

SKewed PRIORITIES

The slow response to the recent disaster in the wake of Hurricane Katrina has made it clear that we have not made national security and the well-being of American citizens a priority. Why aren't we able to respond to emergencies and take care of our own people? It is because our money, resources, military and National Guardsmen and women are tied up in Iraq instead of here, ready to deal with the huge problems developing in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama.

I hope that some good will come out of this desperate situation — that people will open their eyes to the problems this administration ignores. George W. Bush and his war hawks are spending billions of our tax dollars trying (and failing) to secure a country on the other side of the world when we need help here: on flood prevention, FEMA disaster response, fighting poverty and urban decay. Our most capable, strong people are over there fighting Bush's war while our infrastructure is crumbling at home. Without food, water, shelter, sanitation, security or medical attention, the people in the Gulf States are now paying the price of the money-sucking war in Iraq. Bring the troops home. We need them here.

Laura Strobel
Eugene

MASS REVOLUTION

Mardi Gras is over and Katrina is one big factor of why the party's finished. Or changing. The end of the oil economy will contribute and speed things up exponentially. Social unrest must brew and transform to a mass revolution like heat transforms into a tropical storm, then into a hurricane. There are so many ways the suffering could have been prevented. So much neglect of the most needy.

Many are waking up to what we have let our country become: greedy and selfish.

The party is changing and must include all life. May suffering end for all beings. May we work towards that goal.

Pam Driscoll
Eugene

KILLER ADS

An ad on recycled paper with sunflowers, and talk of beneficial insects and earth-friendly agricultural practices — must be for something good for the planet and your body. Or is it? In fact, it's just the latest in a string of misleading advertisements for American Spirit cigarettes, that when used as intended will kill just as effectively as any other tobacco product. The ads do not claim their products are safer, and they do include a required warning, but the implicit claims are an association between natural, organic and health.

Check the Internet and you'll find hundreds of posted comments from misled smokers who buy the myth that organic cigarettes are somehow healthier for you. But, burn a 100 percent natural organic cigarette and you can actually inhale *higher concentrations* of tar and nicotine than regular cigs, and the smoke has greater levels of toxic agents such as carbon monoxide, hydrogen cyanide, ammonia and carcinogenic hydrocarbons. That's right, these nasty toxins *are not added* by evil tobacco companies, they occur naturally as a result of burning a dried organic material called tobacco. The problem is "lighting organic material and sucking it into your lungs" as Michael Erikson, chairman of CDC's Office on Smoking and Health put it.

This clever but misleading marketing of Natural American Spirits also suggests a small, environmentally conscious company that is affiliated with Native Americans. Neither is true — they are owned by one of the largest U.S. tobacco corporations — R.J. Reynolds. *EW* should take a more informed and socially responsible position and reject future tobacco corporation ads.

Julia Martin
Eugene

WRONG QUESTION

The Orwellian-named Communities for Healthy Forests recently conducted a poll to demonstrate what the public thought was the best way to approach post-fire landscapes. The story that ran in most news outlets highlighted the fact that 54 percent of those polled said they "strongly support taking



steps to restore federal forestlands after catastrophic fires by removing dead trees and planting new seedlings." This question could also be phrased: "Do you support massive clearcutting efforts in designated old growth reserves which would seriously affect imperiled species and water quality? I'd bet you'd get a lot lower percentage here.

Interestingly, both will yield the same results: degraded waterways, clearcuts in designated old-growth reserves, and a legacy of stump fields for our children and grandchildren, all funded by taxpayers like you and me.

This skewed poll is aimed to help grease the skids for Sen. Smith and Rep. Walden's impending legislation being discussed that would mandate massive clearcutting projects and artificial conifer replanting after fire events. Just wait.

Real scientists (not the wannabes that are hired by the Douglas County Commissioners or the Communities for Healthy Forests), tell us that aggressive post-fire logging in these fragile landscapes is one of the most damag-

ing forms of management being practiced. Fire is an integral part of the landscape, like wind, rain and snow, and has helped shape the mountains of our continent for millennia. Just look at the remarkable, recovering landscape at Yellowstone.

Josh Laughlin
Executive Director
Cascadia Wildlands Project

CUTS TO STUDENT AID

As a recent college graduate, I believe everyone should have an opportunity to attend college because higher education has given me the skills and knowledge to become an active and engaged citizen. While we live in a great democracy, this cannot continue without our new generations becoming active citizens.

Unfortunately, congress is proposing a bill, HR609, which would force students to pay billions more due to a proposed \$11 billion cut to student aid. The bill freezes grant aid levels, increases student loan costs by an average of \$3,000 and increases taxes on loans.

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