

Breaking Three Hearts

Part II: Nature

I've been walking in rural Ireland for three weeks. The rainfall, greenery and temperature could be western Oregon, but there are no natural forests. An Irish "forest" is dense, rigid rows of Sitka spruce, Douglas fir, lodgepole or Scots pine. At harvest time, every stick comes down and the rows are re-installed.

It wasn't always so. In 1600, Ireland was heavily forested with oak, elm, ash, hazel, pines, alder, birch and willow. By then England had depleted its own supply of wood, and needed timber to build ships for colonizing other countries. When the Irish resisted British occupation from within their forests, Queen Elizabeth I ordered the destruction of all Irish forests. British empire loyalists were given property rights to Irish land (formerly held in commons) if they would move to the island to "reduce the Irish" and secure timber for England.

By 1711, Ireland was treeless. "They had not left wood enough to make a toothpick in many places..." wrote a Frenchman who walked through Ireland in the 18th century.

If you wanted to be an empire in 1600, you needed wood. Now you need oil. Like Elizabeth, George Bush is grasping a scarce resource for military and economic empire: oil from Saudi Arabia, oil transport through Afghanistan, oil from Iraq and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.

The Bush Defense Department argues that complying with environmental laws like the Marine Mammal Protection Act, Clean Air Act, and Endangered Species Act interferes with military readiness to do this. In one recent case regarding five years of military bird-bombing on a South Pacific island, the lead Pentagon attorney, William Haynes II, argued that the bombing benefits conservationists because it makes some species like great frigatebirds more rare. "Bird watchers get more enjoyment spotting a rare bird than they do spotting a common one," Haynes II argued. He lost the case, but Bush subsequently nominated him to be a federal appeals court judge.

Then there's coal-burning, another practice pioneered in Britain on an industrial scale. Bush has stopped the Clean Air Act's "New Source Review," which requires old coal plants to install modern pollution controls when they expand or make major repairs. "The [old] rules put up too many hurdles," Bush told workers at the Detroit Edison plant in Michigan. "And that hurt the working people."

However, Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Agency data show that his gutting of New Source Review will cause 20,000 additional premature deaths per year. Perhaps Bush figures only non-working people will be the ones killed.

Then there are all the other power plants, the nation's major source of airborne mercury, which lowers intelligence in children. Bush proposed removing mercury from the EPA's list of toxic pollutants, thereby delaying any mercury reductions for 15 years. The Clean Air Act would have required a 90% reduction in power plant mercury by 2008.

As for chemicals still allowed to be called toxic, the Bush administration has increased by 10 percent the budget of Superfund for cleaning up the nation's most toxic industrial waste sites. But the entire amount will now come from the public, because Bush is dropping the 24-year practice of requiring polluting industries to contribute to a trust fund that helps pick up the tab when a site's polluter is no longer operating or can't be located.

But don't worry about bad news getting out about these and other Bush anti-environmental measures. Bush has proposed that the Office of Management and Budget appoint its own experts to peer-review the scientific accuracy of all government-issued warnings related to public health, safety and the environment. Bush proposes that only scientists who have never received funding from any federal agency be considered qualified to participate as reviewers. This leaves industry scientists to screen all federal agency statements regarding global warming, toxics, drinking water, energy depletion, nuclear accidents, endangered species or forest health.

Forest health circles us back to Queen Elizabeth giving Irish public lands to private individuals in return for service to her empire. Bush's Healthy Forest Restoration Act, supposedly geared to protecting forest-edge communities from catastrophic wildfire, includes "Goods for Services." This allows companies to cut down and take large trees on public lands as payment for cutting down small ones.

The list of Bush's anti-Creation measures is essentially endless. In an age when nations globally are beginning to acknowledge the dire conditions we humans have brought to water, climate, soil, ocean fisheries, forests, energy, population, wetlands, pollution and extinctions, President Bush is accelerating the stabbing of nature in the heart. The effects of the reign of Bush II will be seen by anyone walking on Earth centuries from now.

Mary O'Brien of Eugene has worked as a public interest scientist since 1981. She can be reached at mob@efn.org



DUMP BUSH

So now the CIA is to blame for the misinformation that justified our invasion and conquering of Iraq. But Bush is still sticking to his guns saying Iraq and the world are better off without a brutal dictatorship there.

My heart and soul can not disagree with the latter, but the big question still remains, "Is the U.S. the world's police and Bush its chief?" Again my heart and soul say "No!"

The United Nations must take that role, making and enforcing resolutions that prevent mass genocide and brutal atrocities by madmen in power in any country.

We must first vote Mr. Bush out of power, as he seems to be taking his role as global chief of police way too seriously. If he follows through on the "Bush Doctrine" against harboring terrorists (and brutal dictators), there are several other countries he must invade and "civilize" with puppet governments of the U.S.

Again this is obviously the job of a revitalized, resolute and powerful U.N., not a Bush Imperial World Government.

Whether or not Kerry rises to the challenge of statesmanship beyond his political pandering, we must dump Bush.

Michael Mooney
Eugene

THE PLATFORM

I enjoy being part of the grassroots movement MoveOn and supported their airing of a new commercial about the upcoming debates between Bush and Kerry, using stand-ins to show who each candidate is working for.

Corporate executives assumed they were entitled to the preferential treatment they are receiving from Bush — after all, they paid him to do that for them.

Working class people made short statements about important policies Kerry proposes that will restore jobs and provide health insurance to everyday Americans. Apparently the commercial was very effective in moving people's opinions.

Kerry's platform is encouraging, though we don't hear much about it in the mainstream media. In fact people have complained about how they never hear about his plans. Are we surprised that somehow the media is preoccupied with other things?

Kerry has plenty of sound and sensible ideas essentially putting the well-being of the people first. Check them out online at www.johnkerry.com/index.html

Anna Sontag
Eugene

LOSS OF APPETITE

An open letter to Carl's Jr. restaurants: Please take down your signs referencing your hopes that customers will leave in "shock and awe." This is a reference to a war. It conjures up images of spattered blood and broken body parts. These are not pleasant images to go with my hamburger. I will not patronize your restaurants while these signs are up and neither will anyone else of conscience.

Steve Kyte
Corvallis

WHAT ELSE DO YOU NEED?

Ralph Nader decided July 19 to accept thousands of petition signatures collected by Michigan Republicans. If that's the only way

he can qualify for the state's presidential ballot, if that's not proof that a vote for Ralph is a vote for George W., what else do you need to know?

Shawn Bird
Springfield

A DEAD EXAMPLE

When the Dead played up in Portland a couple weeks back, I was excited to bring my whole family up to experience the spirited, ecstatic magic of the music. The playfully colorful scene was truly a breath of fresh air. There were multiple generations of loving people singing, dancing and having fun. The children there ran, chased balloons and laughed. Many grinning dads bounced and swayed to the festive rhythms with toddlers bouncing merrily on their shoulders.

I am grateful to have this type of bonding communication that transcends age. I am also grateful to Columbia Meadows for being family friendly. Here in Eugene we have the Cuthbert Amphitheatre that has the potential to be one of the best venues in Oregon. Sadly they choose not to be family friendly. They charge full admission for any child who is age one or older. I have two children under the age of three. I would love to sway with my toddler on my back to the festive rhythms of the national acts the Cuthbert brings to Eugene. Unfortunately, I couldn't afford full-price tickets for my whole family. Children younger than 10 need to be free. The families that could then afford to come to the events would more than cover any lost profits.

It's my opinion that children dancing and singing with their families to the spirit of the music enhances the concert experience. I found this strongly evident when dancing to the Dead.

Steve Brown
Eugene

IDEAL LEADERS

With the onset of national elections this fall, the key to a successful outcome will be participation in the election. Voting not only advertises an educated mind, but also shows how much citizens care about the quality of leadership of those who represent them. It will be up to us to ensure this positive leadership in the future. So let's vote for leaders who are well read, with diplomacy skills, compassion, intelligence and ability. Let's elect leaders who will listen to the average citizen; leaders with the drive and energy to make things happen; leaders who strongly believe in equal rights and opportunity for all; leaders who will take on every issue without pause; leaders who believe in unity through diversity and also as the capability in quality of all citizens of Oregon; leaders who will not shy away from difficult challenges, but embrace them all with a radiant optimistic outlook.

Above all, we need leaders who truly emphasize dedication and true servant leadership. Having had the unique privilege and opportunity to have briefly worked in the local offices of U.S. Senator Ron Wyden, I strongly believe we have been blessed with the kind of leadership both he and U.S. Congressman Peter DeFazio have offered us. I would encourage everyone of voting age to reelect these champions of democracy. After all, the future of our state hangs in the balance. The decision is ours, let's make a wise one.

Tom Bush
Eugene