

POLITICAL WEAPON

I am heartened by the perseverance of those who have publicly resisted the Downtown Ordinance, a Junior Patriot Act intended to perfect the local police state.

It is not Christmas carolers or Art Walkers, by the way, who will be subject to attack under the new law. Rather, the ordinance is a weapon against homeless people and anarchists, those who cannot or will not fit into this bankrupt and pathological culture.

The downtown partisans of the 2002 Homeless Initiative were subject to intense cop harassment and I know for a fact that since about that time it has been police policy to violently attack any and all public gatherings of anarchists.

*John Zerzan
Eugene*

SAY WHAT YOU MEAN

I am tired of hearing and seeing the term "reproductive decision" being substituted for abortion. Many pro-lifers believe that reproductive freedom entails making the decision whether to have sex, whether to use birth control and what kind, and taking responsibility for the consequences, including the failure rate of the birth control. I am not against birth control, but abortion is not birth control; it is the ending of a human life.

In "News Briefs" (1/15), Aria Seligmann takes the president's phrase "restrict abortions" and turns it into "restrict a woman's right to reproductive freedom." Bush has done both of these things; however, I support his efforts to restrict abortion, and not his efforts to undermine access to birth control and sex education.

The same issue comes up in Rep. DeFazio's recent survey mailed to his constituents. One question on the survey asked, "Do you support a woman's right to make her own reproductive decisions?" My answer is yes, I support her right to decide whether to have sex and so on. However, I do not sup-

port abortion, and I know full well that if I answered yes without the above caveat, my view would not be properly represented in the resulting statistics. Pro-choicers need to start using more explicit terms and say what they mean. Perhaps they're afraid that if the actual question was "Do you support a woman's right to have an abortion?" they might find themselves in the minority.

*Nate Brown
Eugene*

THE CASE FOR 30

One of the least addressed issues in the state of Oregon is jobs and job quality. Oregon suffers one of the worst unemployment rates and worst job satisfaction rates in the nation. While the reasons for this include many different answers, probably the most pressing reason is that businesses do not come to Oregon because of its poor quality of life. We have road repair problems, education problems, lack of funding for public services for the elderly, child care, police protection and prisons. Despite pleas from both public and private officials in all of these sectors for more funding, Oregonians turn a blind eye to these problems, maintaining incorrectly that taxation is disproportionately high compared to the rest of the nation. Nothing could be further from the truth. Oregon's taxes are lower than those of 43 other states.

Oregonians want more and better jobs, but they're not going to get them if they refuse to fund the quality of life. Without services for the elderly and children, parks and recreation, prisons and police protection, no company will be attracted to Oregon to provide better paying and more satisfying jobs that are desperately needed here. If Measure 30 doesn't pass, it will not spell doom and gloom — it will only show that Oregonians are too selfish and not willing to "promote the general welfare" of this state. In other words, it will show that capitalism does not work!

We can't have it both ways. Without giv-

TOO MUCH COFFEE MAN BY SHANNON WHEELER



ing up a little (a mere \$43 per year for most families) to provide better services in education, health, and welfare for all, the state's economy will suffer indiscriminately, and not provide better jobs with better pay for the majority. If Measure 30 does not pass, Oregon is destined to stay where it is: at the bottom of the social economic list of all 50 states, in dire need of road repairs, education, police protection, social services, and most importantly, jobs.

*Len Goforth
Springfield*

NO ON 30

Not only is Measure 30 a Band-Aid on a broken system, it's also just another way to bleed the middle class, whose industry

should be encouraged, not penalized. Its passage would only allow more fiscal irresponsibility at the expense of wage earners and property owners, further widening the gap between rich and poor. Though it would cost me personally not one thin dime and would assist some who really need relief, I just can't support it. I'm sorry. Maybe we bought a few too many \$80,000 police motorcycles, or Measure 11 and the War on Drugs are proving to be cost prohibitive — fill in your own blanks — but waste will not be cured with more money. It's time to bite the bullet and see what they do with what they have. If we don't like it, or if it all comes down like a house of cards, at least we will know what is really important, and who is on the side of whom. If it causes some temporary suffering,

REASONABLE DOUBT BY TOM LININGER

For Pete's Sake

Sorenson deserves kudos for leading commissioners in 2003.

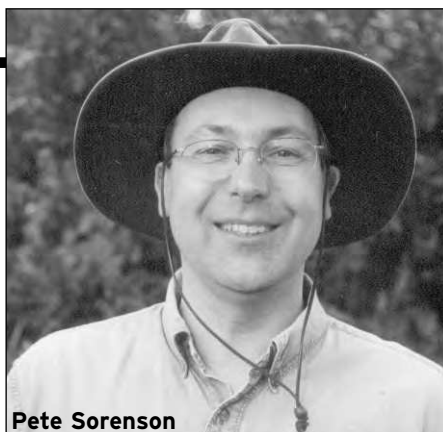
Last month I had lunch with a friend who follows local politics, and she asked me this question: "What do Democrats, dodos and dinosaurs have in common?" Hint: It's not the letter "D."

I learned that Democrats are nearing extinction in local leadership posts. On Dec. 1, 2003, a check of voter registration records revealed that only two of Lane County's 12 mayors were Democrats. More than 200,000 Lane County residents lived in cities with Republican mayors last month, while only about 4,000 lived in cities with Democratic mayors (a 50-to-1 ratio!). So much for the myth of "Moscow on the Willamette," huh?

Amidst the stampede of elephants in Lane County, one donkey stood his ground. Peter Sorenson did an admirable job chairing the Board of County Commissioners in 2003. Now that Sorenson is stepping down from the chair position this month, it's appropriate to reflect on the legacy of his leadership, because we rarely have a chance to see someone like Sorenson presiding over a local governmental body.

As chair of the commissioners, Sorenson addressed issues that had vexed the County for a long time. He led a discussion of pesticide reform that culminated in sweeping revisions to the Lane County Code. He presided over the renegotiation of long-term contracts with all six of the county's unions, easing ill feelings that had festered over the last several years. He insisted on broad public involvement in land use decisions ranging from rezoning to vacating county roads.

Sorenson also dealt with new challenges. He guided a thoughtful debate about the USA PATRIOT Act, leading the commissioners to pass a resolution opposing portions of



Pete Sorenson

the act. When the commissioners needed to appoint replacements for several departing officials, Sorenson deftly directed this process, surprising some observers who didn't expect the board could operate so smoothly.

I admired Sorenson's civility in leading the board last year. Even though county commissioners are nonpartisan officials, they are not immune from the bickering that plagues partisan politics. I recall something that my political science professor told me about nonpartisan officials in Cleveland: "They don't act like they're in the Democratic Party. They don't act like they're in the

Republican Party. They act like they're in the Donner Party."

Lane County commissioners aren't that bad, but there's always room for improvement. Sorenson took the high road last year by respecting opposing viewpoints and refraining from personal criticism. This approach paid off. Debates over pesticide reform and the PATRIOT ACT resolution culminated in 5-0 votes, which is an unusual degree of consensus for this board.

I had hoped to watch Sorenson's State of the County address Jan. 7, but my wife and I were returning from a vacation in Atlanta, where we toured the Carter Presidential Library. During this tour, I was struck by the similarities between Jimmy Carter and Sorenson (who once worked in the Carter administration). Both grew up in small towns — Carter in Plains, Ga., and Sorenson in North Bend. Both were steadfast in their principles: You might disagree with them, but you always knew where they stood. Both remained civil even when critics were not.

Carter, a former peanut farmer, felt most at home when he was surrounded by nuts, and Sorenson ... well, he spent most of his adult life in Eugene. 'Nuff said.

Tom Lininger is a law professor and former county commissioner.