

THE REAL COSTS

Regarding the flurry of letters about humanely raised animal farms like Laughing Stock Farm vs. vegetarianism and veganism, I think the debate needs to refocus around sustainability and local production rather than animal suffering alone. When you look at the true costs of a vegan diet that relies on the privileges of a first-world food transportation/agriculture/packaging system that ships protein from the soy producing areas of the country at great petroleum expense, you find a large amount of animal suffering. How many go-pheers, snakes, field mice, birds, moles were killed in the combine of that organic soybean harvester? How many deer, coyotes, raccoons, antelope, skunks, squirrels were killed by the semi that delivered those organic soybeans from the Midwest to make your vegan tofu?

If the reason for not eating meat is to lessen the suffering of living beings, then a true look at the pain of a death involved in that choice is necessary. Just because the costs of industrially transported vegan protein are hidden does not make them any less costly. It is clearly more humane to grow a modest garden and buy local produce, care for a small flock of egg-laying chickens, buy milk from the neighbor who has a few dairy goats, eat the chickens who turn out to be roosters, and buy meat occasionally from local, humanely raised farms.

The real food revolution is the fight of the bioregional local economy against the agribusiness behemoth, and meat-eaters and vegetarians need to join forces if we are going to win.

Brian Thomas
Cottage Grove

COMMON SENSE

Violent crime is down in America. Of course, none of us knows exactly why it's down, but logical people would agree that rational gun control laws could be part of the reason.

That's why I am amazed that the gun lobby, led by the National Rifle Association, is campaigning

now to gut the Brady Bill and let the Assault Weapons Ban expire.

These are moderate laws that pass the common sense test. The Brady Bill requires that gun sellers keep records on gun sales for 90 days. The Assault Weapons Ban outlaws guns designed for soldiers to mow down enemy troops.

I hope Congress puts safety first and defends these laws.

Julie Mathey
Eugene

JUST SAY WHAT?

Does anyone else feel "One Voice: Media United Against Drugs" is a bit hypocritical? The "media," in this case, seem to be television media; dollar for dollar, television commercials are the biggest drug pushers in America today.

They push Viagra, Lipitor, Procrit, Caltrate, Imitrex, Wellbutrin, Plavix, not to mention all the sugar and beer commercials. After watching football and drinking beer for years it finally dawned on me — I don't like beer.

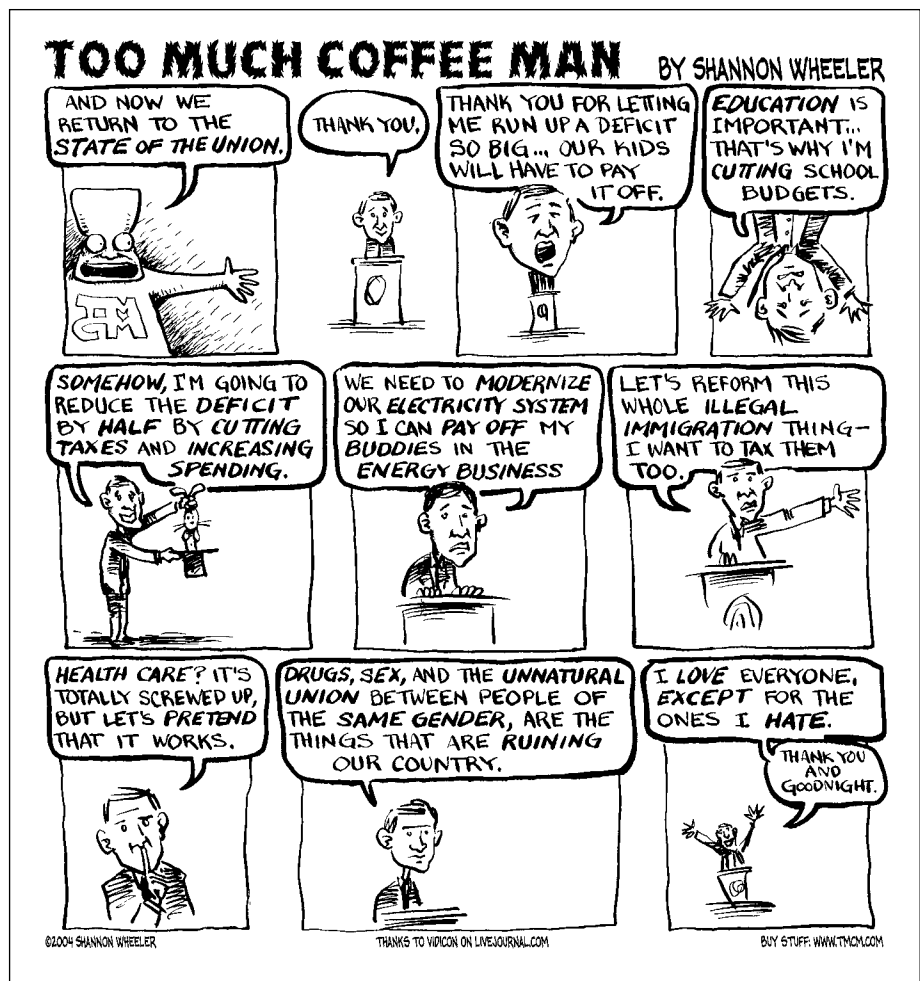
And these are not just poor street kids pushing drugs. These are highly educated, highly paid drug pushers. These pushers have been taught advanced psychology at prestigious universities to trick you and your children into buying their drugs.

Now I realize the local media are trying to do a public service with their "Media United Against Drugs" but to paraphrase Pogo: "You have met the enemy and the enemy is you."

Chris Pender
Eugene

UNINSURED CATASTROPHE

As the president delivers his State of the Union Address I'm reminded of the 44 million Americans, 15 percent of the population, including 8.5 million children, who don't have health insurance. But do those figures accurately cover the situation? Shouldn't the millions of Americans who have only catastrophic



health insurance be added to the list of the uninsured? Essentially, they have no present coverage, either.

A catastrophic plan typically covers only major hospital and medical expenses above a certain deductible; and that deductible, in the case of surgery, can be in the thousands of dollars — essentially making the patient pay for a large percentage of the hospital bill. A plan such as this also leaves the insured paying out-of-pocket expenses for almost everything else, including routine doctor visits and prescription drugs. Not being able to afford to see a doctor today or to pay for the drugs one needs is, of course, a catastrophic situation in the making.

Bob Berman
Elmira

SPRINGFIELD STATUS

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Take as an example the claim-jumping activities of the current Springfield City Council and a few high-placed fire badges. They are attempting to outright steal ownership of millions of dollars of fire truck rolling stock, equipment, buildings, levied tax dollars and paid-for hours of training with housing support supplies. There is also the possibility money will be diverted from running the city.

But what is a "city"?

This is an important definition because it sets standards that apply when any city entity submits for any federal grants, which in this

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