

THE JOYS OF CO-MINGLING

It's hard to miss Sanipac's new co-mingling carts waiting at the curb each week. The carts are larger than the yard debris bins and are used for recycling paper, cardboard, metal and plastic. Sanipac employees and customers have mixed responses to this new recycling system.

One Sanipac truck driver thinks, "It's a good system. Easy for me and the people.

A lot of people aren't sure how to use it yet but I've worked here nine years. They'll figure it out." Another driver, who picks up the old recycling boxes, talked while he hand-sorted through the newspaper, magazines and plastic that are no longer supposed to go into the glass-only bins. "It needs to be done right. In the city people don't understand."

This worker is concerned that the new bins "will lay off people. The ones that are gonna keep their jobs think it's great. Talk to someone who's worried about his job and you might hear otherwise. I have mixed emotions." Both Sanipac employees refrained from giving their names.

Some Eugene residents find the cart's size and mobility awkward. Sue Thompson finds the cart "completely unruly. This morning I nearly fell down my driveway trying to maneuver the big, heavy thing." Cheryl Gross, on the other hand, finds that the "big bin is easy to move. I don't have to bend down and pick up that heavy old bin."

However, Gross is confused by the schedule: "Does my garbage get picked up one week and my recycling another? I still don't know. I'm just putting them out each week. Maybe it'll make sense soon." Sanipac's website says that recycling pick-up is always the same day that garbage is picked up. But in another part of their website Sanipac concedes that "with our new recycling system there are some areas where this [trash and recycling pickup on opposite weeks] will happen." Some customers get two schedules in the mail: one for garbage and yard waste, another for recycling.

Thompson points out that the cart can be heavy when full. Some Eugene residents solve that problem by leaving the cart at the curb or roadside if there's no sidewalk. "Not a pleasant sight on the way to work," says John Hagan. UO student Tom Brown and his housemates "just leave it out all the time. It's great 'cause we can fill it up really full. And we needed the space for all our glass bottles and stuff." The practice of leaving the cart at the curb appears to be particularly common in student housing areas.

According to the Sanipac website, the carts were chosen because "Customers told us they didn't like sorting all their materials, they wanted a lid on their recycling container,

and they wanted to be able to roll it, not carry it." Co-mingling recycling enables customers to dump paper, cardboard, plastic and aluminum (not glass) into one container. The mixed recycling is transported to an automated sorting firm in Portland. The company touts the co-mingling system as enabling "fewer emissions along with less road wear." The website does not address the emissions and road wear involved in transporting Eugene's recycling to Portland.

— Kate Storm



THIS STREETCAR'S NAMED UNDESIRABLE

City Councilors David Kelly, Scott Meisner and Bonny Bettman want city staff to study a trolley as part of updating the city's Central Area Transportation Study (CATS) plan.

Portland's new downtown streetcar has been a popular success, tourist attraction and symbol of the city's commitment to livability. But Eugene's city staff continue to oppose the idea of a trolley here. A trolley "would not provide cost-effective transportation service," city engineer

Chris Henry and planner Allen Lowe wrote to the City Council last month. The staff cited an earlier TransPlan study in which planning staff had opposed a trolley as more appropriate for larger/denser cities and difficult to obtain federal funding for. Staff recommended that the city pursue bus rapid transit instead.

Eugene actually had an extensive trolley system from 1891 to 1927 when the city was only a fraction of the size it is today. In TransPlan hearings, trolley advocates criticized planners for a bias against clean, attractive and fun trolleys. — Alan Pittman

EFN, UNION REACH LABOR AGREEMENT

Eugene Free Community Network (www.efn.org) announced this week that the nonprofit internet service provider has entered into its first labor agreement with its employees, who are represented by the Lane County Industrial Workers of the World (IWW).

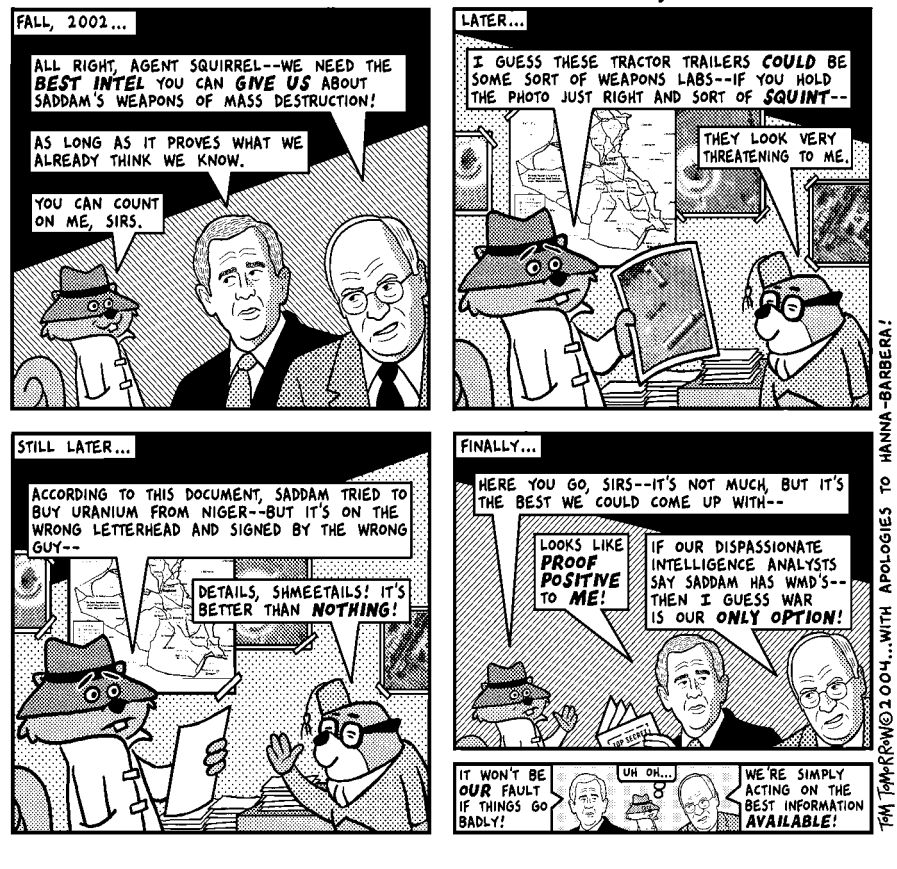
The contract was ratified in late December, and signed Jan. 13 by Paul Harrison, president of the board of directors of EFN, and union stewards. "We're pleased that our discussions with our union employees have resulted in this new agreement," says Harrison.

The agreement provides for collaborative decision-making in the workplace, job security, arbitration of disputes and a commitment to move toward paying a living wage for every employee. IWW members include systems administrators, network specialists, and programmers.

Union rep Patrick Wade says the living wage agreement is still on hold. "We reached agreement about living wages, with the objective of bringing everyone's wages up to \$11 an hour," Wade says, but a "combination of service crises due to outages at our former upstream provider, and financial pinch, have obliged us to put delivery of the living wage

THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



scale on hold until we can get our finances on firmer ground." He says the union is hoping to "make progress on that by mid-2004." Nearly all non-management employees are represented by the union.

Harrison says the agreement is another positive development at EFN, following the ISP's local dial-up expansion throughout the Willamette Valley and its move to becoming a bilingual ISP. — TJJ

EUGENE FIREFIGHTERS SICK 14 DAYS A YEAR

Eugene firefighters take almost twice as many sick days as other city employees, according to a city study.

Eugene firefighters call in sick an average of about 14 days per year, according to city data. Other city staff average about eight days of sick leave per year.

Compared to 42 other similar cities, Eugene non-firefighter workers are about average. But the firefighters push the citywide average to about 7 percent higher sick time usage.

Sick time usage in the private sector is generally much less because private employers don't offer equally generous paid sick time policies.

City Manager Dennis Taylor told the City Council last month that the city disciplines staff for abusing sick leave and has negotiated with the city firefighter union to establish a joint labor management committee to address sick leave issues. — AP

ONRC TO CELEBRATE THREE DECADES

Thirty years is a long time to be working to save the environment. But that's how long the Oregon Natural Resources Council has been plugging away, first as the Oregon Wilderness Coalition and then as the renamed ONRC.

Today, the ONRC can take credit for helping to protect more than three million acres of public land in Oregon, halting construction of the Elk Creek Dam on the Rogue River and playing a pivotal role in protecting much of the nation's remaining old-growth forests.

The 30th anniversary of the organization

will be celebrated Feb. 21 in Eugene, where the ONRC's main office was located for the first half of its existence. The event will be from 6 to 8 pm at LCC's Conference Center, Bldg. 19.

The celebration will include a vegetarian dinner prepared by the LCC Culinary Arts Program, a no-host bar, live music by party dance band Ruckus, guest speakers, stories and reminiscences. A silent auction will be held, as well. Admission is \$35; reservations are required and must be made by Feb. 13. Sponsors are Emerald Valley Kitchen, Eugene Weekly, KLCC, Nova Craft Canoe and Paul's Bicycle Way of Life.

For details, call ONRC's Eugene office at 344-0675 or visit the group's website at: www.onrc.org

ACTIVIST ALERT

Community activists who organized two years ago to oppose an Enron natural gas power plant in the Coburg area are reorganizing to fight a new proposal for an even larger, 900-megawatt plant in the area. Meetings are planned at 6 pm Friday, Feb. 6 at EWEB, 500 E. 4th Ave. in Eugene; and at 6 pm Monday, Feb. 9 at the Springfield City Council chambers, 225 5th St. Speakers will include land use consultant Eben Fodor, former County Commissioner Tom Lininger, and David Monk of the Oregon Toxics Alliance. Carolyn Kinnan of Save Our Valley will moderate the discussion. For more information, call Carolyn at 683-4579 or visit www.saveourvalley.com

The \$34.8 million urban renewal plan for the Riverfront Research Park goes to public hearing before the City Council at 7:30 pm Monday, Feb. 9 in the Council Chambers. Adoption of the ordinance, if approved, would be at the Feb. 23 meeting. For more information, visit www.ci.eugene.or.us/ or call 682-5533.

A joint public hearing with local city councils and county commissioners on Eugene-Springfield Metro Plan amendments will be at 6:30 pm Tuesday, Feb. 10 at the Eugene Public Library. The Metro Plan involves long-range planning for land use, public facilities, natural resources, housing,