news Briefs

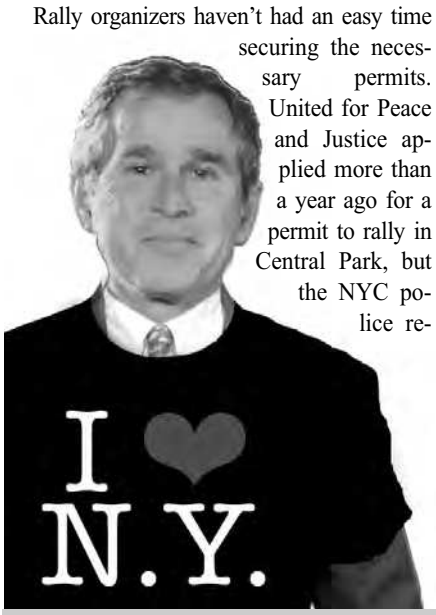
ACTIVISTS PREPARE FOR THE GOP BASH

Conservative bigwigs across America are gearing up for the Republican National Convention (RNC), to be held in Madison Square Garden from Aug. 30 to Sept. 2.

But if America's powerful right is packing suits for the trip to NYC, the radical left is packing protest gear. Yes, as in Cancun and Seattle for the WTO ministerials, as in Miami for the FTAA meeting and Quebec for the Summit of the Americas, activists are mobilizing to make their presence known in New York during this year's RNC.

Several hundred organizations, from local anarchist collectives to national nonprofits, are planning workshops, marches and actions to take place during the convention. United for Peace and Justice is organizing a march on Aug. 31, and the NYC Radical Cheerleaders — outfitted with pom-poms, short skirts and hairy armpits — will cheer on the activists.

Rally organizers haven't had an easy time securing the necessary permits. United for Peace and Justice applied more than a year ago for a permit to rally in Central Park, but the NYC police refused to grant it. NYC Mayor Michael Bloomberg said that the permit process helps police control the crowds, but UPJ is suing the city.



Several Eugene locals will be in New York for the RNC. Bob Avery, chairman of the Lane County Republican Party, will attend as a delegate. "I'm excited about the president. I'm excited about his campaign," says Avery. But he's not excited by the prospect of protesters. "I'm a little disturbed by the absolute hate that's coming out of the Democratic Party and its activists. That's no way to be civilized," he says.

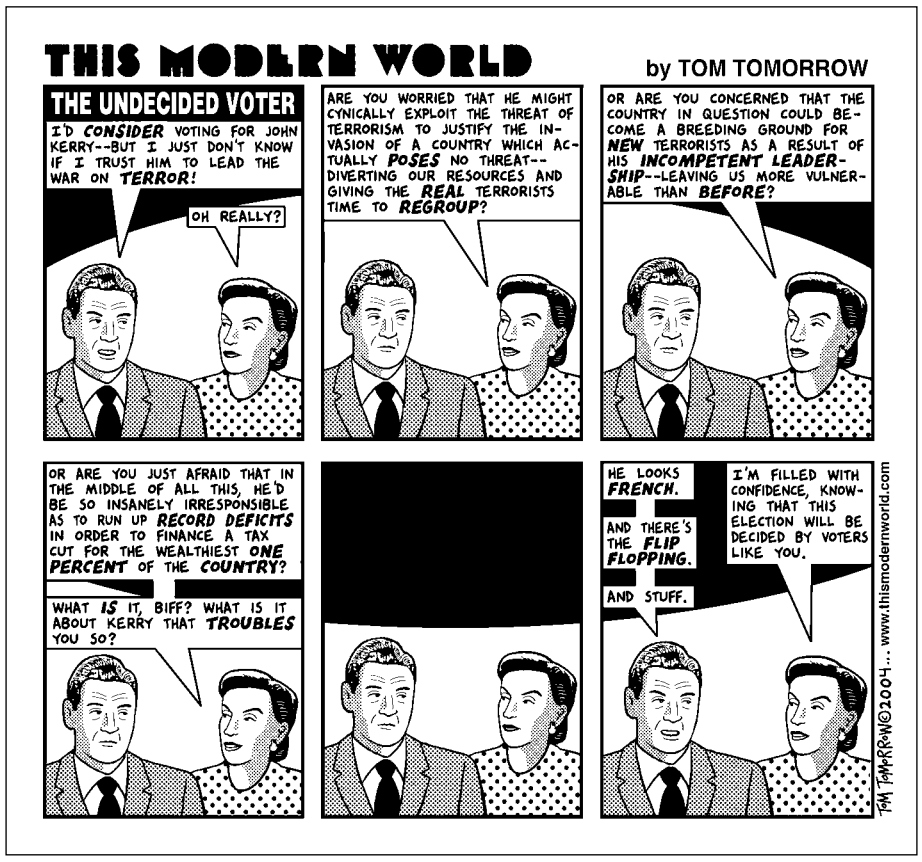
For Eugene activist Peter Chabarek, it's not hate, but patriotism that propels him and Carol Melia to New York to oppose the convention. Chabarek and Melia — whose group is called Enemy Combatants — plan to perform protest songs outside the RNC to send a message to the nation. "We have to take back the country from the ideologues that have taken it over," says Chabarek. "We have to fight for peace and for justice, and we have to apply force without violence. We're trying to convey that message with music and with humor."

Chabarek and Melia play original and reworked political songs. A ditty called "Neo-con Job," which Chabarek wrote, includes this stanza:

The president's half-baked
Supreme Court's on the take.
Cheney works for Halliburton
he is not like Thomas Murton.
If you think Iraq is free
it's mafia democracy.
Greenhouse gas is getting bigger
\9-11 pulled the trigger.

For more information on the mobilization against the RNC, visit www.rncnotwelcome.org or www.counterconvention.org

— Kera Abraham



ENVIRO LAWYER SPEAKS ON NIGERIA OIL EXPLOITS

Simon Amaduobogha, a Nigerian environmental attorney taking on the oil industry in the oil-rich Niger Delta, recently arrived in Eugene as a working exchange fellow with the U.S. office of the Environmental Law Alliance Worldwide (E-LAW U.S.). At the end of his two-week fellowship, Amaduobogha will give a brown bag lunch presentation titled "Fueling the Devastation: Oil Drilling in Nigeria."

The presentation, sponsored by E-LAW U.S. and the Wayne Morse Center, will explore the disastrous effects of the oil industry — from spills to natural gas flaring — on Nigeria's poor.

Amaduobogha works pro bono for Environmental Rights Action, a Nigerian advocacy nonprofit that supports communities suffering from environmental contamination and human rights abuses at the hands of multinational oil corporations. He is also founding a public interest law organization, the Community Defense Law Foundation, to protect Nigerian communities from exploitation by multinational oil companies. The foundation will become Nigeria's only NGO filing lawsuits on behalf of communities against oil companies.

SLANT

• Need a good laugh? The list of supporters of the full-page "Run Jim Run" ad in the *R-G* Sunday, Aug. 22 includes the name Phukyoo Gymn. Gotta love this town.

• Excellent turnout for the grand opening of the Kerry/Edwards Democratic campaign office at 16th and Oak in Eugene Aug. 20. Even Wyden and DeFazio showed up to cheer on candidates for local, state and national races, and to remind us that Nov. 2 is only nine weeks away. After the speechifying, lots of conversation in the crowd about political strategy on both the left and the right. Hot topics? The Republican scheme to front state anti-gay marriage measures in swing states in order to get evangelicals to the polls. And the local mayoral write-in campaign — lots of talk about Torrey sabotaging his political future by not stopping the divisive "Run Jim Run" campaign. Will we see Kerry back in Eugene this fall, along with Edwards? Scuttlebutt has at least one of them in town sometime in late September or early October for a big rally on campus.

• What's happening downtown following the withdrawal of the offer by St. Vinny's to buy the Centre Court Building? It's looks like Terry McDonald will be back shopping for real estate, or more likely, looking at his second and third choices. What have we learned from all this? Downtown has a lot of empty buildings and yet rents are too high for many start-up businesses. Downtown property owners appear to be in no rush to pump money into their buildings to make them more attractive to higher-end shops and offices, despite the huge public investment in downtown, such as the new library, redevelopment of Broadway, bus rapid transit and the coming new federal building. We know that some developers have been crafting a plan for several city center buildings, but it's not easy to find "patient capital" — investment that doesn't give quick returns. And finally, is class still an issue? Economic development czar Jack Roberts tells us it's ironic that one part of the community doesn't want Wal-Mart, and another part doesn't want St. Vincent de Paul. "Maybe we aren't as polarized as we thought," he says. "Maybe everyone just wants to be able to pick their neighbors."

• We're weary of writing about the West Eugene Parkway and it would be great news to hear that this boondoggle has been buried for good. But just because the BLM is finally intervening with serious (and overdue) concerns about the project doesn't mean it won't be built. Support for the WEP remains strong among developers who stand to make millions from its construction and subsequent sprawl. And more significantly, a few folks in government still think it's a good idea. Once highway projects get on track, they are hard to stop, even if they contradict policy and logic. It's funny to read in the *R-G* (8/21) that one federal highway official thinks people will appreciate the wetlands more if they can drive through them. Well, we can't wait to tour the wetlands at 65 mph, flattening turtles, smearing butterflies and scaring the crap out of herons. Meanwhile, it looks like ODOT wants city taxpayers to take financial responsibility for maintaining the WEP east of Beltline. Try taking that to the voters. Let's pull the plug on the WEP, remove sprawl incentives from our local land use rules, and rework our existing roads such as West 11th to ease congestion.

SLANT includes short opinion pieces, observations and rumor-chasing notes compiled by the EW staff. Heard any good rumors lately? Contact Ted Taylor at 484-0519, editor@eugeneweekly.com

DO SOMETHING

Kids for Kerry
Every Sunday

• Lane County Kids for Kerry are meeting from 4 to 5 pm every Sunday at Cozmic Pizza, 8th and Charnelton downtown. Kids from toddlers to teens can't vote, but they can raise money, canvass, register new voters, bake cookies for house parties, and most importantly, speak up about why this election is so important. For more information, show up Sundays, visit the LCKK booth at Saturday Market, or call 345-3576.