reconcile" with her. Yet Bettman's campaign literature said she'd be "a councilor with a track record for collaboration across political boundaries." But the only boundaries she's been crossing have been to the right.

Remember when Kelly and Bettman, in private negotiations, helped devise a strategy to sacrifice six residential blocks west of campus for Peace Health to clear-cut in a vain attempt to keep the hospital from moving? That would have fragmented a neighborhood, just as the MLK name will now be fragmented on separate streets in Eugene and Springfield. Would Dr. King approve?

Taylor says it best: "The process was really rotten from beginning to end."

Pat Wilson
Eugene

GUARD CAUGHT SLEEPING

Why is *The Register-Guard* so reluctant to cover the presidential candidacy of Rep. Dennis Kucinich? When given every opportunity, many days in advance, to publicize events where candidate Kucinich was appearing, *The R-G* passed. When given every opportunity, days in advance, to show up at events where candidate Kucinich was speaking, to report local reaction, *The R-G* was a no-show.

Thankfully, despite the lack of coverage, we packed out PLC hall on Sunday (July 20). But I have to think, if the *R-G* had been a part of the political process and a part of the community, and had a deeply felt responsibility to promote participation of the public in the electoral process, how fast we'd had to have the event outdoors.

Thank you *EW* for being there and reporting local interests. I'm only sorry we weren't able to publicize the event with enough lead-time to fit within your weekly publishing deadline.

Todd D. Woodward
Springfield

READ ME ENTIRELY!

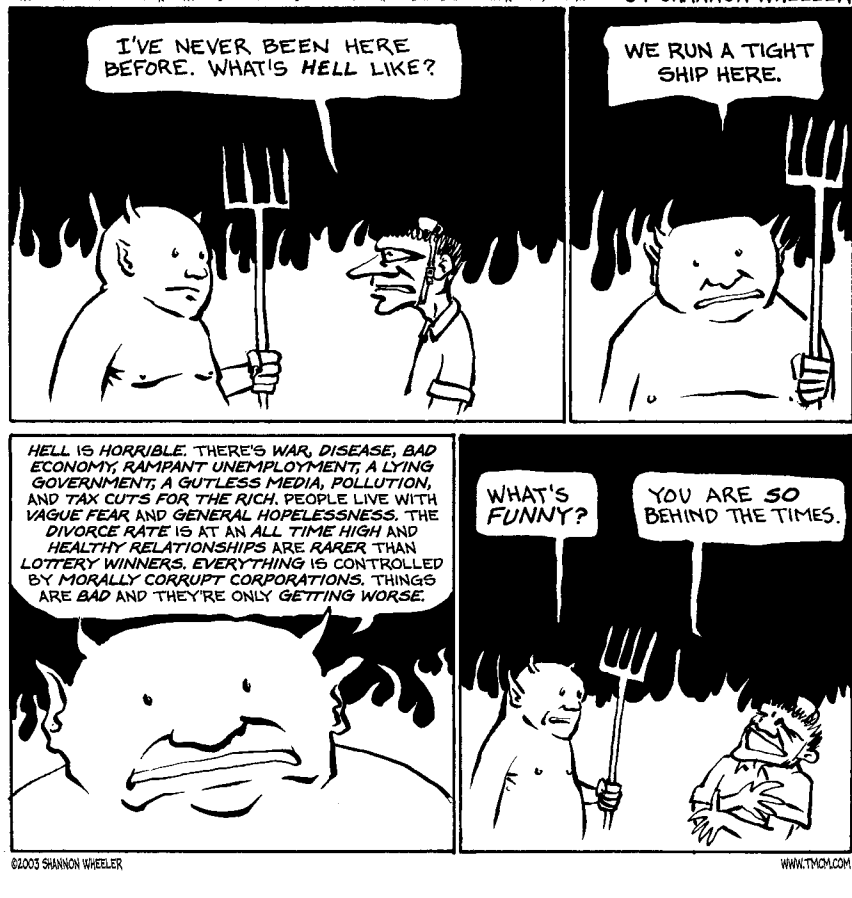
Bush and Rice "didn't entirely read" the memo indicating the Niger-Iraq nuclear evidence was cooked? Har, har, har! Boy, why don't my students come up with excuses like that? Because they'd get laughed off campus and clear out of the county, that's why.

"Teach, you have to give me an A, because it's not my fault I missed all the answers. They're not really wrong, see, because I didn't entirely read the textbook."

"Innocent, your honor. I didn't do anything wrong. I didn't entirely read that sign. Who woulda thought they would've expected me to yield to that guy?"

"St. Peter, sir, you have to let me in. It

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



wasn't my fault they killed 50,000 innocent Iraqi civilians. 'Bear false witness'? Never heard of it. I didn't entirely read that book."

So what *did* Bush "entirely read"? *Mein Kampf*?

Ann Tattersall
Eugene

DENNIS IS DIFFERENT

Every day's news confirms that President Bush is taking this country down an ugly and dangerous road. Today, I read that the Pentagon, under Donald Rumsfeld's orders,

is devising a new military plan for confronting North Korea. It consists in part in harassing North Korea's military forces into using up scarce fuel and rations. This is intended as an ongoing peacetime action.

Also in the news, Bush wants to renege on the ozone treaty [Montreal Protocol, 1987], the most successful cooperative action ever undertaken by the global community to avert an environmental catastrophe. He wants to void the 1997 agreement on [phasing out] methyl bromide, the most potent remaining ozone-destroying chemical.

INSIDER BASEBALL BY TONY CORCORAN

Slots for Tots

Speaker's education budget a long-shot gamble.



It was noon on Friday, nothing was going on in the Senate. We had already taken care of the state's most pressing issue earlier in the week. We passed SB919, which "specifies titles that may not be used by a person not licensed as a landscape contractor." Yes, that's the actual explanation from the staff measure summary. This solves a major controversy in Oregon: What does one call oneself if one is a lawnmower? But remember, there is an exception: You don't have to have a license if the work you perform is "of a casual, minor, or inconsequential nature." Hmm, do you think that was a backdoor way of exempting legislators?

So, feeling that great burden lifted from my shoulders, I moseyed over to the House to watch the debate on the K-12 school budget. The session was delayed two hours for a Republican caucus; arms were twisted and the bill passed 32-26. Every Democrat present voted against the bill.

Take that, you Nader purists: There is a difference between D's and R's!

In the past six weeks of negotiations House Republicans have reneged on three agreements: one to fund schools at a higher level; another - in writing - regarding changes to the Oregon Health Plan; and another on spending for public safety. And for the past six weeks the speaker has threatened to form her own budget committee and put out her own budgets, bypassing the Joint Ways and Means Committee process, to punish the Democrats and the governor for not giving in to her pathetic demands. She finally pulled the trigger, ended negotiations, and chose the K-12 budget as the first product of her new committee. If this is the best she can do, we are in deep horse droppings.

The speaker's bill would provide only \$4.56 billion from the General Fund and Lottery; the rest is "funny money":

- It steals \$131 million from next year's School Stability Fund, the interest of which is used to pay for low-income college scholarships for Oregon students. We can't steal this

year's fund because the R's already stole that for last year's school funding. By the way, the R's got to the ambitious figure of \$131 million by assuming the addition of extra video poker terminals and new slot machines in bars and restaurants.

- And, the bill sets up a trigger mechanism for distributing an extra \$250 million in the second year: If the May 2004 revenue forecast is at least \$200 million over the May 2003 forecast, 43 percent of the excess over \$200 million goes to the schools. (It would take over \$700 million in growth to actually get to the \$250 million proposal - I don't think our state crystal-baller economist would agree with this prediction.) Of course, if revenues actually exceeded the forecast by \$200 million, it would cause the kicker to kick! So, we'd be paying for the 2004-05 school year with kicker money we'd have to send back to the taxpayers in 2006! Is that a cool Ponzi scheme or what?

Consensus among the Senate Democrats is that we will not go below \$5.3 billion of real money for schools, a figure which School Superintendent Susan Castillo says won't even get us back to the level of funding for the 2001 school year.

On a local note, Rep. Pat Farr's vote was a real disappointment. He failed his first big test as a freshman after getting elected as an education supporter. He buckled under pressure from the speaker and voted with the Republicans. His justification, that his school districts would be fine with this level of funding, was nonsense. Hell, Pat, I can take you to a bunch of small school districts around the state, even here in Lane County, that are dying on the vine. Our job is to represent all the school kids, not just the ones in cities lucky enough to have voters who were so pissed off at legislative inaction, that they went forward with their own local tax.

What irritated me the most was Pat's comment to me on the House floor after his vote: "Please, Tony, fix it for us in the Senate." I wouldn't need to, Pat, if just two more Republicans had the cajones to take on their leadership. Then again, caucus politics can be brutal. And Republicans are different than Democrats.

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