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viewpoint BY JOSH WELCH

Talk the Talk

How the right wing is usurping Eugene's progressive radio.



Like many other progressives in Eugene, I was extremely pleased when Air America hit our air waves. They have a strong line-up of heavy hitters: Randi Rhodes, Al Franken, Bobby Kennedy Jr. and several other proud intelligent liberals. They stand for compassion, fairness, security and freedom. They help fill a huge void on talk radio, which is overwhelmingly right-wing.

Shortly after Air America came to Eugene, Churchill Communications LLC (owned by the "development firm" Arlie & Co.) added two local shows: *The Afternoon Edition*, hosted by proud liberal Nancy Stapp (she rocks!), and the *AM Edition* with Liz Kelly and Dave Wooten, both registered Republicans.

"There have only been two – yes, count them – two liberal presidents in the U.S. in the past 30 years," said the voice on the radio. "Why do you suppose that is? Is it all conspiracy? It's because you guys won't own up to anything, and the American people see that." This was not Rush Limbaugh or Shawn Hannity, it was Eugene's own Dave Wooten, of KOPT 1600's *AM Edition* on Oregon's "progressive" talk radio.

This was not friendly advice to advance the progressive movement; this was a frustrated 30-year Republican catching some heat from progressive listeners. He does a fairly good job of hiding his contempt for liberals on air, but is a bit less disciplined online. News flash for Dave and fellow R's: After four years of disaster, Dubya refused to "own up" to one mistake during the debates.

Dave certainly has other "progressive" views and ideas. He's suggested dealing with Oregon's public education budget shortfall by cutting teachers and through corporate sponsorship of our schools. What does Dave think about all of us liberals complaining about the Bush administration? "The liberals are doing or have done everything they accuse the conservatives of doing," he said. He also thinks most liberals are "angry and yes, whiny."

During a recent on-air call, I brought up bio-diesel, a plant-based renewable fuel. Neither Liz nor Dave seemed to know a thing about it. After suggesting tax incentives that would motivate people not to consume material goods, Dave's response was, "Why is consumption so bad? What's wrong with buying things that bring me joy?" He obviously doesn't get it. Not thinking about the impact of your daily decisions on the world is what's "so bad." Not taking responsibility for your actions is what's "so bad."

Progressive means knowing about and using alternative fuels and transportation. It means adding teachers to reduce class size, not cutting back on them. Progressives don't favor corporate sponsorship of public schools. Progressives know that there are major problems with Americans' consumption habits. Progressives get angry and take a stand when their country is hijacked by religious right-wing war mongers and our credibility around the world has been flushed down the toilet.

To be fair, Liz takes a more progressive stance on many issues, and I think she's currently in the Republican Rehab program. Both Dave and Liz have talked about switching parties and are willing to discuss just about anything. They help provide this community with a great forum to share ideas. Yet the fact remains, *AM Edition* is very inconsistent with the rest of Air America's programming and out of step with progressives.

Advertising this show as "progressive" or "blue state" radio is misleading. Moderate Republicans are not what progressives want, especially at a time when liberal voices are marginalized in the media. *AM Edition* falls way short of what it could and should be.

Why were two Republicans hired to fill positions on liberal Air America? If you know a little about who was involved in the hiring process, it makes a bit more sense. Arlie & Co. certainly doesn't have a reputation for being liberal and at least one of the show hosts has described their "boss" as being "conservative." The real question is; why are they getting away with it in blue Eugene?

Editor's Note: Josh Welch e-mailed EW Tuesday morning to tell us that the AM Edition hosts told him it wasn't good for him to bring up their affiliation with the Republican party. He also said that after he made comments criticizing Arlie & Co. and John Musumeci on air, hosts at the station will no longer accept his phone calls and have referred him to the station's general manager.

Joshua Welch of Eugene a part-time KOPT heckler and future President of the Nancy Stapp Fan Club.

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